

Cleavage or Convergence: Elected Officials of Color and the Politics of Immigration

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Immigration figures prominently in American politics in multiple ways. It currently appears as one of the top priorities for national policymakers, as the president and Congress debate and develop federal policy directed at legal and illegal immigration. Similarly, state and local communities grapple with various aspects of immigration, particularly over the provision of government services and public goods to newcomers in their midst. Indeed, city councils in an increasing number of communities across the country are enacting ordinances to restrict the private sector from employing or housing undocumented immigrants, establish English-only laws, and limit immigrant access to public services in order to deal with illegal immigration on their own terms. Certainly a climate of contentiousness envelopes immigration issues in contemporary politics.

Intrinsically tied to the current debates and policy concerns associated with immigration are the nation's racial and ethnic minority populations. High levels of immigration, particularly from Latin American and Asia, are rapidly expanding the demographic diversity of the nation's population, raising a number of issues regarding the status and power of diverse communities in American society. Two major questions that emerge in public and scholarly discourse are the extent to which immigrants are becoming (or should be) incorporated into the American political system and the impact of immigration on relations both within and across ethnic and racial groups.

Recent scholarship draws attention to the contemporary role of civic institutions in fostering the incorporation of immigrants (Jones-Correa 1998, 2005; Gerstle and Millenkopf 2002; Anderson and Cohen 2005; J. Wong 2006) and the socio-demographic status and participatory behavior of immigrants across race, ethnic origin, generation, and other variables (Foner and Frederickson 2004; Lien 2004; Ramakrishnan 2005; Lee, Ramakrishnan, and Ramirez 2006). At the same time, the attitudes and political behavior of ethnoracial groups towards immigrants and each other provide ways to assess the possibilities for intra-ethnic and inter-group cooperation and conflict.

Media celebrities, pundits, and public intellectuals underscore serious divisions among various sectors of the American population, including populations of color, with regard to the place of immigrants in today's political economy. They contend that competition for limited resources, such as jobs, is driving a wedge between African Americans on the one hand, and Latinos and/or Asians on the other. Cultural differences and/or racial attitudes are also identified as underlying factors that place distance and strain relations across racial groups as well as among recent immigrants and long-established residents (Huntington 2004; Vaca 2004).

Scholarship on race and ethnicity in American politics portrays a more complicated and nuanced picture of intra-ethnic and inter-group relations among African Americans, Latinos, and Asians, including relations among those U.S.- and foreign-born (Hood, et al. 1997; Kim 2000; Jaynes 2000; Morris 2000; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004; McClain and Stewart 2006; Segura and Rodrigues 2006). Much of this scholarship

is based on public opinion research, attitudinal surveys, and studies of group behavior at the individual or mass level, such as voting on citizen initiatives that seek to block or restrict the rights of immigrants to public goods and services. Much less attention focuses on political elites and their attitudes and positions on issues dealing with immigrant incorporation and race and ethnic relations more broadly defined.

This paper examines the politics of immigration from the point of view of the nation's elected officials of color, who as governing elites represent an important voice in current debates on immigration, as opinion leaders and policymakers. The paper reports results from telephone interviews with a national sample of African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian elected officials in local and state legislative office. The national survey, conducted from June 2006 through January 2007, explores the perspectives and policy stands of the elected officials of color on various issues related to immigrant incorporation in state and local contexts. Drawing from the literature on intra-ethnic and inter-group racial attitudes and the few works that focus upon or include elected officials of color in their analyses, this study examines four major dimensions that may influence elite responses to policy proposals that address various aspects of immigrant incorporation. The four sets of factors include: elected officials' perceptions of their constituencies; the officials' personal demographic characteristics and attitudes towards race and gender identity and linked fate with co-ethnics and other groups; political characteristics of the elected officeholders, including partisan affiliation and ideology; and political/institutional characteristics associated with their campaigns and jurisdictions. The paper ends with a general assessment of the lines of convergence and/or cleavage on immigrant-related issues that exist within the nation's multicultural leadership ranks.

Immigrant Incorporation

Of major theoretical and practical interest in contemporary politics is the incorporation or inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups in American society. Attention focuses in particular on how the nation's ethnoracial minority groups achieve "voice," representation, and influence in the nation's political structures and processes (Wolbrecht and Hero 2005). Because of the rising presence of immigrants in the nation's demographic make-up, these questions extend to the incorporation of immigrants in American society as well (Ramakrishnan 2005; J. Wong 2006). The answers to such questions speak to the strength and vitality (or limits and constraints) of American democracy. On a practical level, how governmental structures and social groups respond to the presence of rising immigrant populations carries implications for not only the inclusion of immigrants in the body politic, but also for the nature of group interaction and quality of life for all concerned.

Over time, the American public and the nation's political actors—policymakers, institutions, and interest groups—have adopted two general policy stances towards issues of immigration and immigrants. Daniel Tichenor (2002) identifies these two orientations as support for expansionist and inclusionary policies towards immigrants and immigration or restrictionist and exclusionary measures toward the same. Such a

dichotomy prevails in studies of congressional policymaking (Gimpel and Edwards 1999) or interest group activity on immigration (Sierra 1991; C. Wong 2006). Considered under these rubrics, for example, are federal policies concerning admission standards, levels, and quotas and the definition of immigrant rights and privileges as denizens of the United States. Of course, the issue of illegal immigration raises particular divisions over such considerations.

Because this is a study of state- and local-level public officials, the issues chosen for study do not address federal policy per se. We do not ask, for example, questions about whether immigration to the United States should be increased, decreased, or stay the same, a question that appears in numerous public opinion surveys. Realistically, immigration levels are set by Congress and not state and local officials. Rather, we identified policy issues that are becoming increasingly relevant in local communities across the nation, as immigrants add to the numbers of established residents in traditionally receiving areas (e.g. major cities such as Los Angeles, Houston, New York, Chicago, and Miami) and new sites for immigrant settlement, such as urban and rural areas in the Deep South (Schmid 2003).

The four policy issues related to immigrant incorporation in this study consist of the provision of government services in languages other than English; bilingual education in public schools for students not proficient in English; drivers' licenses for immigrants regardless of legal status; and non-citizen voting rights in local (i.e. school board) elections. Elected officials were asked about their support or opposition on these issues (a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree) in the following way:

- 1) Government agencies should provide services in a variety of languages to help non-English speaking clients”;
- 2) “As a matter of public safety, drivers' licenses should be made available to immigrants, regardless of their legal status in the U.S.”;
- 3) “Non-citizen legal immigrants should be allowed to vote in school board elections if they have children in the public schools”; and
- 4) Do you favor or oppose “a law mandating public schools to provide instruction in other languages for students not proficient in English?

These four proposals encompass measures that are inclusive of the needs and interests of immigrants as they negotiate their way in American community life. The proposals also speak to the role of government in assisting immigrants to transition to American culture and society and become participants in it. The proposals differ in the nature and extent of government action or the extent to which political and social space is created for immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants (attaining drivers' licenses) and non-citizens (the right to vote)-- measures that push the boundaries of legal and conventional definitions of residency and citizenship. The provision of bilingual services and education to immigrants, although potentially controversial as well, can be seen as less challenging to conventional practices and norms, because these public goods deal with basic civil rights. Hence, these four policy proposals attempt to gauge a range of support for or opposition to immigrant incorporation. Strong support for these proposals

would suggest a more inclusive orientation toward immigrants with support for expanding their rights and access to public goods and services. Opposition towards these proposals would suggest a more restrictionist predisposition toward immigrants, limiting their access and rights to public goods, the electoral arena, and societal resources or excluding them altogether from such benefits.

Inter-Group Attitudes Towards Immigrants

The intersection of immigration with the politics of African Americans, Latinos, and Asians weaves a complicated story that yields no easy answers. Segura and Rodrigues (2006) note that for the most part, “immigration and its attendant issues of legal status, naturalization, assimilation, language policy, and the like are absent from the black experience. By contrast, they have profound effects on the political incorporation and political experiences of both Latinos and Asian Americans” (378). Yet African American attitudes and behavior towards immigrants and immigration policies do figure into the complex mosaic of ethnoracial group relations and the possibilities for immigrant incorporation within a multiracial society. Indeed, an evolving challenge for African Americans is their adjustment and response to black immigrants, for example, from Caribbean countries or Brazil, who settle alongside them in long-established communities and neighborhoods.

Studies that examine relationships between African Americans and immigrants have focused largely on African American attitudes towards immigration and immigrants (or vice-versa) (Johnson, et al. 1997; Diamond 1998; Thornton and Mizuno 1999; Pastor and Marcelli 2003; McClain et al. 2006). Added to this developing body of literature are a few studies that include discussions of Black leadership towards immigration issues (Rodriguez 1996; Diamond 1998; Gimpel and Edwards 1999). This scholarship points to two major tendencies within the African American community with regard to immigration and the increasing presence of immigrants, particularly from Latin America and Asia. On the one hand, scholarship points to negative responses among African Americans toward immigrants, whom they may see as economic competitors or rivals for political power. At the same time, there is evidence of more positive and affirming positions towards immigrants among African Americans, especially by Black leaders and political elites. When immigration issues are framed in the context of struggles over civil rights and humanitarian concerns, African Americans are likely to endorse policies that support immigrant incorporation and join Latinos and Asians in coalition to support immigrant rights.

Scholarship on Latinos and Asians similarly shows intra-group differences in evaluations of immigrants and immigration policies. Factors such as nativity, generation, ethnoracial identity, group consciousness, and cultural assimilation play a role in how these populations view immigration-related issues and concerns. Studies of Latino public opinion and voting behavior show mixed responses toward immigrants and immigration issues. De la Garza, et al. (1991) found variations on immigration along dimensions of cultural assimilation. Differences appeared between those who felt more “Mexican” and those who felt less “Mexican.” Contact with undocumented persons also figured into

opinion on immigration policy. For the most part, studies of Latino voting (U.S.-born and naturalized citizens) on Proposition 187 in California, an initiative making illegal aliens ineligible for public social services, non-emergency public health care services, and public school education, show a Latino community mobilized against it (Pantoja, et al. 2001; Geron 2005). At the same time, Newton (2000) examined the basis for Latino voting for the proposition. Sanchez (2006) underscores the role of group consciousness in Latino public opinion on immigration and finds that perceived discrimination motivates Latinos to support bilingual education and increased immigration.

Although Latino activism on immigration has at different historical moments supported restrictionist and expansionist immigration policies (Gutierrez 1995), studies of the contemporary politics of Latino activists and political elites generally find supportive attitudes towards immigrant incorporation and expansionist policy positions (Sierra 1991, 1999; Gimpel and Edwards 1999; Sierra et al. 2000). The above findings have led some political pundits and advocates of immigration restriction to contend that there is a “disconnect” between Latino public opinion and Latinos’ elected leadership on immigration concerns.

The high proportion of the foreign-born in the Asian American population may predispose Asian Americans to support and advocate for immigrant incorporation in principle. Yet they may disagree on specific policy proposals because of their socioeconomic class, length of U.S. stay, concept of the role of government, concern over the need to become assimilated, and stereotypes of blacks, Latinos, and other U.S. minorities learned from abroad. The literature is mostly on national immigration reform—whether there should be restrictions set on the number of legal immigrants allowed per year and whether the number of immigrants is too high. On controversial issues such as Proposition 187, Asian American voters’ opinion has been mixed and only 40% would oppose this ballot initiative. Support for immigrant incorporation may be broader among Asian American adults, a significant portion of whom are non-voters. Compared to other racial minorities, Asian Americans tend to act more like Whites than non-Whites on controversial issues dealing with race and immigration (Lien 1997; Cho and Cain 2001). In a 2000-01 national survey of Asian American adults, as high as 73% of respondents expressed support for government to provide public information and services important to the immigrant community in English as well as in the immigrants’ native languages (Lien, Conway, and Wong 2004). When asked if Congress should pass laws limiting the number of legal immigrants admitted each year into this country, only 25% disagreed and 45% agreed to this proposal. When asked if noncitizens who are legal permanent residents should be permitted to make donations to political campaigns, 49% agreed.

In sum, intra-ethnic and inter-racial attitudes and behavior towards immigrants produce no easily predictable patterns. Support for expansionist and inclusive policies towards immigrant incorporation may be more likely to emerge within African American, Latino, and Asian American populations. At the same time, restrictionist attitudes and anti-immigrant activism appear in the politics of these groups as well. The bottom line is that immigration is a contentious issue both within and outside of minority communities.

Scholarship has focused attention largely on the study of public opinion and neglected the study of political elites on this salient topic. This study seeks to rectify that situation by drawing upon a first-of-its-kind comparative study of elected officials of color to examine the nation's multiracial leadership in state and local office and its positions on immigrant incorporation.

Description of the GMCL Survey

Data used in this paper come from the Gender and Multicultural Leadership (GMCL) survey which is a systematic telephone survey of the nation's nonwhite elected officials holding state and local offices across the 50 states of America. It was conducted by the Institute for Public Policy (IPP) at the University of New Mexico whose interviewers telephone interviewed a sample of randomly selected individuals from a population of nonwhite elected officials grouped by race, gender, and level of office.

The IPP Survey Research Center, equipped with a computer assisted telephone interviewing system and a nineteen-station survey laboratory, trained interviewers to conduct the survey under full-time supervision, using a protocol that included at least ten attempts per number, respondent appointment tracking and follow-up, and reluctant respondent persuasion where necessary. In the event the eligible respondent from the list-based component was not at a particular number, interviewers tried to acquire a valid number for the designated point of contact. The protocol utilized to track calls and respondents was designed to maximize both the survey response rate and the consistency with which the survey was applied to assure maximum data validity and reliability. Upon request, the IPP survey research staff faxed and/or emailed a general study description to potential participants in an attempt to validate the study and the IPP as the survey implementers for this project.

Multiple lists of elected officials in the population grouped by their office levels and complete with their first and last names, official titles, phone numbers, and their reported race and gender identification were prepared by the GMCL project team and handed to IPP for field work, which lasted from June 5 to November 9, 2006. A follow-up phase aiming to enhance the participation of American Indian and Asian American elected officials was conducted by the Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston and took place between December 15 and January 31, 2007.

Overall, 1,310 interviews were completed between June 5 and November 9, 2006. An additional 31 interviews were completed in the follow-up phase. The survey response rate as a percentage of the total successful contacts is 72%. The average length of interviews is 44 minutes. There are no statistically significant differences in the interview length by race, gender, level of office, or implementation stage.

Differential quota or unequal selection probability rates are assigned for each of the population groups to permit analysis by race, gender, and office. For example, the quota rate for Asian male municipal officials is .5, but that for their female counterparts is

1.0; the quota rate for Black female state legislators is .5, but that for their male counterparts is .33; and the quota rate for Latino male county officials is .33, but that for their female counterparts is 1.0. The overall quota rate is .24.

Limitations. Although the survey is designed to be a probability study of the population, our ability to generalize the findings is limited by the scarcity of the population in some offices and for some racial and gender groups as well as the idiosyncratic nature of the elite population that facilitates the participation of those who have more time in hand (fewer responsibilities, less campaign need) and are more accessible for the survey interviewers (have valid contact information on record, have no or friendly gatekeepers). To the extent that the survey approximates a probability sample of the nation's nonwhite elected officials at sub-national levels of office, we estimate the margin of error or the measure of the variation one would see in reported percentages if the same survey were taken multiple times for the total N at the 95% level of confidence to be $\pm 3\%$. That is, the "true" percentage for the entire population would be within the margin of error around the survey's reported percentage 95% of the time. Note that the margin of error only takes into account random sampling error. It does not take into account other potential sources of error such as bias in the questions, bias due to excluding groups who could not be contacted, people refusing to respond or lying, or miscounts and miscalculations, as well as other limitations mentioned above.

Coverage. The final N of 1341 interviews represents 14% of the nation's total number of 9568 nonwhite elected officials serving at the sub-national levels in early 2006. Participants in this telephone survey include 94 Asians or 27% of the universe of 345 Asian American elected officials (AEOs), 18 American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AIANs) or 38% of the universe of 47 AIAN state legislators, 739 Blacks or 12% of the universe of 5961 Black elected officials (BEOs), and 490 Latinos or 15% of the universe of 3215 Latino elected officials (LEOs). Among the universe of 3245 women of color elected officials, 16% or 516 of them participated in the survey; among men of color, 13% or 825 of the 6323 officials participated.

Who is in the Sample?—Basic Demographics. Among the total valid N of 1328 respondents, 736 or 55% are Black, 480 or 36% are Latino, 94 or 7% are Asian, and 18 or 1% are AIAN elected officials. About half (49%) hold positions at the municipal level, 24% at the school board level, 16% at the county level, and 11% hold positions at the state legislative level of governance.

About every 4 in 10 respondents are women of color (38%). The share of women of color elected officials is highest among Blacks at 42%, followed by AIANs at 39%, Latinos at 33%, and Asians at 32%. A far greater proportion of women of color hold positions at the school board level (54%) than at state legislative (38%) and municipal (36%) levels. Among nonwhite elected officials, women are least represented at the county level.

Among Blacks in the survey, the largest share of the elected officials (52%) is at the municipal level. This is true with Latinos and Asians, with the respective share of

municipal office holding being at 47% and 46%. About 3 in 10 Asians and Latinos are school board members, but they are only one in five (19%) among Blacks. A higher share of Blacks (19%) hold positions at the county level than Latinos (14%) or Asians (4%). Except for American Indians, who are all state legislators, a higher share of Asians (18%) than Blacks (10%) or Latinos (9%) hold positions at the state legislative level.

Among Asians in the survey, women find their best representation at the school board level (40%), followed by the municipal level (33%) and state legislative level (24%). There are no Asian women county elected officials in the survey. Among Blacks, most women are also found at the school board level (56%), followed by the state legislative level (47%), the municipal level (43%), and the county level (28%). Among Latina elected officials, they too are best represented at the school board level (55%), followed by the state legislative level (29%), the municipal level (24%), and the county level (16%).

Findings on Attitudes toward Policy Proposals on Immigrant Incorporation

Overall, 8% of respondents strongly agree, 28% agree, 38% disagree, and 13% strongly disagree to the proposal to issue drivers' licenses to all immigrants, regardless of their legal status. The majority of respondents also disagree to the proposal to allow parents who are legal noncitizens to vote in local school board elections where 6% strongly agree, 35% agree, 38% disagree, and 9% strongly disagree to the proposed idea. Support is higher on the proposal to mandate bilingual instruction for students with limited English abilities in public schools where 18% strongly favor, 42% favor, 23% oppose, and 5% strong oppose to the proposed idea. Support is highest on the proposal for government agencies to provide multilingual services to clients in need where 13% strong agree, 56% agree, 16% strongly disagree, and 3% disagree.

In accounting for policy positions on immigrant incorporation, we focus on four sets of factors: 1) elected officials' perceptions of their constituencies in terms of percent immigrant, majority race, and majority political ideology in the jurisdictions; 2) the officials' personal demographic characteristics regarding race, gender, and immigration generation; 3) political orientations of the elected officeholders, including partisan affiliation and ideology, their attitude on linked fate with co-ethnics, other minorities, and women, and support for bilingual ballots; and 4) political/institutional characteristics associated with their level and type of office.

Perceptions of Constituency

Given the importance of both descriptive and substantive representation to an elected official's role as a public servant, we would expect that an elected official has his/her constituency and interests in mind when evaluating public policies. When evaluating immigrant-related policies, we would expect that the presence of immigrants in one's jurisdiction (i.e. the people they represent) would influence the EO's (elected official's) position. Moreover, given EOs' need to represent diverse backgrounds and

views of the constituents, we also examine their views on the racial make-up, class make-up, and ideological leanings of their jurisdictions.

Perceived % Immigrants. When asked to indicate the percentage of immigrants living in the respondent's jurisdiction, on average Asians give the highest figure of 28%. Latinos give the figure of 25%. Both Blacks and AIANs report single digit figures (of 8% and 9%, respectively).

Does the perceived percentage of immigrants living in the EO's jurisdiction influence his/her view on whether to issue drivers' licenses to immigrants regardless of their legal status, in light of concerns for public safety? Yes, EOs who strongly disagree with the idea report an average of 12% of immigrants in their jurisdictions; those who disagree report 13%, those who agree report 19%, and those who strongly agree to the idea of issuing drivers' licenses to immigrants report an average of 30% of immigrants in their jurisdictions.

A different pattern emerges in response to the question of whether government agencies should provide services in a variety of languages to help non-English speaking clients. Those who strongly disagree and strongly agree report a higher percentage of immigrants compared to those who only agree or disagree. Those who strongly disagree and agree report an average of 21% immigrants in their jurisdiction. Those who agree report an average of 16% immigrants, whereas those who disagree report an average of 14% immigrants.

When asked whether to allow parents who are legal residents but noncitizens to vote in school board elections, those who strongly disagree report an average of 15% immigrants in their jurisdictions, but those who strongly agree report an average of 24% of immigrants. Those who either agree or disagree both report having an average of 16% of immigrants in their jurisdictions.

Finally, on whether to mandate the provision of instruction in other languages for students not proficient in English, there are no statistically discernible differences in the reported percentages of immigrants for EOs who hold different attitudes toward this policy proposal.

Perceived Majority Racial Makeup. There are substantial racial gaps in the perceived racial and ethnic makeup of their constituents. About two-thirds of AIANs (63%) believe that they represent jurisdictions that are majority American Indian. Six in ten of Latinos (60%) believe their constituents are mostly Latino. About the same proportion of Blacks (59%) also believes that they represent jurisdictions that are majority Black. A higher percentage of Asians than other groups believe that their constituents are mostly non-Hispanic White (45%) or mixed (30%); only 14% of Asians believe that their constituents are mostly Asian.

The perceived majority racial makeup of the jurisdiction is found to impact EOs' views but only on the proposals to issue drivers' licenses to immigrants and, except in jurisdictions that are perceived to be majority Black, to mandate bilingual education.

In jurisdictions that are perceived as majority Latino, 54% of EOs would support the proposal to issue drivers' licenses to immigrants, compared to the 37% of support from EOs who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority Latino. In jurisdictions that are perceived as majority Black, 27% of EOs would support the proposal to issue drivers' licenses to immigrants, compared to the 47% of support from EOs who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority Black. In jurisdictions that are perceived as majority White, 48% of EOs would support the proposal to issue drivers' licenses to immigrants, compared to the 39% of support from EOs who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority White.

In jurisdictions that are perceived as majority Latino, 74% of EOs would support the proposal to mandate bilingual education to students with limited English proficiency, compared to the 66% of support from EOs who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority Latino. In jurisdictions that are perceived as majority White, 63% of EOs would support the proposal to mandate bilingual education to students with limited English proficiency, compared 69% of support from EOs who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority White.

Perceived Political Ideology. When asked to assess the political ideology of their constituents, 44% among Latinos, 40% among AIANs, 36% among Asians, and 27% among Blacks think most of their voters are very or somewhat conservative. About one-third of Blacks and AIANs but only 20% of Latinos and 26% of Asians believe their constituents are very or somewhat liberal.

The perceived political ideological makeup of the jurisdiction does impact EOs' views on immigration politics, but the pattern of influence is not consistent across ideological positions and policy domains. For EOs who view their jurisdictions as majority liberal, 45% would support the proposal to issue drivers' licenses to immigrants, compared to the 39% of support from those who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority liberal.

For EOs who view their jurisdictions as majority liberal, 54% would support the proposal to permit voting for noncitizen parents in school board elections, compared to the 44% of support from those who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority liberal. For EOs who view their jurisdictions as majority conservative, 14% would strongly disagree with the proposal to permit voting for noncitizen parents in school board elections, compared to the 9% of strong opposition from those who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority conservative. For EOs who view their jurisdictions as majority middle-of-the-road, 41% would support the proposal to permit voting for noncitizen parents in school board elections, compared to the 50% of support from those who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority middle-of-the-road.

For EOs who view their jurisdictions as majority liberal, 25% would strongly favor the proposal to mandate bilingual education. In contrast, 18% of those who do not consider their jurisdictions as majority liberal strongly disfavor that position.

The findings suggest that elected officials' perceptions of their constituency's make-up are related to their positions on certain immigrant-related policies. Depending on the issue, the perceived presence of immigrants in one's jurisdiction and the perceived racial and ideological make-up of one's constituents have varying impacts on EOs' policy positions. Perceptions of the predominant class composition of one's jurisdiction had no impact.

It is unclear to what extent elected officials would follow a "delegate" role on such policies, closely mirroring the opinion of their constituents. First, depending on the salience of such proposals, the EO may not perceive a constituent position on these issues. Secondly, our survey finds that the overwhelming majority of elected officials from each racial group (i.e. African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and American Indians) indicate that "in a situation when the views of my constituents conflict with my own, it is more important that my vote reflects my informed judgment and trust that my constituents will support me." Given the contentiousness of immigrant-related provisions in many locales, elected officials of color may very well invoke a "trustee" role of representation when deciding on proposals involving immigration and immigrants.

Personal Demographic Characteristics of Elected Officials

Race. An EO's race does not impact his or her view on government's role in providing services in a variety of languages to help non-English speaking clients and on allowing noncitizen parents to vote in school board elections. It does have an impact on an EO's views on issuing drivers' licenses and mandating bilingual education. The level of support for issuing drivers' licenses to all immigrants legal or not is highest among Latinos, followed by Asians. Blacks express the lowest level of support for this. Asians are significantly less likely than other nonwhites to support the teaching in other languages for public school students not proficient in English. AIANs are the group that shows the highest level of support for mandating bilingual education.

Gender. In contrast to the findings on race, an EO's gender does not impact views on issuing drivers' licenses and mandating bilingual education. Rather, it impacts views on government's role in providing services in a variety of languages to help non-English speaking clients and on allowing noncitizen parents to vote in school board elections. Eighteen percent among women strongly support the provision of bilingual services compared to 13% among men. Fifty-three percent of women support allowing noncitizens to vote compared to 42% among men.

Immigration Generation. Only 84 or 6% of the respondents were born outside of the United States. The percentage of foreign-born is highest among Asians (42%), followed by Latinos (8%). Only 1% or 7 BEOs in the survey were foreign-born. And all of the AIANs were born in the US. There are 165 or 12% of the respondents who were

U.S.-born but with foreign-born parents. These second generation Americans are 26% among Asians and 28% among Latinos in the survey.

There are 152 or 11% of the respondents whose parents were born in the United States but whose grandparents were not. These third generation Americans are 24% among Asians, 22% among Latinos, 17% among AIANs, and 3% among Blacks in the survey. Seventy percent of the respondents are of the fourth generation or more. They constitute 96% among Blacks, 83% among AIANs, 42% among Latinos, and 8% among Asians.

Only views on issuing drivers licenses are significantly impacted by one's immigration generation. As high as 62% of the second generation and 59% among the foreign-born express support for this policy, but only 32% of the fourth or more generation would support this policy. Support among the third generation is 51%.

Personal Political Orientation and Attitudes on Linked Fate and Bilingual Voting Rights

Political Partisanship. About eight in 10 EOs are Democrats by political party affiliation and, among the rest, there is a greater proportion of Independents (10%) than Republicans (8%). The incidence of Democratic partisanship is higher among Blacks (85%) than Latinos (75%), AIANs (73%), and Asians (57%).

An EO's personal political partisanship may significantly influence his or her opinion on the four policy proposals in question. Democratic party identifiers are much more likely than Republican party identifiers to show support for issuing drivers' licenses to immigrants (43% vs. 30%), government's providing multilingual services to non-English speaking clients (81% vs. 59%), permitting noncitizen parents to vote in school board elections (48% vs. 32%), and mandating bilingual education (72% vs. 41%).

Political Ideology. Despite the highly Democratic skew in partisanship, about an equal share of these elected officials indicate that their view on most matters having to do with politics would fall under the liberal, conservative, and middle-of-the-road banners. Asians report the highest level of being middle-of-the-road (44%). Blacks report the highest level of liberalism at 38%. AIANs report the highest level of conservatism (40%), which is followed closely by Latinos at 38%.

Personal political ideology matters greatly in shaping policy views on immigrant incorporation. On issuing drivers' licenses, EOs who are very liberal express a much greater level of support than their very conservative counterparts by a 53% to 35% margin. On the other hand, those who are very conservative express a much stronger level of opposition than their very liberal counterparts by a 65% to 47% margin.

On government provision of multilingual services, EOs who are very liberal express a much greater level of support than their very conservative counterparts by a 86% to 57% margin. On the other hand, those who are very conservative express a much stronger level of opposition than their very liberal counterparts by a 43% to 14% margin.

On permitting noncitizen parents to vote, EOs who are very liberal express a much greater level of support than their very conservative counterparts by a 65% to 43% margin. On the other hand, those who are very conservative express a much stronger level of opposition than their very liberal counterparts by a 57% to 36% margin.

On mandating bilingual education, EOs who are very liberal express a much greater level of support than their very conservative counterparts by a 73% to 57% margin. On the other hand, those are very conservative express a much stronger level of opposition than their very liberal counterparts by a 43% to 27% margin.

Although personal ideology and partisanship matters, we should note that neither the perceived ideology nor the perceived partisanship of the constituency make much impact on an EO's policy views on immigration.

Sense of Linked Fate. When asked how much they think what happens generally to other minority groups, to their co-ethnics, and women in this country would affect what happens in their life and how they view politics, at least two-thirds of the EOs in each race express solidarity with others. Blacks and AIANs report a higher level of linked fate with co-ethnics than with other minority groups or women. Latinos report as high a level of linked fate with co-ethnics as with other minority groups and women. Asians report a higher level of linked fate with co-ethnics and women than with other minority groups.

EOs who possess a sense of linked fate (either with other minorities, co-ethnics, or women) are more likely to express support for issuing drivers' licenses to immigrants (44%) than those who do not (32%). The general opinion breakdown is quite consistent across the types of linked fate. Similarly, EOs who possess a sense of linked fate (either with other minorities, co-ethnics, or women) are more likely to express support for the provision of multilingual services by government agencies (81%) than those who do not (70%).

The possession of linked fate with other minorities does not make a difference in EOs' opinion on allowing noncitizen parents to vote in school board elections. However, those who express linked fate with co-ethnics are more likely to support this proposal (48%) than those who do not (41%). Also, those who express linked fate with women in general are more likely to support this proposal (49%) than those who do not (39%).

On the mandating of bilingual education, those EOs who possess a sense of linked fate with other minorities express a higher level of support than those who do not (71% vs. 60%). However, support for this policy does not vary much in terms of the possession of a sense of linked fate with co-ethnics or women.

Attitude towards Bilingual Ballots. When asked to assess the importance of specific voting rights provisions, an overwhelming majority (83%) express support. A

slightly higher percentage of AIANs (87%) and Latinos (85%) than Blacks (82%) and Asians (81%) mention the desire to keep the bilingual ballot provision.

There is a very strong relationship between support for the provision of bilingual ballots and support for immigrant incorporation through the four policy proposals. Forty-five percent among those who express support for bilingual ballots also support the issuing of drivers' licenses to all immigrants, compared to the 16% of support found among those who do not support bilingual ballots. Support for the government to provide multilingual services is much higher among those who support the provision of bilingual ballots (86%) than those who do not (39%). Similarly, support for mandating bilingual education for limited English students is much stronger among those who support the provision of bilingual ballots (74%) than those who do not (40%). To a smaller but still very significant extent, support for allowing noncitizen parents to vote in school board elections is higher among those who support the provision of bilingual ballots (50%) than among those who do not (39%).

Political /Institutional Characteristics

Level of Office. An EO's level of office may significantly impact his/her policy views on immigration except for the proposal to permit noncitizen parents to vote in school board elections. On the proposal to issue drivers' licenses to all immigrants regardless of legal status, support is highest among state legislators (66%), followed by school board members (40%), municipal officials (38%), and county officials (34%).

On the proposal for the government to provide multilingual services for non-English speaking clients, the same order of support appears among the EOs. Namely, support is highest among state legislators (95%), followed by school board members (79%), municipal officials (76%), and county officials (74%). On the proposal to mandate bilingual education to students of limited English proficiency, much higher support again is found among state legislators (78%) than school board members (69%), county officials (69%), and municipal officials (65%).

District Type. Only 1 in 5 local nonwhite officials were elected from multimember districts. About 4 out of 10 were elected either at-large (41%) or in district-based elections (38%). There are substantial racial differences in that nearly two-thirds of Asians and over half of Latinos--but only one-third of Blacks--were elected at-large. Close to half of Blacks (45%) but only 30% of Latinos and 22% of Asians were elected from district-based elections. Nearly one-fourth of Blacks, but only 17% of Latinos and 13% of Asians, were elected from multimember districts. However, women of color are more likely than men of color to be elected from multimember districts (24% vs. 18%).

There is generally no relationship between an EO's district type and his or her views on immigration policy proposals studied here. The exception is on the proposal allowing immigrants legal or not to receive drivers' licenses. Those who were elected from at-large systems show a higher level of support (45%) than those elected from multimember districts (29%) or single-member districts (35%).

Multivariate Results

To answer the question of whether the nation's nonwhite elected officials possess convergent or divergent views on immigrant incorporation policies, we conduct ordinary least squares based multivariate analysis using the four policy proposals as the dependent variables and the four set of factors discussed above as the independent variables. To capture the significance of women of color being at the intersection of race and gender, we create three interactive terms of Asian American women, Latina, and American Indian women, with the slope coefficient of "Female" being that for Black women and the slope coefficient for each race being that of males in the race.

The results in Table 1 show that, after controlling for the possible confounding effects of immigration generation, level of office, jurisdictional characteristics, personal political orientation, and attitude towards minority linked fate and bilingual voting rights, black men and Latino men still significantly disagree with each other on their attitude towards issuing drivers' licenses to all immigrants and with Latino men showing greater support than black men on this proposal. On predicting support for government agencies to provide multilingual services to clients in need, we find the interaction of race and gender matters in that Asian men and Latino men are significantly more likely than Black men to support the policy, while Asian women are significantly less likely and Black women are significantly more likely than other women to support the policy proposal. On predicting support for voting in school board elections for parents who are legal residents but noncitizens, there is no racial divide but there is a gender one, with Black women being more likely than other women and Black men to express support, everything else being equal. On predicting support for mandating bilingual education, neither race nor gender nor the interaction of the two matters.

Summary and Conclusions

This study has sought to fill a void in the literature on race and ethnic politics by addressing the perspectives and policy positions of elected officials of color on immigration concerns. Four sets of factors were examined to determine their influence on nonwhite state and local elected officials and their positions on policies geared towards the incorporation of immigrants. Perceived constituency characteristics, personal demographic characteristics of the officeholders, a select set of attitudes and political orientations, and institutional/political variables associated with their public office find relevance in this study.

Most importantly, multivariate analysis shows that race and gender matter—but in different ways across the racial and gender groups studied and depending on the policy issues at stake. To be sure, there is no clear divide between African Americans on one side and Latinos and Asians on the other. Nor is there a clear and consistent gendered pattern on the four specific policy proposals studied. Race and gender groups show a variation of support across the immigrant-related policies.

Immigration-related issues do not necessarily conform to an ideological continuum of conservative to liberal stances. Tichenor (2002) finds that ideologically conservative and liberal groups may find themselves on the same side of endorsing expansionist or restrictive immigration policies. Nevertheless, Gimpel and Edwards (1999) in their study of congressional decision-making do find a link between partisanship and ideology on immigration issues. In particular, they state that immigration issues that are perceived as redistributive in nature are connected to political partisanship. Redistribution issues that involve taxes and the payment of services generally show that Democrats, “whose constituencies have often favored more government spending for social programs,” are more supportive of expansive or inclusive policies towards immigrants. Republicans are more predictably against measures that call for government funding or more support for public services (p. 298). Along the same lines, liberals would be expected to support our four policy proposals more so than conservatives. There is strong evidence in this study that conventional political variables—party affiliation and ideology—matter in the policy evaluations of elected officials of color. Regarding political/institutional characteristics of EOs’ public office, state legislators appear to be more supportive of inclusive immigrant-related policies than EOs on the local level.

The specific policy proposals chosen to gauge the positions and perspectives of elected officials of color provide insights into the degree to which elected officials will endorse conventional and unconventional definitions or parameters of immigrant rights. To be sure, in general, two of the four policy proposals (bilingual services and bilingual education) are well established practices in many communities across the nation. At the same time, the two others (drivers’ licenses and noncitizen voting) push the boundaries of commonly accepted understandings of the meaning and requirements of membership in a political community. This study shows that, notwithstanding their controversial nature, such policies still find some support among the nation’s multicultural elected leadership. Over four in ten of the total sample support the drivers’ license proposal and 46% support non-citizen voting. Such levels of support run counter to the restrictionist voices advanced through the media and within the U.S. Congress (Jacobson 2006). Such issues are not simply abstract exercises in political decision-making. They are real policy proposals that are emerging in various states and locales across the nation. State legislators and local officials, especially mayors and council members, will be key political actors and opinion leaders called to weigh in on debates and decision-making on these issues (Hayduk 2006).

This study is a preliminary attempt to map areas of commonality and difference on important and controversial issues relating to immigrant incorporation in contemporary society. State and local officials will be leading actors on policy decisions such as the ones examined here. Hence, it is important to assess the basis for their different perspectives and policy positions as well as delineate the commonalities among them. Scholarship can inform the development of coalitions as groups negotiate their way through difficult and contested issues. Scholarship that explains cleavage and convergence may hopefully move democratic decision-making towards outcomes that benefit all parties and the polity as a whole.

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Table 1. Ordinary Least Squares Estimations of Support for Proposals on Immigrant Incorporation among Nonwhite Elected Officials

	Drivers' Licenses		Multilingual Services		Noncitizen Voting		Bilingual Education	
	b	s. e.	b	s.e.	b.	s.e.	b.	s.e.
(Constant)	2.330	.190	2.389	.153	2.147	.188	2.408	.194
<i>Race (ref.=Black)</i>								
Asian	.114	.142	.275*	.113	.124	.139	-.118	.145
AIAN	.331	.288	.175	.232	-.206	.270	.148	.295
Latino	.423**	.094	.152*	.076	.131	.093	.006	.096
<i>Race x Gender</i>								
Asian Female	.155	.208	-.386*	.155	.141	.190	-.311	.209
Latina	-.045	.110	-.115	.089	-.099	.108	-.035	.112
AIAN Female	-.298	.416	-.263	.336	.340	.402	-.238	.425
Female	.068	.070	.146*	.056	.185*	.069	.038	.071
Immigration Generation (4=4 th or higher)	-.098*	.036	-.002	.029	.019	.035	.004	.037
<i>Level of office (ref.=Municipal)</i>								
State Legislature	.359**	.090	.213**	.073	.086	.088	.170^	.093
County	.013	.070	-.007	.057	-.097	.069	.117^	.072
School Board	-.057	.062	.032	.050	.001	.061	.050	.064
<i>Perceived Constituency Makeup</i>								
Majority Latino	-.063	.077	.007	.062	.055	.076	.149^	.079
Majority Black	-.125^	.068	.002	.054	.023	.066	-.018	.069
% Immigrant in Jurisdiction	.004**	.001	.001	.001	.002	.001	.000	.002
<i>Personal Political Orientation</i>								
Political Ideology (5=very conservative)	-.098**	.025	-.078**	.020	-.078**	.024	-.054*	.025
Republican	-.321**	.090	-.182*	.072	-.241*	.088	-.304**	.091
<i>Attitude toward Minorities</i>								
Bilingual Voting Rights	.356**	.068	.651**	.054	.285**	.066	.515**	.068
Linked Fate with Other Minorities	.167**	.060	.096*	.048	.088	.060	.102^	.061
N	968		982		987		978	
Adj. R-sq.	.208		.204		.073		.111	
F	15.10		14.98		5.32		7.79	

Source: The GMCL Survey, June 2006-Jan. 2007.