

# Path to Citizenship or Deportation? How Elite Cues Shape Opinion on Immigration in the 2010 U.S. House Elections

Danielle Joesten  
Bradford Jones

University of California, Davis

April 1, 2014

**Abstract:** The ascendancy of the immigration issue has been concomitant with massive increases in the Hispanic population in the United States. Further, the rate-of-change of the Hispanic population in the U.S. has been highest in states sometimes referred to as “new destination” states – states that heretofore had limited experience with large Hispanic populations. This paper examines the relationship between individuals’ opinions on illegal immigration as a function of characteristics of the Hispanic population. We argue that because the Hispanic population has been inextricably tethered to the illegal immigration issue, opinion on immigration policy among non-Hispanics residing in geographic areas with large numbers of Hispanics or areas where the rate-of-change in this population has been high will gravitate to higher preferences for restrictionism. The mechanism underlying this prediction emanates from social identity theory, which predicts that when ingroup/outgroup differences are made salient, individuals are more prone to think in group-based terms. We hypothesize that legislative campaigns can serve as a catalyst to make group-based judgement salient. Using data from the 2010 U.S. House elections, we show that in high Hispanic populated states or where the rate-of-change in the Hispanic population has been high, restrictionist attitudes among individuals increases as candidate emphasis on the issue of illegal immigration increases.

For presentation at the 2014 Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting. The National Science Foundation (SES-0852387) supported the district-expert surveys.

## **Introduction**

A widely recognized demographic reality is the rapid change in the size of, and especially, the rate-of-change in the Hispanic population in the United States. Concomitant with this change has been the emergence of the immigration issue on the national political agenda. Legislative efforts at “immigration reform” in the past ten years have largely been stymied, supplanted by overt, sometimes draconian restrictionist legislative proposals. This strain of restrictionism coupled with demonstrable population dynamics have had deleterious consequences for Latinos. We argue, similar to Branton et al. (2011), that the Hispanic population, invariant to immigration status, has been inextricably tethered to the illegal immigration issue. Rhetoric on this issue by political elites as well as framing of the issue within the media has, we contend, created in many places in the United States, a context of threat that has awoken nativist tendencies and has exacerbated feelings of ingroup/outgroup anxiety and outgroup derogation. In the context of immigration, the de facto “out-group” has become Hispanics (Branton et al. 2011, Jones and Victor n.d.). In this paper we ask the following question: Is the relationship between opinion on the illegal immigration issue and characteristics of the Hispanic population in a geographical context influenced by elite cues in legislative elections? Using data from the 2010 midterm House elections, we show that the relationship between the overall size of the Hispanic population, and especially the rate-of-change in the Hispanic population on individual-level immigration preferences is significantly related to the volume of information on the illegal immigration issue espoused in the campaign. In general, as emphasis of the issue increases, the relationship between attitudes and population context increases.

## **Theory and Hypotheses**

The theoretical motivation leading to our hypotheses lies with social identity theory. Social identity theory (Tajfel 1978; 1979; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner 1999) contends that one’s “social identity” is “that part of an individual’s self concept which derives from his

knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 3). Under certain conditions, individuals will form judgements that are based in part on identification with some group. What the “group” is may be loosely defined; indeed, the origin of social identity theory was premised on the minimal group paradigm, where individuals formed group associations based on absolutely contrived conditions. These identities may become “activated” possibly leading to ingroup/outgroup differencing. The role of social context in social identity theory is important (c.f. Haslam and Turner 1995) and often overlooked in studies referencing the theory (see Turner 1999 and Huddy 2001 for prescient critiques of applied work). Social identity theory does *not* predict outgroup stereotyping will *always* occur; rather, if the conditions make salient ingroup/outgroup differences, then outgroup stereotyping and discriminatory behavior is more likely to be observed. As such, group identities may lie “dormant” until activated.

Tajfel (1974) conjectured there was an “interpersonal-intergroup continuum” over which social identities formed. At the extremes of the continuum, one would predict attitudes and behavior are predicated on individual differences (i.e., group differencing does not matter) while at the other end, attitudes and behavior would be explicitly group-based (see also Turner 1999). As Turner (1999) notes, movement along this continuum is a “function of an interaction between psychological and social factors.” If group identity is made salient, then judgement may become based in large part on group factors. Discriminatory behavior is predicted when group identities are made salient and the status hierarchy of the ingroup versus the outgroup is perceived as illegitimate (Turner 1999; see also Bettencourt and Bartholow 1998; Terry 2001). In a context where the status hierarchy is viewed as legitimate, social identity theory predicts no discriminatory behavior (based on social identities). This might occur when the boundaries between the ingroup and outgroup are permeable. This condition is sometimes referred to as consensual discrimination (Rubin and Hewstone 2004). Yet in a context where the status hierarchy is perceived as illegitimate, ingroup favoritism and

outgroup bias is predicted. Boundaries between the groups are thought of as impermeable and movement from the outgroup to the ingroup is difficult. The nature of the current immigration debate underscores the “illegitimacy” of the status hierarchy. The very lexicon of the debate—illegal, alien, invaders, job stealers—associates threat with the outgroup.

And threat, as we have discussed, is a strong activator of social identities. Threat heightens the salience of group identity. And if the salience of an outgroup is established, then actuation of outgroup-based judgement arises quickly and is easily and cognitively accessible (Allport 1954, Brewer and Brown 1998, Fiske 1998, 2000). Discriminatory behavior toward the outgroup is therefore naturally predicted by social identity theory: threat begets identity formation; identity formation heightens the salience of ingroup/outgroup differences; outgroup salience induces animus toward the outgroup.

Further, the concept of “threat” as Huddy (2003) argues, is not a unitary concept. Threats may be “realistic” as in outgroup members illegitimately acquiring services, benefits, or resources “rightfully” entitled to ingroup members. Threats may also be “symbolic” insofar as the outgroup poses a challenge to dominant cultural mores espoused by the ingroup. Indeed, this is the point made by Huntington (2004) where he argued that the proliferation of the Hispanic population is resulting in de facto *reconquista*, which in turn is posing a threat to what he calls the “American Creed.” And despite the absolute lack of empirical support for Huntington’s (2004) conjectures (c.f. Citrin et al. 2007; Segura 2005; Fraga and Segura 2006), Branton et al. (2011) show that many Americans have come to view the immigration issue through, what they call the “lens of Huntington” (p. 677).

Threat contexts can also evoke feelings of anxiety, which in turn can induce negative expectancies about outgroup members (Plant and Devine 2003). Regarding the immigration issue, Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008) considered how issue framing and ethnic cues was related to individual preferences about immigration. They show experimentally that the inclusion of ethnic cues within the issue frame was enough to trigger anxiety, which in turn changed immigration attitudes. In their study, learning about the potential costs of

immigration generates considerably more opposition to immigration if the group is Latino rather than European. In short, their results suggest *mere exposure* to the issue, *if the exposure contains ethnic cues*, can arouse opposition attitudes on immigration. Gadarian and Albertson (2014), also using an experimental design, show that individuals who show heightened levels of anxiety regarding the immigration issue are more prone to engage in “biased information processing; they read, remember, and agree with threatening information” (p. 133) and discount less threatening information. Further, and perhaps more troublesome, are results reported by Knoll (2013). He found using implicit association tests that mere exposure to images associated with Latinos induced nativist sentiments even among subjects who did not espouse overt nativism in experimental pre-tests.

It is natural, then, to consider how demonstrable population dynamics occurring within the Hispanic community are related to judgement on the immigration issue by non-Hispanics. In this study, we address this issue in the context of cues offered by candidates running in House elections (in 2010). Specifically, we ask the question: do campaign cues exacerbate the relationship between population characteristics (“demographic context”) and individual attitudes regarding immigration? This question naturally emanates from the social identity perspective offered above: does campaign emphasis on the illegal immigration proliferate in demographic contexts conducive to group-based judgement? If so, then mere emphasis of the issue in these kinds of contexts may induce higher rates of restrictionism among individuals residing in these contexts. In other words, if identities are contextually “activated”, do elite cues “help” to activate them? Using a unique data set (discussed in the next section) that allows us to objectively measure campaign emphasis of the illegal immigration, we address our research question by posing the following testable hypotheses:

$H_1$ : Emphasis of the illegal immigration issue in a campaign will be significantly related to population characteristics of the Hispanic population: emphasis increases with the size of, and rate-of-change in, the population.

$H_2$ : Individual-level attitudes will be more restrictionist in demographic contexts conducive to group-based judgement if campaign emphasis of the illegal immigration issue is high.

Clearly,  $H_1$  requires data on candidate behavior while  $H_2$  requires individual-level information. Moreover, it is important to note that  $H_2$  poses an explicit *conditional* relationship between attitudes and demographic context: this relationship is moderated by elite cues (as measured by campaign emphasis on the illegal immigration issue). We now turn to the design and analysis.

## Data

To test our hypotheses we use a combination of public opinion data and demographic data. For the public opinion survey data, we use the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), UC Davis Module.<sup>1</sup> This dataset includes informant-based measures from a national sample of district experts, combined with constituent survey data in a random sample of 155 districts nationwide from the U.S. House elections of 2010.<sup>2</sup> The constituent survey consists of pre- and post-election surveys of approximately 2,000 respondents.

The district expert informant survey was conducted in the same sample of districts as respondents. The expert survey was of delegates to the 2008 national convention, county chairs, and state legislators resident in the districts, on the assumption that individuals who held these positions would be close observers of the congressional races in their districts. The 2010 expert survey also includes constituents who scored above a certain threshold on a knowledge battery. The survey solicited information from experts in both political parties, which allows us to estimate and correct for partisan bias in individual expert informants' candidate assessments.<sup>3</sup> Because the district expert samples averaged just above 31 respondents per district, the candidate-assessment measures are district means of adjusted

---

<sup>1</sup>Data available at <http://electionstudy.ucdavis.edu/>.

<sup>2</sup>The district sample is composed of a random cross-section of 100 districts, supplemented with a sample of 55 districts anticipated in the summer of 2006 to be competitive and/or open. The canvass of districts was conducted in June 2006 and consulted *Congressional Quarterly*, *Cook Report*, *Sabato Crystal Ball*, and *National Journal*. The canvass identified 17 districts already included in the random cross section, so strictly speaking a sample control does not introduce a control for the competitiveness of the race.

<sup>3</sup>Individual informants' ratings were corrected for partisan bias by regressing the candidate rating on the partisanship of the informant, relative to the candidate ("same party" = 1; "independent" = 0; "opposite party" = -1). The coefficient indicates the degree of partisan bias across the sample; ratings were corrected by subtracting the coefficient from the individual informant's rating of the candidate.

individual expert ratings.

For our indicators of demographic context, we rely on U.S. Census Bureau data. Specifically, we include four indicators of the Hispanic population in the models reported below: (1) the proportion of the congressional district that is Hispanic; (2) the rate-of-change in the proportion Hispanic from 2000 (after the 2000 redistricting period ensued) to 2010; (3) the proportion of the state’s population that is Hispanic; and (4) the rate-of-change in the proportion of the state’s population that is Hispanic between 1990-2010. Before turning to the analysis, it is useful to consider two features of these data in more detail, as they are important components to our theoretical story.

First, why include *state*-level indicators of population? After all, in single-member districts, why might a candidate “care” about demographic indicators outside his/her district of interest? The answer is straightforward and comes straight from members of congress themselves. The framing of the illegal immigration issue by politicians, particularly U.S. House members during the 2000s was replete with language evoking images that states, especially “new destination states” – states that had, until the 2000s, very little experience with large numbers of Hispanics and unauthorized populations – were being “overrun.” Indeed, in testimony at a 2005 House Judiciary Committee hearing on illegal immigration, numerous House members made explicit references to how changes in their *state’s* population influenced their policy positions on illegal immigration (U.S. Congress 2005). Further, as Jones and Kalaf-Hughes (n.d.) show, House member sponsorship behavior on restrictionist immigration proposals was, for Republican members, significantly related to a *state’s* Hispanic population, but not not to the district population. This makes sense: even a restrictionist-minded member (or candidate) in a low Hispanic-growth/low Hispanic-populated district could reside in a high-growth/high-populated state.

Second, why focus on the Hispanic population? After all, in general, most Hispanics in the United States are U.S.-born and most Hispanic immigrants are “legal” immigrants. As a result, why would citizens or “legal” immigrants comprise a potential threat, as argued

above? We contend that the tethering of Hispanics to the immigration issue has, as a direct result, connected this group to “illegal” immigrants. Moreover, because by far the largest share of the undocumented population is of Hispanic origin (Passel and Cohn 2011, 2012), unambiguously identifying “legals” from “illegals” for many Americans is difficult. As a result, the two populations have largely become conflated, or as Citrin and Wright (2009) contend, there is “no bright line” between these two groups.

To underscore the two points just discussed, we present Figure 1, a composite plot of characteristics of the Hispanic and unauthorized population (the latter data comes from Passel and Cohn’s estimates, estimates widely regarded as the best available [2012]). This plot has two key take-away points: (1) the rate-of-change in the Hispanic population and undocumented population from 1990 to 2010 has been *massive* and has been largest in the “new destination” states – states heretofore inexperienced with these populations; (2) the correlation between the unauthorized population and the Hispanic population is high (close to .90). With regard to the first point, the huge rates-of-change observed in these “new destination states” have amounted to a significant disruption to extant population equilibria. It is easy to see why a restrictionist-minded politician residing in states experiencing such disruptions may view these changes as a threat (even if, objectively, no empirical evidence exists that they are “a threat”). With regard to the second point, because changes to (and the size of) the unauthorized and Hispanic populations are so highly correlated, Hispanics, *invariant to immigration status* may be viewed, by some, as a threatening population.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

To test our hypotheses, we conduct analysis at two-levels: district and individual. To begin the analysis, we start with candidate behavior on the illegal immigration issue at the district level.



## District-level analysis

Of interest to us is the extent to which candidate behavior in U.S. House elections is related to the population characteristics discussed above in the way we outline in  $H_1$ . To do this, our primary response variable of interest involves the extent to which the candidate (Republican or Democrat) prioritized the illegal immigration issue in his/her campaign. To measure this response variable, we rely on expert assessments of how much each candidate weighted this issue in the campaign. Specifically, district experts were asked to evaluate how much priority the campaign placed on the issue of immigration for each U.S. House candidate in the 2010 election. Experts were asked:

“Regardless of the candidate’s position on these issues, please indicate the priority of each of the following issue areas to the Democratic (Republican) candidate for the U.S. House in your district: Health care, Tax reform, War in Afghanistan, Immigration, Gay marriage, Governmental environmental regulation.”

Raters were given the following options to select: low priority, medium priority, high priority, top priority, and not sure. Expert evaluations of candidates’ emphasis on immigration were averaged and corrected to account for partisan bias.<sup>4</sup> High values (close to “4”) indicate immigration was a high or top priority for the campaign; low values (close to “1”) indicate that immigration was a low priority for the campaign. For each district we have a rating of emphasis on immigration for the Democratic candidate and Republican candidate. This measure serves as the primary response variable of interest for our district level analysis.

However, in addition to our measure of immigration “emphasis”, we also examine experts’ assessment of the candidate’s *position* on the immigration issue. Experts were asked:

“Some people believe that illegal immigrants in the U.S. should be given a path to citizenship if they have a job; others believe that illegal immigrants should be forced to return to their home country. On the one to seven scale below, where would you place the Democratic (Republican) U.S. House candidate in your district?”

The scale is anchored with “Provide path to U.S. citizenship” and “Force to return home” with an option to select “Not sure.” Expert evaluations of candidates’ emphasis on immi-

---

<sup>4</sup>The ratings of experts who selected “not sure” were omitted when expert evaluations were averaged and corrected.

gration were averaged and corrected to account for partisan bias.<sup>5</sup> High values (close to “7”) correspond to a candidate whose position is more conservative or restrictionist; low values (close to “1”) correspond to a candidate whose position is more liberal. It is very important to note that assessment of the candidate’s position is not necessarily a reflection of the tone of the candidate’s rhetoric in the campaign (or even if this information was revealed in the campaign). For example, a candidate may be rated as “restrictionist” even if the immigration issue was never raised in the campaign. Nonetheless, analysis of the candidate’s position will reveal important features of Republican and Democratic campaign behavior that we can exploit later in our analysis of individual-level attitudes.

Before reporting regression estimates treating these response variables as a function of covariates, it is useful to visually examine these data. Doing so will drive home some key observations used later. In Figure 2, we plot the campaign emphasis variable by the candidate position variable for: (a) all candidates; (b) races with Democratic incumbents facing Republican challengers; and (c) Republican incumbents facing Democratic challengers. There are three take-away points of interest. First, there is a clear separation between the parties in terms of candidate-position on the immigration issue. Predictably, Republicans espouse far greater rates of restrictionism than when compared to Democrats. Second, there are *no differences* in emphasis and position-taking due to incumbency status: Republican incumbents and Republican challengers are indistinguishable in their rates of emphasis and positioning; similar remarks apply to Democratic incumbents/candidates. Third, if a Republican candidate emphasizes the immigration issue, this candidate *will have* high restrictionist preferences over the issue; if a Democrat candidate emphasizes the issue, this candidate *will be associated* with less-restrictionist preferences over the issue. As such, even though we do not have direct measures of campaign rhetoric, we *can infer* that emphasis has an implicit directional cue. This information will prove useful for us later.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

---

<sup>5</sup>The ratings of experts who selected “not sure” were omitted when expert evaluations were averaged and corrected.

To evaluate  $H_1$ , then, we regressed the primary response variable of interest – candidate emphasis – as well as candidate position on district-level factors, including the demographic indicators discussed above. For the district level analysis, there are 155 districts in the full sample with a Democratic candidate facing a Republican candidate in 150 districts (there was no challenger in 5 districts). We estimate the following model using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with robust standard errors. We estimate this model separately for Republican candidates and Democratic candidates. The candidate emphasis model was specified as

$$\hat{E}_j = \beta E_k + \beta_k D + \beta_k H, \quad (1)$$

where  $\hat{E}_j$  is the estimated emphasis by the candidate in party  $j$  on illegal immigration;  $E_k$  is the emphasis placed on the issue by the opposing party,  $k$ ;  $D$  are district-level opinion indicators, and  $H$  are the Hispanic population characteristics. At the district-level, the covariate referred to as “District Ideology” below is the mean ideology score for respondents residing in the candidate’s district. Higher scores on this scale imply greater conservatism; lower scores imply greater liberalism. The canonical ideology variable is scored on a 1-7 point scale, where respondents indicated if they were “very liberal” (1) to “very conservative” (7). The second district-level opinion covariate used is referred to as “Immigration Opinion”. This too is an aggregated opinion item corresponding to the mean placement of district respondents on a question asking them to assess their opinion on the immigration issue. This question (which is discussed in more detail below) asked respondents to place their preference on immigration policy using a seven-point scale anchored at “path-to-citizenship” (1) to “forced to return home” (7). The covariate is scaled such that higher scores ostensibly measure a stronger preference among constituents for restrictionist policy. The covariates corresponding to  $H$  are the four population indicators discussed earlier: proportion Hispanic in the district; rate-of-change in the proportion Hispanic in the district from 2000 to 2010; the proportion Hispanic in the state; and the rate-of-change of the Hispanic population in

the state from 1990-2010.<sup>6</sup>

As a secondary analysis, we also treated candidate position as a function of the same set of covariates. This model, given by

$$\hat{P}_j = \beta P_k + \beta_k D + \beta_k H, \quad (2)$$

is identical to (1) except for the party-based covariates. Here  $\hat{P}_j$  corresponds to the candidate from party  $j$ 's position on immigration and  $P_k$  corresponds to the position of the candidate from the opposite party,  $k$ . The  $D$  and  $H$  covariates are the same as in model 1.

Estimates for models (1) and (2) are reported in Figure 3. This figure gives the point-estimates along with the 90 percent confidence intervals around the estimate. Consider model (1) first, the results of which are reported in panels A and B. It is clear that candidate emphasis of the immigration issue is materially affected by population characteristics (i.e. the  $H$ ), but in ways that substantially differ by political party. For Republicans candidates, *state*-level covariates – proportion Hispanic in the state ( $\beta = 1.03$  (.26)) and rate-of-change of the Hispanic population in the state ( $\beta = .37$  (.10)) – are positively associated with higher rates of emphasis on immigration. District-level population characteristics have no bearing on campaign emphasis. In this sense, then, the traditional view that candidates are most responsive to extant conditions within their immediate district does not hold. Moreover, the result is consistent with GOP elite rhetoric on the immigration issue, rhetoric that often invokes states, not districts, as the “battleground” for illegal immigration (U.S. Congress 2005). Interestingly, our aggregated measure of district-level immigration opinion is unrelated to candidate emphasis, although the aggregated measure of district ideology is related to emphasis for Republican candidates (more conservative districts are associated with higher rates of emphasis).

---

<sup>6</sup>This variable had to be “doubly” rescaled in order to make the coefficient visually comparable to the other  $H$  covariates. Because the rate-of-change in some states was so large (943 percent in North Carolina, for example), we rescaled the covariate by dividing through by 1,000. As such, the rate-of-change is in terms of increase of 1,000 (i.e. North Carolina scores a .943 which corresponds to 943 percent).

Democratic candidates' emphasis of the immigration issue, in contrast, *is* a function, in part, of district population characteristics, specifically the size of the Hispanic population in the district. For high Hispanic-populated districts, Democratic emphasis on the immigration issue is higher compared to lower Hispanic-populated districts ( $\beta = .85 (.23)$ ). This result makes sense – higher numbers of Hispanics in a district are associated with higher Democratic success rates in the district. Therefore it is not surprising to see Democratic candidates exhibiting responsiveness to this constituency vis-a-vis prioritizing a highly salient issue. With respect to aggregated district-level immigration opinion, Democratic emphasis seems to be negatively related to this factor. Democratic candidates prioritize immigration less when the average opinion on immigration in the district is more conservative or restrictive.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

To what extent is candidate positioning related to  $D$  and  $H$ ? This question is answered in panels C and D in Figure 3. For Republican candidates, positioning and population characteristics show a positive association for *state*-level factors but a negative association for *district*-level factors. In high Hispanic-populated states as well as states with high rates-of-change, Republican candidate positioning is highly restrictionist. As such, this result is consistent with the narrative of threat argument we made earlier: high-population/high rate-of-change states, we argue, make salient the group-based dynamics of the immigration issue. Republican candidates, who are politically more restrictive in their position-taking to begin with, evince even greater rates of restrictionism in these contexts. However, for Republican candidates emerging in high Hispanic-populated districts (or districts with high rates-of-change), the opposite result holds. Positioning is moderated in these contexts. The most likely reason for this is straightforward. These kinds of districts will tilt, politically, toward the Democratic party. Competitiveness in such a district prompts (relative) moderation on the immigration issue. For Democratic candidates, population characteristics show no relationship to positioning, implying that invariant to the size of the “outgroup”, candidates' position on the issue is unmoved. However, for Democratic candidates emerging in relatively

more conservative districts, positioning moves to the restrictionist side of the scale. The aggregated measure of ideology suggests that as districts increase in levels of conservatism, the expected increase in restrictionist position-taking increases by slightly less than half a point on the positioning scale ( $\beta = .39 (.11)$ ). For Republican candidates, positioning is also (predictably) positively associated with district ideology: more conservative districts are associated with more extremist Republican candidates.

Overall, we now have established the following:  $H$  matters, but matters differentially by party. Republican candidates generally exhibit greater emphasis and higher rates of restrictionism due to state-population factors; Democrats (at least with respect to emphasis) show responsiveness to district-level characteristics. Importantly, extant immigration opinion in the districts seems unrelated to emphasis or positioning among Republicans and unrelated to position among Democrats. Finally, in regard to candidate emphasis, there is a mutual response in prioritization of the immigration issue: if candidate  $j$  emphasizes the issue at a high rate, so too does candidate  $k$ . With respect to  $H_1$ , there is mixed evidence. For Republicans,  $H_1$  holds (and holds strongly) with respect to state-level characteristics; for Democrats, campaign emphasis is strongly related to the district's Hispanic population. Having established a connection between candidate emphasis (as well as positioning), we now turn to the individual-level analysis.

### Individual-level analysis

For the individual-level analysis, we use the constituent survey of 2,000 respondents paired with the district expert evaluations and Census data for district measures. To evaluate  $H_2$ , we treat individual-level attitudes on immigration as a function candidate emphasis, population characteristics, as well as individual-level characteristics. The individual-level model, given by

$$\hat{O}_i = \beta_k E + \beta_i I + \beta_k H + \beta_k (E * H), \quad (3)$$

was estimated using OLS regression with clustered standard errors by district and weighted to account for the unrepresentative nature of the sample. In model (3),  $\hat{O}_i$  is the estimated respondent’s opinion on immigration;  $E$  is the overall campaign emphasis on immigration in the district;  $I$  are individual-level characteristics of the voter;  $H$  are the Hispanic population characteristics; and  $(E * H)$  are interactions between overall campaign emphasis on immigration in the district and Hispanic population characteristics. Model (3) was estimated separately for Republican, Democratic, and independent respondents. In this analysis we exclude Hispanic respondents.<sup>7</sup>

The response variable ( $\hat{O}_i$ ) is respondents’ opinion on immigration. This variable is measured as respondents’ response to the survey question:

“Some people believe that illegal immigrants in the U.S. should be given a path to citizenship if they have a job; others believe that illegal immigrants should be forced to return to their home country. On the one to seven scale below, where would you place yourself?”

The scale is anchored with “Provide path to U.S. citizenship” and “Force to return home” with an option to select “Not sure.” This seven-point scale is re-scaled to range from zero, corresponding to “Provide path to U.S. citizenship” to one, corresponding to “Force to return home.” Therefore, respondents with higher values have restrictionist opinions regarding immigration while respondents with lower values on this scale have less restrictionist immigration preferences. Respondents who selected the “Not sure” option or who did not answer the question are coded to the neutral position (0.5). There are 170 respondents who did not answer the question and 46 respondents who selected the “not sure” option (therefore 216 respondents are re-coded to the neutral position).<sup>8</sup>

To measure overall campaign emphasis on immigration ( $E$ ), we sum the Democratic candidate and Republican candidates’ evaluated emphasis on immigration. We reason that a voter’s information context is influenced by both House candidates’ campaigns in their dis-

---

<sup>7</sup>There are only 114 Hispanic respondents dropped from this sample.

<sup>8</sup>This choice of re-coding the “Not sure” and missing respondents to the neutral position is robust to the alternative of list-wise deletion of these 216 respondents. When we run analysis with these 216 respondents dropped rather than included at the neutral position, the results are substantively the same.

trict, so we include both campaigns' emphasis on immigration as an overall level of discussion of immigration in the district. We mean-centered this emphasis measure so positive values indicate a district where the campaigns emphasized immigration more frequently than the average district; negative values indicate a district where campaigns emphasized immigration less than average. The covariates corresponding to  $H$  are the four population indicators discussed in the district-level analysis: proportion Hispanic in the district; rate-of-change in the proportion Hispanic in the district from 2000 to 2010; the proportion Hispanic in the state; and the rate-of-change of the Hispanic population in the state from 1990-2010. In model (3), we mean-centered the  $H$  covariates. Mean-centering of  $E$  and  $H$  was done to facilitate interpretation of the ( $E * H$ ) interaction.

We include three individual-level characteristics ( $I$ ): ideology, moral traditionalism, and interest in politics. Ideology is measured on a seven-point liberal-conservative scale ranging from "Very liberal" (0) to "Very conservative" (1). Moral traditionalism is a scale derived from four survey questions designed to measure respondents' level of cultural or moral traditionalism and preference for maintaining cultural values and norms. This scale was originally designed by Conover and Feldman (1989) and recently used by Branton et al. (2011). Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with four statements relating to newer lifestyles contributing to societal breakdown, moral behavior in a changing world, emphasis on traditional family ties, and tolerance of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards (exact question wording is available in the Appendix). The interitem covariance for this scale is 0.073 and the scale reliability coefficient is 0.839. The moral traditionalism variable is scored from zero, indicating a low level of moral traditionalism, to one, indicating a high level of moral traditionalism and preference for maintaining traditional cultural values. Interest in politics is measured on a four-point scale ranging from interested in news and public affairs most of the time ("1") to interested in news and public affairs hardly at all ("0").

To provide an explicit test of  $H_2$ , we condition the bivariate relationship between  $H$  and



$O_i$  on  $E$  by inclusion of interaction terms. Specifically, we argue that absent a factor to make population characteristics salient, there is no *a priori* reason to expect a “main effect” estimate of the  $H$  covariates. The factor we theorize helping to make  $H$  salient is campaign emphasis, that is,  $E$ . At this point an objection could be raised as to whether or not our summative measure is a valid measure of emphasis. We contend, strongly, it is. As we showed earlier in Figure 2, there *is* an implicit directional cue in campaign emphasis: when Republicans emphasize the issue, the kind of candidate emphasizing the issue is restrictionist; when Democrats emphasize the issue, the candidate is less restrictionist. Further, we know from the district-level models that when one candidate emphasizes the issue at a high rate, the other candidate responds in kind. The final justification for using the summation measure as an indicator of cues, then, comes from the following: Republicans significantly emphasize immigration at rates higher than Democratic candidates. In all but 24 districts (out of 150 competitive districts), the Republican candidate “outemphasized” the Democratic candidate (and in 8 of those 24 districts, the difference in emphasis was nearly 0) on this issue. Thus, summation of emphasis accomplishes two things: 1) we get a measure of the total amount of emphasis and 2) we can *infer* that in most districts and for most respondents in the study, emphasis is Republican-driven (therefore we safely can infer that emphasis has an implicit directional cue embedded in it).

To proceed in evaluating  $H_2$ , we first estimated model (3) but omitted the conditional terms,  $E * H$ . This model, which is reported in Figure 4, gives us a baseline for the “main effects” of  $E$  and  $H$ . Panels A, B, and C give the models for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents respectively. There are several important take-away points from this model. First, there is no “main effect” of  $E$ : emphasis, it appears, seems to be unrelated to individual-level preferences on immigration. Second, population characteristics for Republican identifiers also seem unrelated to attitudes: whether in a high Hispanic-populated state/district or high Hispanic-growth state/district, placement on the immigration scale is unmoved. For Democratic identifiers, some of the  $H$  seem to exhibit a relationship to extant attitudes:

Democrats residing in high Hispanic-populated states have less restrictionist-minded attitudes than those residing in lower Hispanic-populated states. There also seems to be a (very) weak association between a district’s Hispanic population and immigration attitudes – Democratic respondents (all of whom are non-Latino) show slightly more restrictionist placements on the scale. For independent-minded individuals, higher rates of restrictionism seem to be associated with the demographic contexts of a district’s Hispanic population and rate-of-change in the size of the district population. With respect to individual-level characteristics that are significantly related to opinion on immigration – high moral traditionalists espouse significantly higher rates of restrictionist attitudes, invariant to political party, a result consistent with Branton et al. (2011). For Democrats, ideology also plays a role, with more ideologically conservative Democrats having more restrictionist views on immigration.

[Insert Figure 4 here]

Under  $H_2$ , we suggest that the relationship between  $H$  and  $O_i$  would be moderated by  $E$ . This gives rise to the  $E * H$  interactions in model 3. In general, a significant interaction term would imply the following with respect to  $H_2$ : the bivariate relationship (the slope  $\beta$ ) between population characteristics and individual-level attitudes will be moderated (amplified or diminished) by levels of emphasis. When emphasis is ubiquitous, our prediction goes, the strength of this bivariate relationship should increase –  $\beta$  should become more positive. When emphasis diminishes, so too should the strength of the bivariate relationship between  $H$  and  $O_i$ . In other words,  $H$  is conditioned by  $E$ . The model with these conditional terms is reported in Figure 5. To estimate model (3) with interaction terms, we first estimated the model including all possible  $E * H$  interaction terms. After inspecting these results (not reported here), we omitted any  $E * H$  terms that were indistinguishable from 0, a result implying that the simpler, unconditional relationship is preferred. Figure 5 then provides the point-estimates and the 90 percent confidence intervals. Panels A, B, and C give the model estimate for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents separately. Similar to Figure 4, the constituent effects (or “main effects”) of emphasis and many of the demographic covariates

are indistinguishable from zero while moral traditionalism (and ideology for Democrats) continues to be positively associated with individuals' opinion on immigration. In other words, the model (ignoring the interaction terms) looks similar to the model reported in Figure 4.

But it is not. Most importantly for our purposes, consider the  $E * H$  interactions reported at the bottom of each column of estimates. *Invariant to party affiliation*, candidate emphasis has a significantly and substantively large moderating influence on the covariate measuring a *state's* rate-of-change in the Hispanic population. Specifically, in a context where the size of the Hispanic population is rising, *if* candidates convey high emphasis on the immigration issue, it uniformly results in a movement toward the restrictionist end of the attitude scale. When emphasis subsides, so too does the role of this covariate in predicting individual-level attitudes. Moreover, for Republican identifiers, we see a similar result with respect to the state Hispanic covariate: emphasis moderates the role between this population characteristic and attitudes. For independent identifiers, apart from the strong moderating influence of emphasis on the state rate-of-change covariate, independents seem sensitive as well to the rate-of-change of in the Hispanic population at the district-level. As emphasis rises, so too does the slope for this covariate on immigration attitudes.

[Insert Figure 5]

The coefficients plotted in Figure 5 suggest statistically significant evidence for some of the  $E * H$ , but it is not possible to determine the magnitude of the relationship by simply looking at the point estimate and its standard error. Because the  $E * H$  interactions entail an interaction between two continuous covariates, it is necessary to evaluate the relationship between  $H$  and  $O_i$  over levels of  $E$ ; that is, it is useful to estimate the point-wise slopes (and standard errors) as campaign emphasis ranges from “low” to “high” emphasis. This is precisely what Figure 6 does. For each  $E * H$  interaction from Figure 5, the estimated conditional slope coefficient (and standard error) was computed over the effective range of the candidate emphasis covariate and plotted in Figure 6. The  $x$ -axis in each plot corresponds to

the estimated  $\hat{\beta}$  over the range of  $E$ . Point estimates to the right of the reference line plotted at 0 implies that as candidate emphasis increases, so too does the bivariate relationship between  $H$  and  $O_i$ . Panels A and B give the conditional slopes for the  $E * H$  interactions for Republican identifiers; panel C gives the conditional slope estimates of  $E * H$  for Democrats; and panels D and E gives these estimates for independents.

[Insert Figure 6 here]

The most comparable panels are B, C, and E, which give the conditional slope estimates for the *state* rate-of-change covariate for Republicans, Democrats, and independents. It is easy to see that when immigration is not emphasized, the bivariate relationship between this covariate and attitudes is actually negative. As emphasis increases, this bivariate slope very quickly becomes positive, increasing in strength as candidate emphasis of the issue increases. Similar remarks apply for panels A and D, which show Republican sensitivity to the state's Hispanic population conditional on emphasis, and independent's sensitivity to the rate-of-change of the district's Hispanic population conditional on emphasis. Demographic context matters, but only in a conditional sense. Further, cues, by way of emphasis, matter, but it appears only in exacerbating the relationship between demographic context and attitudes. In general, there is support for  $H_2$ .

## Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has two points to make. First, candidate emphasis (and to some extent, candidate positioning) is in part a function of geographic context. For Republican candidates, state characteristics matter, for Democratic candidates, district characteristics matter. Second, campaign cues and population characteristics in a demographic context matter, but matter only in tandem. Thus, the main research question asked at the onset of this paper, "Is the relationship between opinion on the illegal immigration issue and characteristics of the Hispanic population in a geographical context influenced by elite cues in legislative elections?",

now has an answer: yes. We think this is an important result for several reasons, which we elaborate upon in this section. But it is first important to address a possible objection to our conclusions: endogeneity of context and opinion.

The age-old problem with inferring contextual effects is the conflation of these “effects” with endogenous variables, namely, that an individual, merely by residing in a particular context, will have a given set of opinions that may differ from someone else residing in a different context. In the case of our study, if (as Figure 1 implies), the fastest Hispanic growth states are the so-called “new destination” states (and they are) and if these states tend to exhibit greater levels of conservatism (and they do), then simply residing in them may imbue an individual with more conservative political attitudes. While we agree that this is a possibility with respect to immigration attitudes, our modeling strategy suggests that this obvious kind of “contextual effect” does not robustly emerge.

The model displayed in Figure 4 is helpful. Especially for Republican identifiers, mere residence in a high Hispanic or high Hispanic-growth state exerts zero “influence” on attitudes. Yet if context in and of itself “mattered,” the prediction would be that a strong “main effect” for the  $H$  covariates should be observed: a Republican in a context where in-group/outgroup based judgement is relatively “easy” *should have* higher rates of restrictionist attitudes compared to someone not residing in such a context. Again, this is not the case (for Republican identifiers). Instead, it is only when the *salience* of the context is heightened that we observe the “contextual effect.” With respect to Democratic identifiers, individuals who tend to hold more moderate positions on the immigration issue, we see no relationship between a state’s Hispanic population rate-of-change and attitudes. Yet when this population characteristic is presumably made salient by candidate emphasis, even Democrats take on higher rates of restrictionist opinion. Independents, for whom contextual “main effects” are the strongest, also show movement in attitudes, movement we think is attributable, at least in part, to information supplied by candidates in the campaign.

And it is this result we think contributes most to the literatures invoked in this paper.

We motivated our theoretical story by way of social identity theory. Specifically, we noted that the framing of the immigration issue – framing that has largely been negative (Knoll et al. 2011) – coupled with demonstrable changes to population equilibria occurring in many parts of the country with respect to the Hispanic population has created ripe conditions for group-based judgement. Yet as Turner (1999) stresses, just asserting the existence of group-based judgement is risky: the salience of groups can be variable. Sometimes they matter. Sometimes they do not. Using this as our starting point, we asked the natural question: to what extent do campaign cues make salient the “outgroup.” In this study, we relied on indicators of the Hispanic population as our indicator of the “outgroup.” This was, as discussed earlier, justifiable on many grounds. Using candidate emphasis as a measure of cues, we find very strong support for the assertion that cues moderate – in this case, they amplify – the relationship between population context and individual-level attitudes. Viewed in this light, our results suggest that campaign cues can activate group-based judgement. Absent the cue, demographic context matters very little (and not at all for Republicans); in the presence of the cue, characteristics of the outgroup begin to impinge on individual-level judgement.

We think these results have political and policy implications, especially for the Republican party and particularly with respect to the results found for the state rate-of-change variable. In part due to its restrictionist stance on the immigration issue, the Republican party has not made inroads into the Hispanic community. Indeed, Hispanic voters have gravitated away from the GOP in recent years. In demographic contexts conducive to ingroup/outgroup-based judgement, for example high-Hispanic populated states and states where the rates-of-change have been astronomical, our results suggests that campaign cues are associated with an uptick in restrictionist sentiment among individuals, particularly among Republican identifiers. Yet the absence of any appreciably strong “main effects” for the state rate-of-change covariates, suggests that absent the group salience trigger, individual-level attitudes are *not* a function of demographic context.

The problem, at least for the Republican party, we would argue, is that candidates – incumbents and challengers alike – ubiquitously emphasize this issue in campaigns. As such, campaign rhetoric may be contributing to eliciting opinion among Republican identifiers that, when it comes to public policy choices, is constricted to the restrictionist end of the spectrum. Worse, this kind of behavior may lead to greater rates of group-based judgement. In a context of a rapidly increasing Hispanic population, campaign cues that excite group differencing may induce negative expectancies and outright hostility toward Hispanics. For Republican candidates, emphasizing immigration in the restrictionist vein may be a “safe strategy” in these kinds of House districts: potentially alienating the Latino vote likely would have limited impact on any given Republican’s political survival. Yet with respect to the party as a whole, in demographic contexts most susceptible to outgroup derogation, Republican emphasis of the immigration issue may have the effect of pushing Latinos further out the door.

## References

- Allport, Gordon W. 1954. "The historical background of modern social psychology." *Handbook of social psychology* 1: 3-56.
- Bettencourt, B. A. and B. D. Bartholow. 1998. "The Importance of Status Legitimacy for Intergroup Attitudes Among Numerical Minorities." *Journal of Social Issues* 54: 759-775.
- Brader, Ted, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay. 2008. "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat." *American Journal of Political Science* 52: 959-978.
- Branton, Regina, Erin Cassesse, Bradford Jones, and Chad Westerland. 2011. "All Along the Watchtower: Acculturation Fear, Anti-Latino Affect, and Immigration." *Journal of Politics* 73: 664-679.
- Brewer, Marilyn B., and Rupert J. Brown. *Intergroup relations*. McGraw-Hill, 1998.
- Citrin, Jack, Amy Lerman, Michael Murakami, and Kathryn Pearson. 2007. "Testing Huntington: Is Hispanic Immigration a Threat to American Identity." *Perspectives on Politics* 5: 31-48.
- Citrin, Jack and Matthew Wright. 2009. "Defining the Circle of We: American Identity and Immigration Policy." *The Forum*. 7: 1-22.
- Conover, Pamela Johnston and Stanley Feldman. 1989. "Candidate Perception in an Ambiguous World: Campaigns, Cues, and Inference Processes." *American Journal of Political Science* 33: 912-940.
- Fraga, Luis R. and Gary M. Segura. 2006. "Culture Clash? Contesting Notions of American Identity and the Effects of Latin American Immigration." *Perspectives on Politics* 4: 279-287.
- Gadarian, Shana Kushner and Bethany Albertson 2014. "Anxiety, Immigration, and the Search for Information." *Political Psychology*. 35: 133-164.
- Haslam, Alexander S. and John Turner. 1995. "Context-dependent Variation in Social Stereotyping 3: Extremism as a Self-categorical Basis for Polarized Judgement." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 22: 341-71.
- Huddy, Leonie. 2001. "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory." *Political Psychology* 22, 127-156.



- Huddy, Leonie. 2003. "Group Identity and Political Cohesion." In David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis (Eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 511-558.
- Huntington, Samuel. 2004. *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Jones, Bradford S. and Nicole Kalaf-Hughes. n.d. "Ideology, the 'Demographic Imperative' and Position-Taking on the Immigration Issue." Working paper.
- Jones and Victor (n.d.) "Proximity to Threat: Latino Citizenship and Perceptions of Discrimination." Working paper.
- Knoll, Benjamin R. 2013. "Implicit Nativist Attitudes, Social Desirability, and Immigration Policy Preferences." *International Migration Review*. 47: 132–165.
- Knoll, Benjamin R., David P. Redlawsk, and Howard Sanborn. 2011. "Framing Labels and Immigration Policy Attitudes in the Iowa Caucuses: "Trying to Out-Tancredo Tancredo"." *Political Behavior*. 33: 433–454.
- Passel, Jeffrey S., and Senior Writer D'Vera Cohn. 2011. Unauthorized immigrant population: National and state trends, 2010. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Passel, Jeffrey S. and D'Vera Cohn. 2012. "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States." Washington DC: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Plant, E. Ashby, and Patricia G. Devine. 2003. "The antecedents and implications of interracial anxiety." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29(6): 790-801
- Rubin, M., and Hewstone, M. 2004. "Social Identity, System Justification, and Social Dominance: Commentary on Reicher, Jost et al., and Sidanius et al." *Political Psychology*, 25: 823-844.
- Segura, Gary. 2005. "Book review. Who Are We? by Samuel Huntington." *Perspectives on Politics*, 3: 640-642.
- Tajfel, Henri. 1974. "Social Identity and Intergroup Behavior." *Social Science Information*, 13, 65-93.
- Tajfel, Henri (Ed.). 1978. *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* London: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, Henri. 1979. "Individuals and Groups in Social Psychology." *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18: 183-190.

- Tajfel, Henri and John Turner. 1979. "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict." In William Austin and Stephen Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Terry, Deborah. 2001. "Intergroup Relations and Organizational Mergers." In Michael Hogg and Deborah Terry (Eds.), *Social Identity Processes in Organizational Contexts*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell.
- Turner, John. 1999. "Some Current Issues in Research on Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theories." In Naomi Ellermers, Russell Spears, and Bertian Doosje (Eds.) *Social Identity: Context, Commitment, Content*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell Publishers.
- U.S. House of Representatives. 2005. Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims of the Committee on the Judiciary. *How Illegal Immigration Impacts Constituencies Perspectives from Members of Congress (Part II)*. First Session. 17 November.

## Appendix

**Moral Traditionalism** The moral traditionalism scale is based on four survey questions. Respondents were asked if they “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” with the following statements. Respondents were also provided an option to select “Not sure.”

1. The newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society.
2. The world is always changing and we should adjust our view of moral behavior to those changes.
3. This country would have many fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties.
4. We should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own moral standards, even if they are very different from our own.

## Characteristics of Hispanic and Unauthorized Population by State

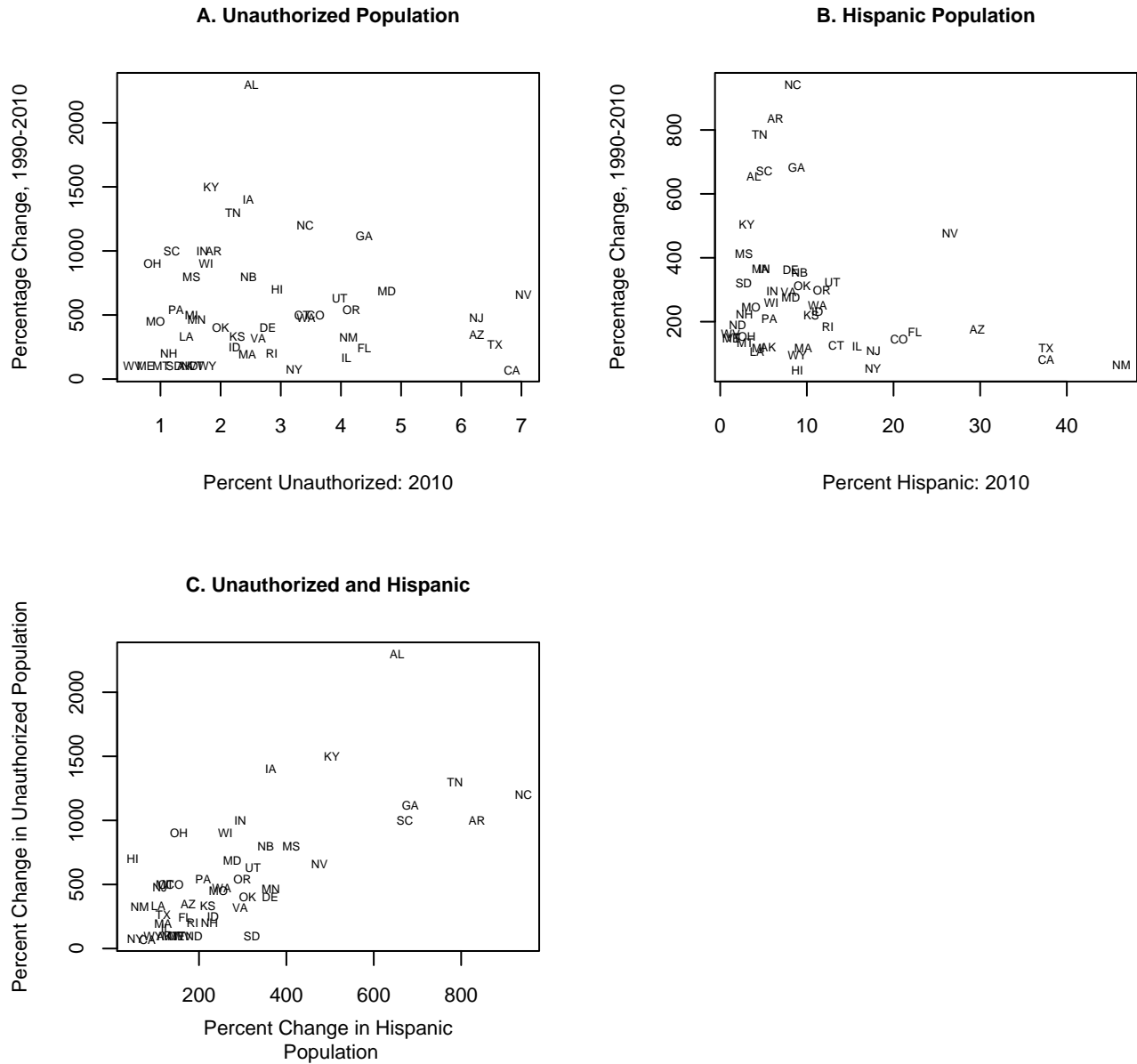


Figure 1: Panel A plots the estimated size of the unauthorized population by the rate-of-change in the unauthorized population; panel B plots the size of the Hispanic population by the rate-of-change in the Hispanic population; panel C plots the rates-of-change of the Hispanic population and unauthorized population. State Hispanic population data come from the US Census. Data for unauthorized populations come from Passel and Cohn 2011, 2012.

## Republican and Democratic Candidate Emphasis and Position on the Immigration Issue

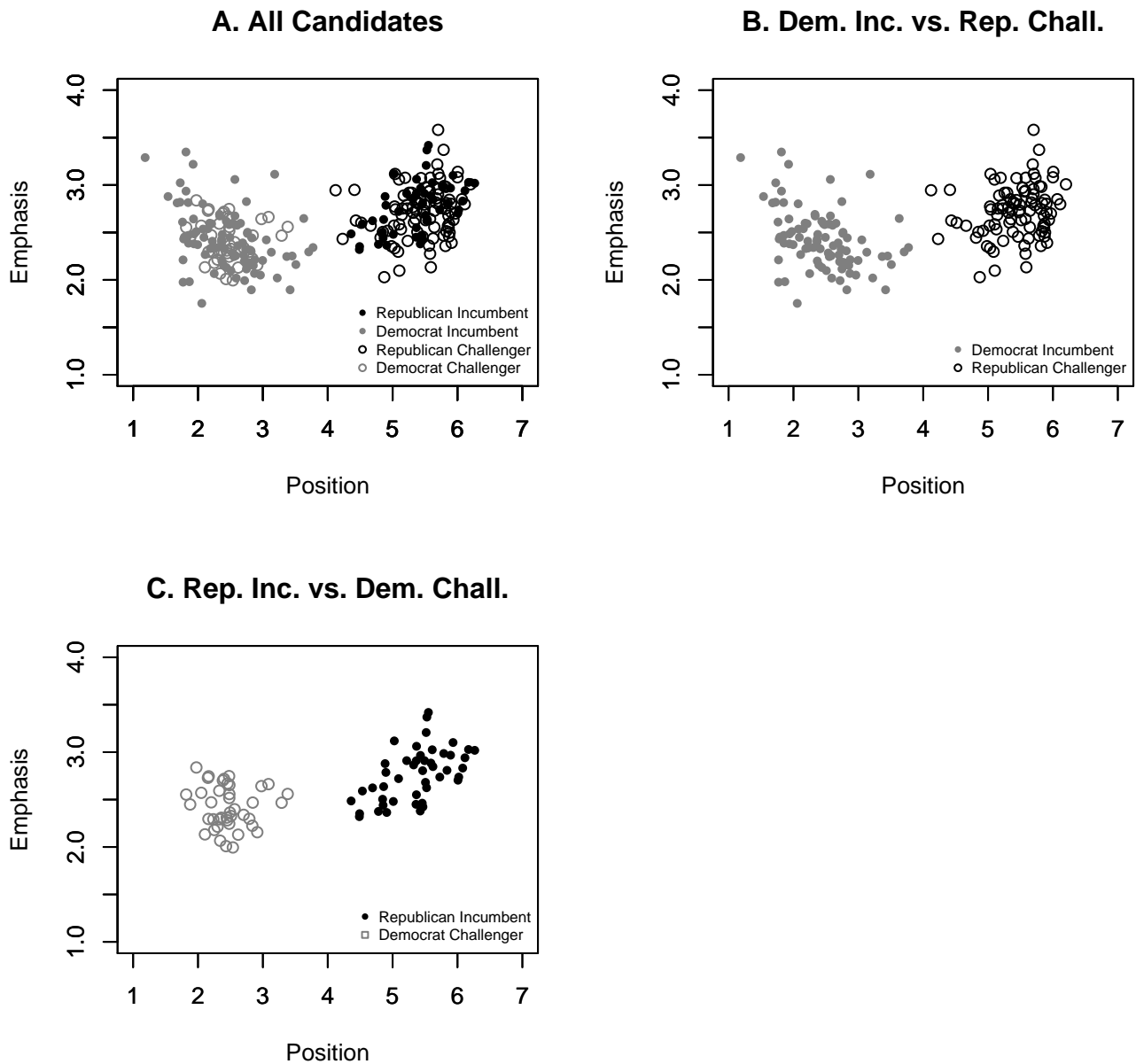


Figure 2: Panel A plots candidate emphasis by candidate position on the illegal immigration issue; Panel B plots this relationship for races with a Democratic incumbent facing a Republican challenger; Panel C plots this relationship for races with a Republican incumbent facing a Democratic challenger. Data are from the 2010 CCES.

**Candidate Emphasis of and Position on the Immigration Issue as a Function of State and District Characteristics**

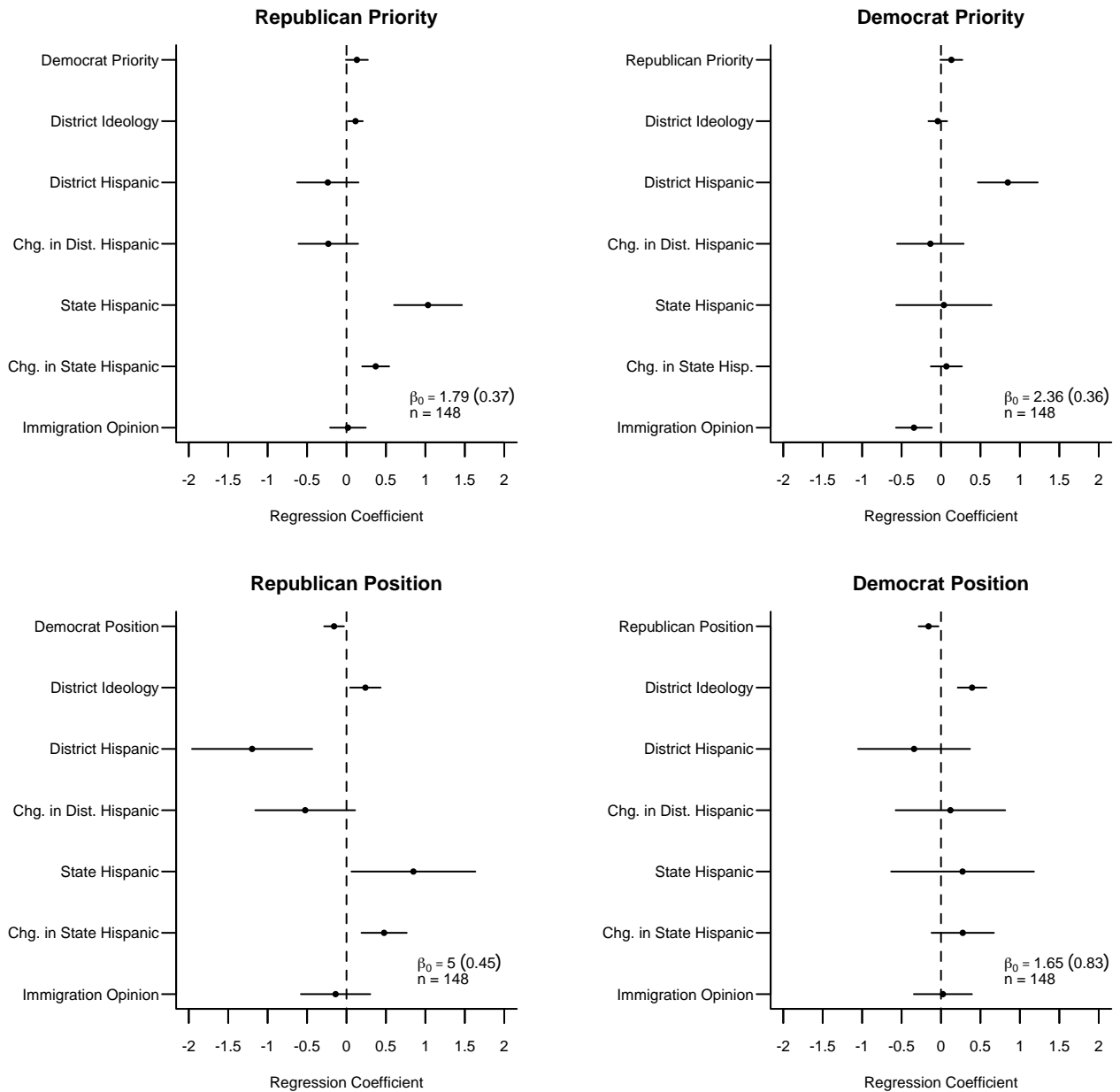


Figure 3: Panels A and B give the regression estimates of candidate emphasis (“priority”) as a function of the covariates (model 1) and panels C and D give the estimates of candidate position as a function of the covariates (model 2). Data are from the 2010 CCES.

### Immigration Attitudes as a Function of Campaign Emphasis and Demographics

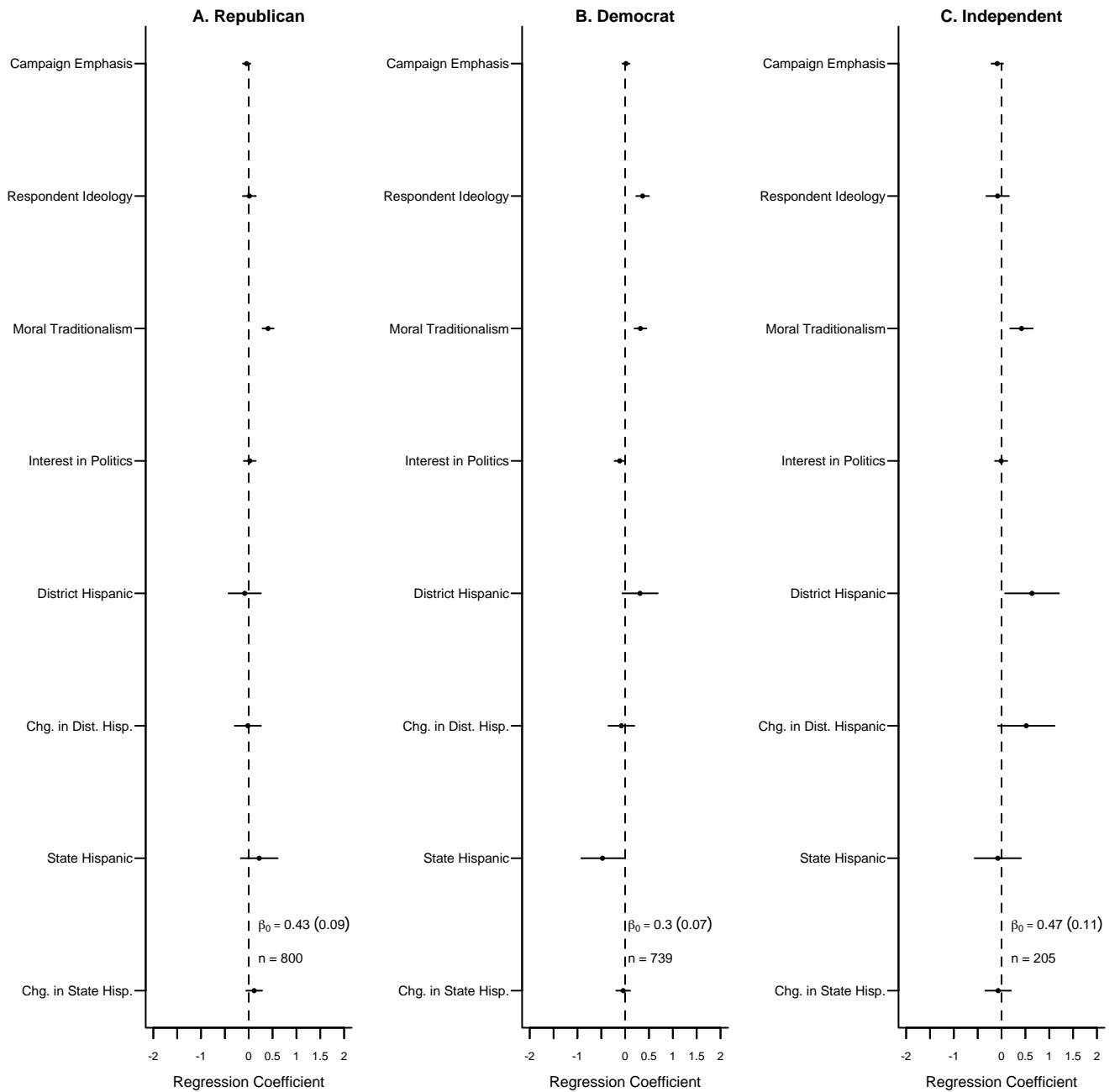


Figure 4: Panels A, B, and C give the regression estimates of respondent self-placement on the immigration policy scale treated as a function of emphasis, individual-level characteristics, and population characteristics for: Republican, Democratic, and Independent identifiers. Data are from the 2010 CCES.

### Immigration Attitudes are Sensitive to Campaign Emphasis and Rates-of-Change in Population

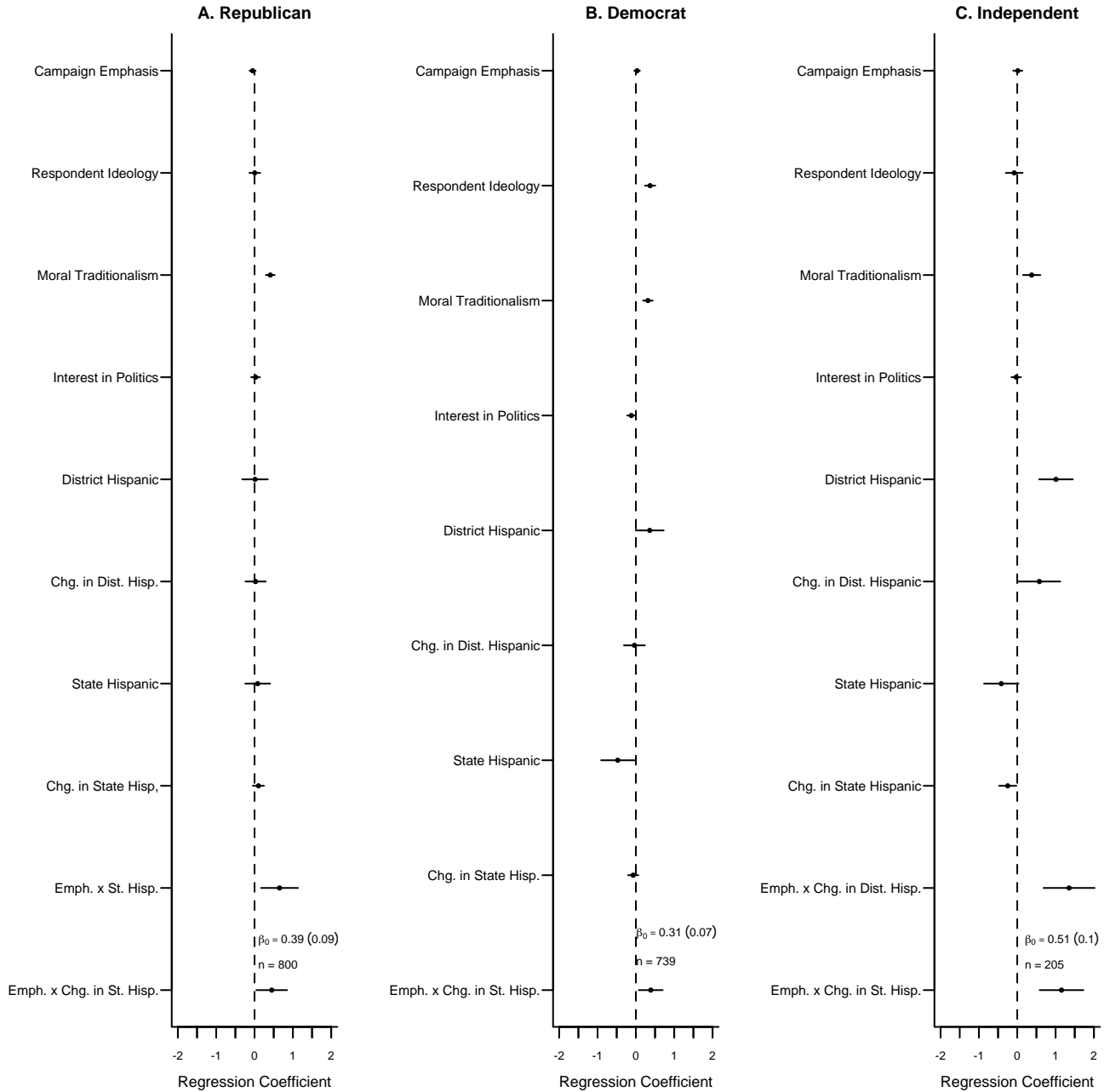


Figure 5: Panels A, B, and C give the regression estimates of respondent self-placement on the immigration policy scale treated as a function of emphasis, individual-level characteristics, population characteristics and interactions for: Republican, Democratic, and Independent identifiers. Data are from the 2010 CCES.



### Candidate Emphasis as a Moderator of Population Characteristics

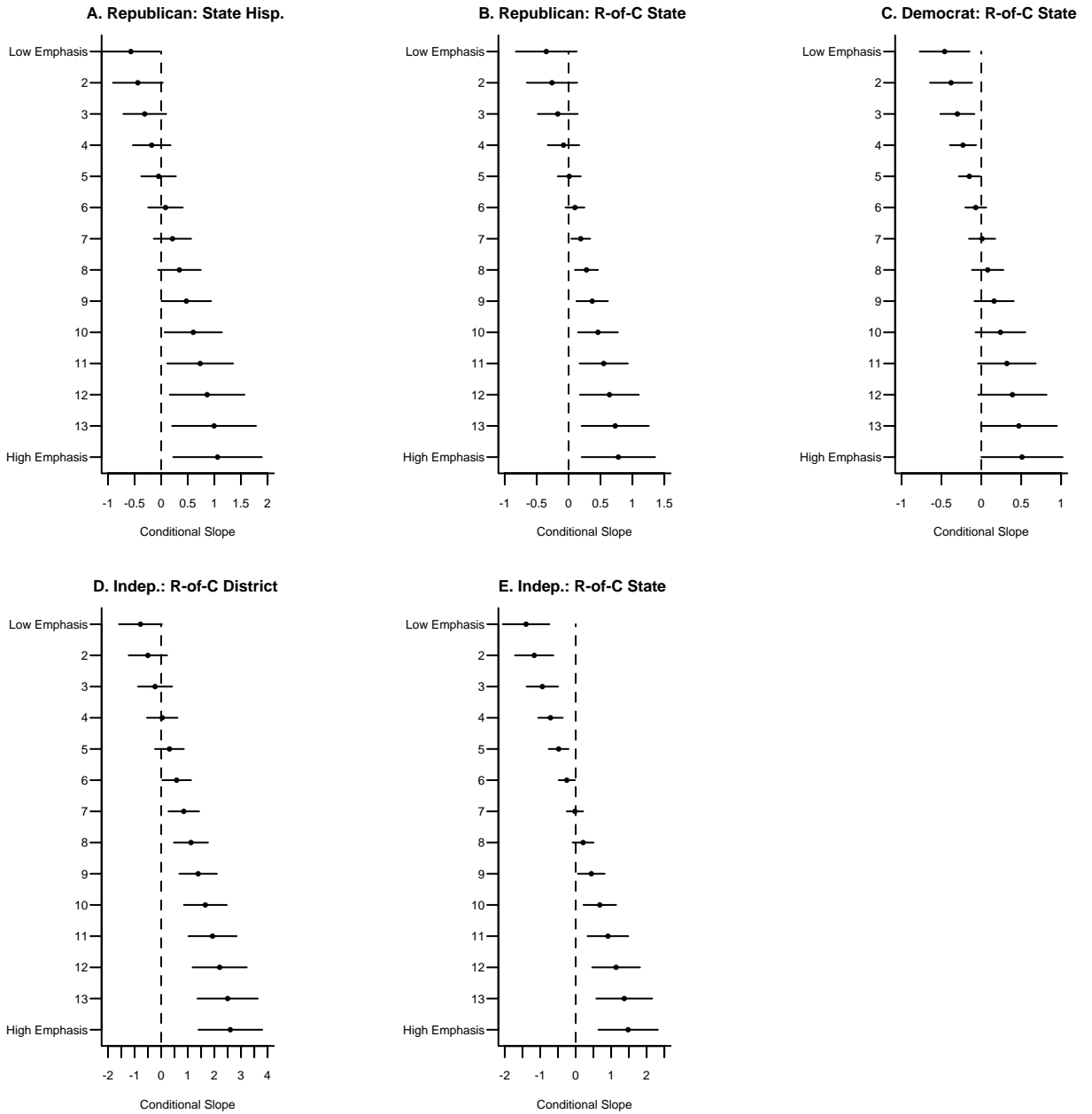


Figure 6: This figure plots the slope estimates of the population variables on respondent self-placement on the immigration policy scale conditional on levels of candidate emphasis. Data are from the 2010 CCES.