

About the Researchers

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holds a Bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Notre Dame, and he has quantitative research experience in a variety of topics regarding the Hispanic population in the United States. In 2006 he became a regular contributor to the National Society for Hispanic Professionals' website. In addition, he has professional experience in qualitative evaluation and research at a large educational institution. Knight has previously held positions in database management and data analysis. His interests lie in research methodologies, particularly in human services evaluation and educational research and, more recently, labor market outcomes and other issues related to Hispanic professionals.



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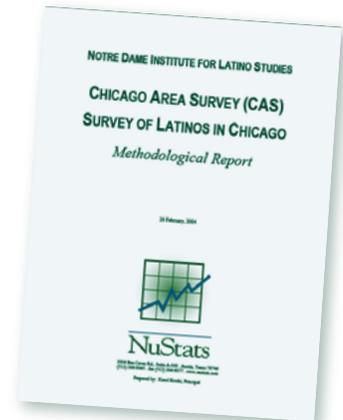
Attitudes toward Immigration: Findings from the Chicago-Area Survey

Introduction

Throughout its history Chicago has been a prime destination for new immigrants to the United States, and the metropolitan area continues to be among the premier destinations for newcomers. Nearly one in five residents of metropolitan Chicago (18 percent) is an immigrant, compared to only 11 percent nationwide. Among working-age adult residents the concentration of immigrants is even greater—nearly one-quarter (24 percent) are foreign born. Just under half (47 percent) of all immigrants in the Chicago area are from Latin America—principally Mexico.¹

Immigrants historically have played a major role in the civic, cultural, and economic life of the city, and this is no less true today than it has been in the past. The Chicago-Area Survey (CAS)² provides an unparalleled opportunity to examine immigrants' patterns of adaptation in metropolitan Chicago, the impact that they are having on the region, and how they are perceived by non-Latino Chicagoans. Based on findings from CAS, this paper examines the attitudes of Latino and non-Latino white and black residents of the area concerning:

- the impact that immigrants are having on the country;
- whether the number of immigrants should be increased, decreased, or remain the same; and
- immigrants of different national origins, including Mexicans who make up 85 percent of the region's Latino immigrants.



¹ Source: Census 2000.

² The 2003 Chicago-Area Survey was a randomized sample of 1,512 Latino, 411 non-Latino white, and 403 non-Latino black households in metropolitan Chicago (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties). The lines of inquiry and questionnaire were designed by a group of scholars working with the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame. Field work was conducted by NuStats Corporation of Austin, Texas. Nearly 21,750 households were eligible for interviewing. A total of 2,326 interviews were completed among Latinos, non-Latino whites, and blacks in the Chicago region. Respondents were 18 years and older; interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish. For more detailed information about the survey visit the website: www.nd.edu/~latino/CAS. Survey data in this report are from the complete datasets of Latino and non-Latino respondents.



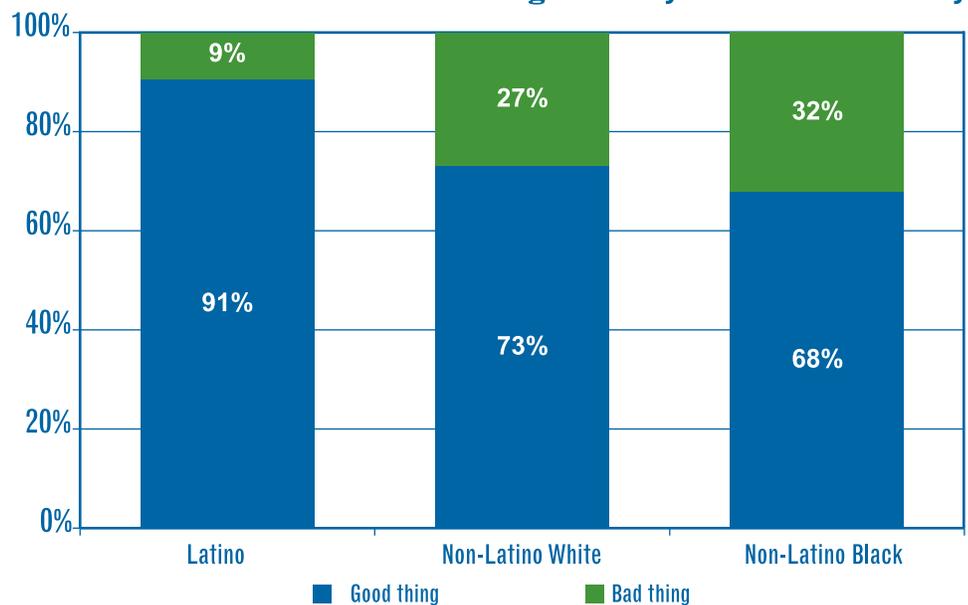
In support of the mission of the Institute for Latino Studies and the Inter-University Program for Latino Research (IUPLR), the Research team provides policy-relevant information and analysis about Latino communities and issues affecting their well-being. The team both contributes to studies originating from the Institute's other programs and centers and from IUPLR member institutions and carries out its own independent projects.

Views on Immigration of Latinos, Blacks, and Whites

CAS respondents were asked, "On the whole, do you think immigration is a good thing or a bad thing for this country today?" At least two-thirds of respondents from each racial and ethnic group expressed a positive attitude toward immigration, although there are important differences among the groups. While fewer than one in ten Latinos believes that immigration is "bad" for the country, more than a quarter of non-Latino whites (27 percent) and nearly one-third of non-Latino blacks (32 percent) consider it a "bad thing" (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Overall Attitudes toward Immigration by Race and Ethnicity



Source: The data in the figures and table are from the 2003 Chicago-Area Survey

That Latino respondents are most likely to hold favorable attitudes toward immigration is probably related to the fact that more than half are immigrants themselves. Fifty-three percent of Latino CAS respondents are foreign born, compared to 10 percent of non-Latino white respondents and 1 percent of non-Latino black respondents.³ In addition, one-quarter of US-born Latino survey respondents have one or more members of their households who were born outside the United States. In all, 78 percent of Latino survey respondents are either immigrants themselves or share their homes with persons who were born outside the United States.

In a follow-up question, survey respondents were asked, "In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?"⁴ Figure 2 shows important differences in the views of respondents of

³ According to Census 2000, 65 percent of adult Latinos in metropolitan Chicago are foreign born, as are 11 percent of non-Latino whites and 3 percent of non-Latino blacks.

⁴ A 2006 Gallup national poll found that 39 percent of respondents believe immigration should be decreased, 42 percent believe that it should be kept the same, and 17 percent believe that it should be increased.



different backgrounds. Latinos are more likely to believe that immigration levels should stay the same or be increased, while non-Latino whites are more likely to think that immigration levels should be decreased. The opinions of non-Latino blacks are intermediate between those of Latinos and non-Latino whites in this regard. In sum, 71 percent of Latinos, 57 percent of non-Latino blacks, and 43 percent of non-Latino whites think immigration should be kept at the present level. On the other hand, 52 percent of non-Latino whites, 31 percent of non-Latino blacks, and 12 percent of Latinos believe that immigration levels should be decreased.

Respondents who expressed the view that immigration levels should be increased or decreased were further asked whether they thought that immigration levels

should be increased or decreased “a little” or “a lot.” Although a majority (52 percent) of whites indicated that immigration levels should be decreased, nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of whites with this view stated that immigration levels should be decreased only “a little”; only 28 percent indicated that immigration levels should be decreased “a lot.” Non-Latino blacks who indicated that immigration levels should be decreased were even less likely to state that immigration should be decreased “a lot.” While only 12 percent of Latinos indicated that immigration levels should be decreased, those who did were almost equally likely to say that it should be decreased “a little” as “a lot.” Respondents from all three racial/ethnic groups who stated that immigration levels should be increased were much more likely to

say that levels should be increased only “a little” than “a lot.”

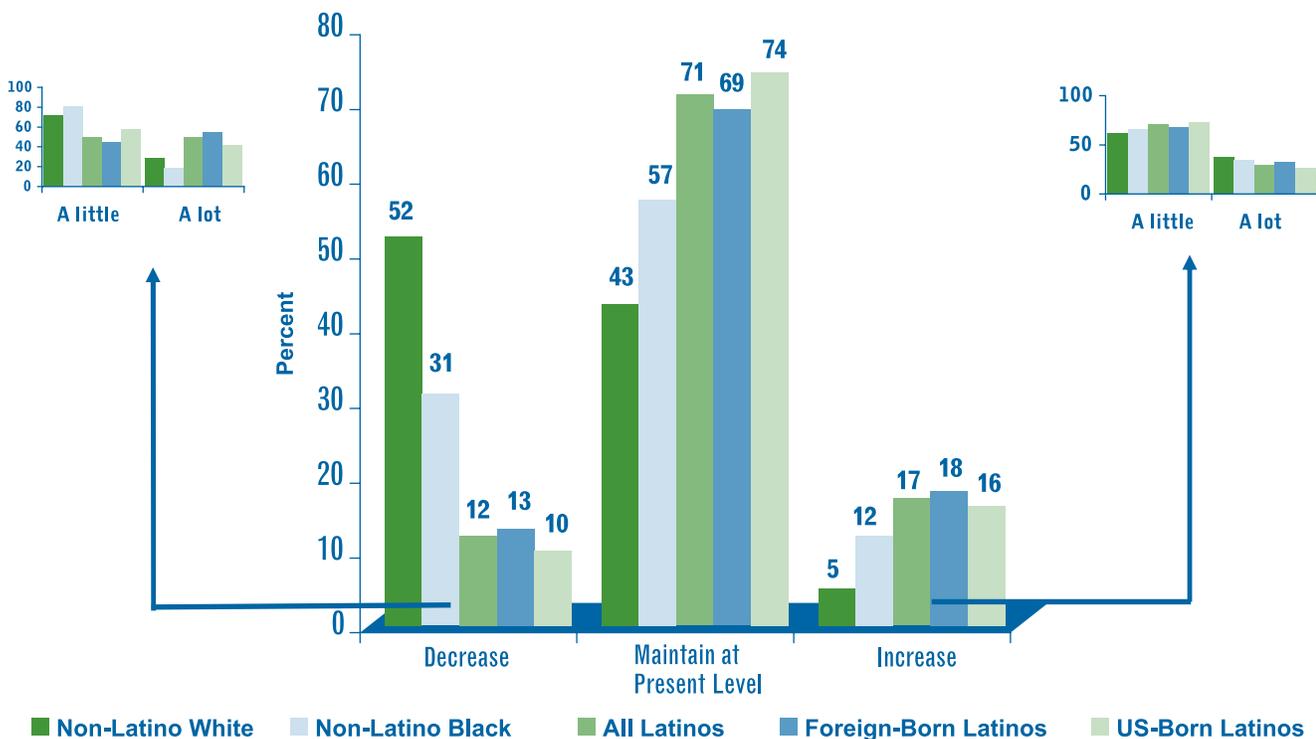
Thus far we have examined views on immigration held by Latino and non-Latino white and black survey respondents. In the following sections, we probe further to examine how gender, educational attainment, and political party preference are related to the attitudes of Latinos and non-Latino whites and blacks toward immigration.

Gender⁵

Latino men and women almost equally, and overwhelmingly, favor either maintaining or increasing current immigration levels

⁵ More than half of CAS non-Latino respondents are female (56 percent of blacks and 52 percent of whites), while Latinas account for only 47 percent of the Latino sample. These percentages are consistent with the percentages of women for each racial/ethnic group that were reported in Census 2000.

Figure 2
Attitudes toward Immigration Levels by Race and Ethnicity



(Figure 3). This is in marked contrast to the attitudes of non-Latino white men and women. More than six in ten white men favor decreasing the number of immigrants, while nearly six in ten white women would like to either maintain or increase current immigration levels. While non-Latino blacks are much more likely than whites to favor maintaining or increasing current immigration levels, black men are slightly more likely than black women to favor decreasing the number of immigrants. It is interesting to note that non-Latino white men are the only group in which a majority (61 percent) would prefer to reduce the number of immigrants.

Educational Attainment

Latinos' level of educational attainment is essentially unrelated to the probability of favoring a decrease in immigration.⁶ Scarcely more than one in ten of all educational levels favor a decrease in immigration. However, Latinos who have not completed high school are approximately twice as likely to favor increasing immigration levels (24 percent) as those with a high school education (12 percent) or more

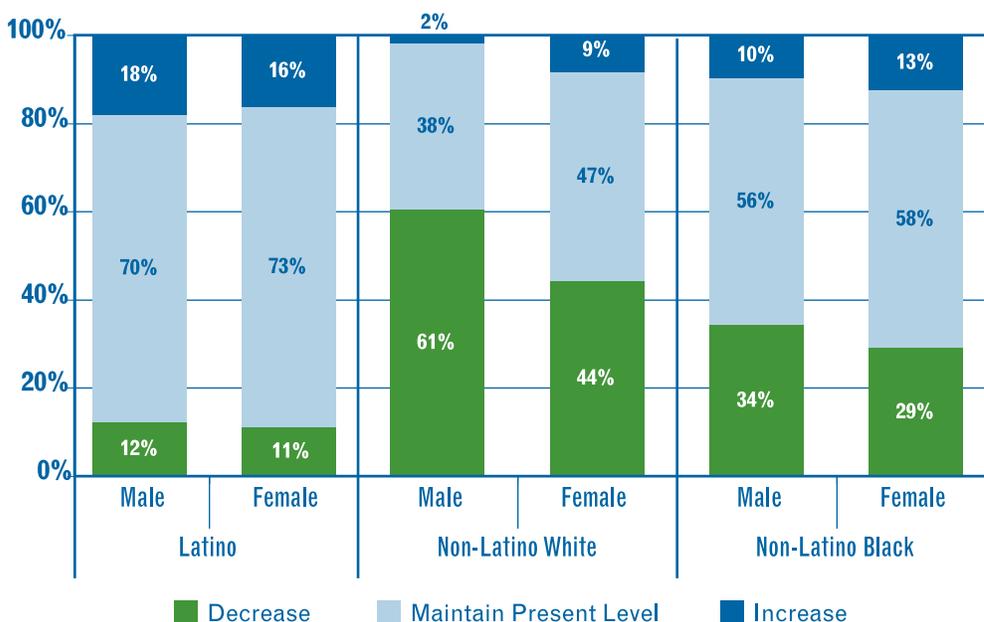
⁶ Two out of five Latino survey respondents (39 percent) have less than high school education, 36 percent completed high school, and only 25 percent have more than high school education. On the other hand, 18 percent of non-Latino blacks have less than high school education, 35 percent completed high school, and 47 percent went beyond high school. Nearly three-quarters of non-Latino white respondents (72 percent) have more than high school education, a further 18 percent are high school graduates, and only 10 percent have less than high school education.

(14 percent) (see Figure 4). Perhaps not coincidentally, more than half (53 percent) of Latino survey respondents who have not completed high school are immigrants themselves, compared to only 27 percent of Latino high school graduates and 20 percent of those with at least some college.

For non-Latino whites, the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes concerning immigration is more complex and puzzling. A majority of white respondents who either did *not* complete high school *or* who have gone on from high school to receive at least some college education favor maintaining or increasing immigration levels. However, nearly seven in ten white respondents with *only* a high school education favor decreasing immigration levels. A majority of non-Latino blacks of all educational levels favor maintaining or increasing immigration levels. However, support for the current or increased immigration levels rises markedly with the educational attainment of respondents among blacks.

Thus, non-Latino black respondents with more education are more likely to favor maintaining or increasing immigration levels than blacks who are less educated. Non-Latino whites with only a high school education are the only group depicted in Figure 4 in which more than half favor a decrease in immigration levels—and they do so overwhelmingly. Nearly 70 percent of white high school graduates favor a decrease in immigration. It may be that non-Latino black and white Chicagoans with less

Figure 3
Attitudes toward Immigration Levels by Gender



Totals that do not equal 100% are due to rounding.



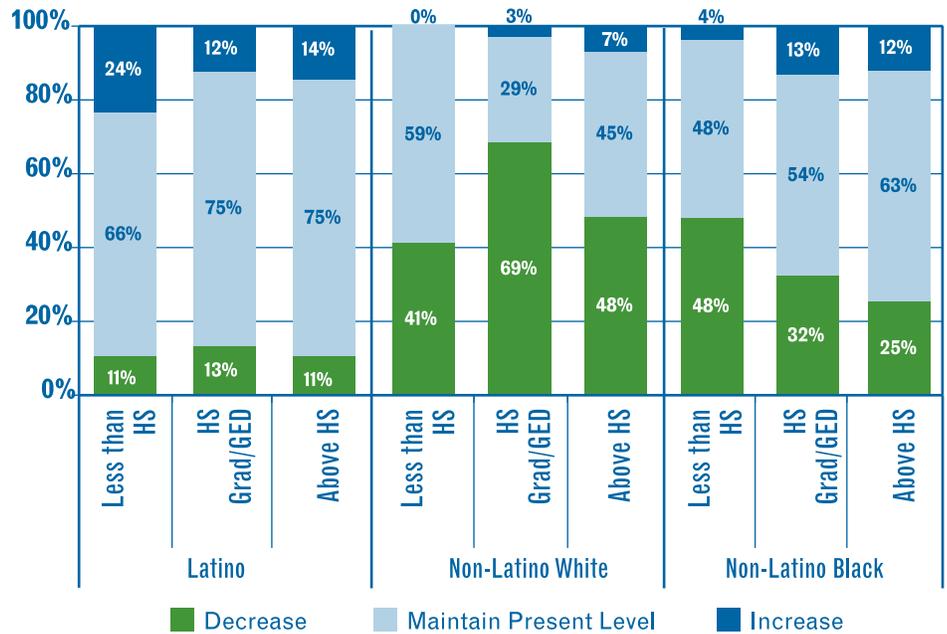
education are more likely to perceive immigrants as competitors in the job market or as otherwise posing a threat to their ability to achieve or maintain a middle-class way of life than those with more education.

Political Party Preference

Republicans and Independents are much more likely than Democrats to favor a decrease in immigration levels, although attitudes toward immigration vary more by the race/ethnicity of the respondent than by political party preference (see Figure 5).⁷ For example, for each racial/ethnic group, Republicans and Independents are more likely to favor reducing immigration levels than Democrats. However, black Democrats are more likely than Latino Republicans to favor a reduction and just as likely as Latino Independents. White Democrats are more likely than

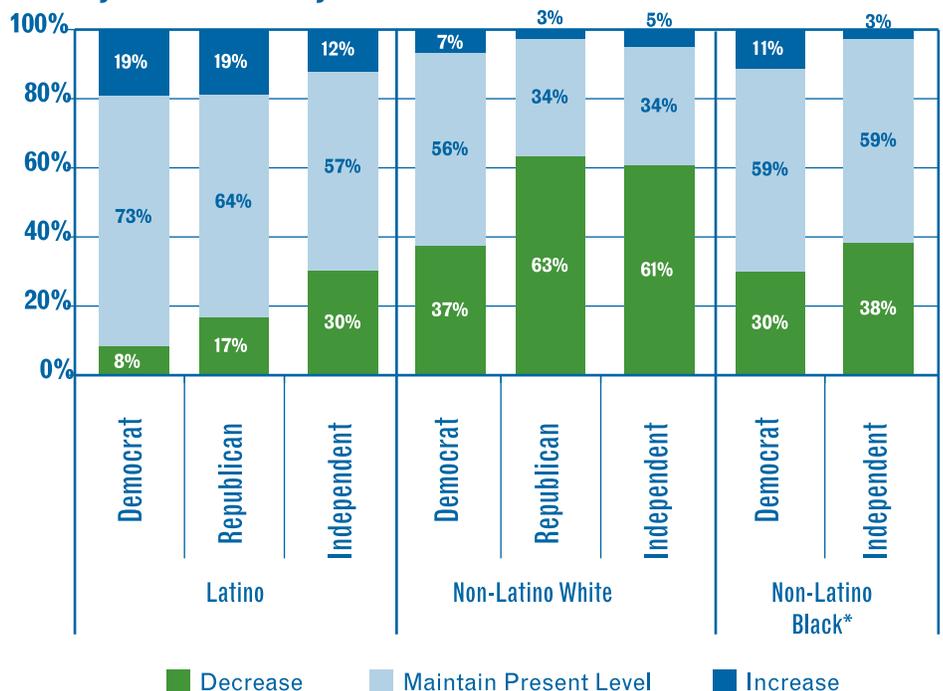
7 Of Latino CAS respondents 49 percent identify with the Democratic Party, 6 percent with the Republican Party, 11 percent are Independents, and 34 percent expressed no preference. Party affiliation for non-Latino whites is 38 percent Democrats, 35 percent Republicans, and 27 percent Independents. Of non-Latino black respondents 85 percent consider themselves Democrats, 3 percent Republicans, and 12 percent Independents. (The percentages of blacks and whites who expressed no preference were negligible.) For further information from CAS on political party affiliation of Chicago-area Latinos see Timothy Ready, Roger Knight, and Sung-Chan Chun, "Latino Civic and Community Involvement," Latino Research @ ND, Volume 3, Number 4, December 2006, and John A. Garcia and Rodney Hero, "Preliminary Explorations of Latinos and Politics," Latino Research @ ND, Volume 4, Number 1, March 2007, both from the Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame.

Figure 4
Attitudes toward Immigration Levels by Educational Attainment



Totals that do not equal 100% are due to rounding.

Figure 5
Attitudes toward Immigration Levels by Political Party Affiliation



* Because of the small number of non-Latino black Republican survey respondents (10), data are not presented for this group.

Latinos of any political party to favor a reduction. White Democrats also are more likely than black Democrats to favor a reduction and nearly as likely as black Independents.

More than six in ten non-Latino white Republicans and Independents favor reducing immigration levels compared to only 17 percent of Latino Republicans, 30 percent of Latino Independents,

and 38 percent of black Independents. More than 9 in 10 Latino Democrats favor maintaining or increasing immigration levels, compared to 63 percent of white Democrats and 70 percent of black Democrats.

Perceptions of How Immigrants of Different Nationalities Affect the Country

CAS respondents were asked whether they thought that immigrants from various parts of the world “generally benefited the country or generally created problems for the country.” Table 1 shows the distribution of opinion regarding immigrants from various European, Latin American, and Asian countries.

It is perhaps not surprising that Latinos hold the most positive views toward immigrants, given that over half of Latino respondents are immigrants themselves. In addition, one-fourth of US-born Latino survey respondents have one or more immigrants living in their homes. In general, Latino and non-Latino white and black survey respondents are far more likely to believe that immigrants of every national origin that they were asked about in the survey benefit the United States than cause problems for the country (Table 1).

No more than 5 percent of Latino respondents expressed the view that immigrants from any of the nations listed in Table 1 cause problems for the country. Latino respondents were most likely to believe that immigrants from Mexico (92 percent) and China (85 percent) benefit the country. Interestingly, Latinos were somewhat more likely

to favorably assess the contributions of Chinese, Korean, Irish, and Polish immigrants than Cuban immigrants. It should be noted however, that there are many more immigrants in metropolitan Chicago from all of these countries than from Cuba. (Persons of Cuban origin make up only 1 percent of the area’s Latino population.)

Over half of non-Latino white respondents positively evaluated the contributions of immigrants of every nationality but one.⁸ Non-Latino whites were most likely to indicate that immigrants from China and Ireland (89 percent) and Poland (86 percent) benefit the country. Nearly two-thirds of non-Latino white respondents (64 percent) said that Mexican immigrants benefit the country, although more than one-quarter (27 percent) think that they create problems—the highest negative assessment of any immigrant group. Overall, non-Latino

whites were more likely to hold negative views of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean than from Asia or Europe—with 23 percent and 21 percent stating that Haitian and Cuban immigrants create problems for the country. Fewer than 10 percent negatively evaluated the impact on the country of immigrants from Vietnam, Korea, China, Poland, and Ireland.

Non-Latino blacks were the most circumspect in their views toward immigrants of various nationalities, with between one-quarter and about one-third of black respondents not expressing either a positive or negative assessment of immigrants of most nationalities. As a result, the percentage of black respondents expressing positive views of nearly all immigrant groups was lower than for white and Latino respondents. Like Latino and non-Latino white respondents, blacks were most likely to hold positive views toward Chinese immigrants. Cuban and Mexican immigrants were more likely than other groups to be negatively perceived, but for these as well as all other nationalities blacks who replied “don’t know” far outnumbered those stating that each of the various nationalities “created problems” for the country.

⁸ Only 40 percent of non-Latino white respondents said that Haitian immigrants benefited the country. However, nearly as many non-Latino white respondents responded that they “don’t know” (36 percent). Fewer than 5,000 Haitian immigrants reside in metropolitan Chicago—less than 0.01 percent of the area’s population. In general we prefer to exclude the response category “don’t know” from our analyses; however, we find it relevant here because of the high percentage of respondents who replied “don’t know” with regard to several of the nationalities listed in Table 1.



Table 1
Opinions about Selected Immigrant Groups by Race

Group	Latino			Non-Latino White			Non-Latino Black		
	Benefited Country	Created Problems for Country	Don't Know	Benefited Country	Created Problems for Country	Don't Know	Benefited Country	Created Problems for Country	Don't Know
Chinese	85%	1%	14%	89%	3%	8%	77%	9%	14%
Cuban	74	5	21	52	21	27	47	19	34
Haitian	64	3	33	40	23	36	42	9	48
Irish	75	2	23	89	2	9	67	6	27
Korean	78	2	20	79	5	16	59	10	31
Mexican	92	5	4	64	27	9	56	14	30
Polish	78	4	18	86	6	7	66	7	26
Vietnamese	65	3	32	73	8	18	66	8	26

Source: 2003 Chicago Area Survey

Summary and Discussion: Overall Attitudes toward Immigration

In this paper we have examined the attitudes of Latino and non-Latino white and black Chicagoans about immigration, in general, and the perceived impact on the country of immigrants from Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, and various countries in Asia and Europe. Overall, the attitudes of survey respondents of all backgrounds toward immigration and immigrants of various nationalities were remarkably positive, especially considering the salience of immigration as a political issue in recent years. Latino respondents reported the most positive views about immigration and immigrants from various parts of the world. However, non-Latino white and black survey respondents also expressed very positive views about the impact of immigration on the country and the contributions of various immigrant groups, although a majority of non-Latino whites said that immigration levels should

be moderately reduced. The only subgroups of survey respondents in which a majority favored reducing immigration levels were non-Latino white men (but not women), whites with only a high school education, and white Republicans and Independents.

Non-Latino survey respondents were most likely to view immigrants from Asia and Europe favorably, but more than half favorably viewed Mexican immigrants, who are by far the largest immigrant group in Chicago and the United States.

A recent poll of attitudes toward immigration of residents of each of the 50 states shows that attitudes of Illinois residents are fairly typical of those expressed throughout the nation.⁹ Nevertheless, the State of Illinois has

⁹ See "Rasmussen Reports: Immigration Views," May 10, 2006. Available on-line at: www.rasmussenreports.com/2006/May%20Dailies/Immigration%20State-by-State.htm.

implemented more policies to facilitate immigrant incorporation than most other states. For example, lawmakers have recently enacted legislation to protect day laborers against employers who cheat them of pay and leave them unprotected at work. Other legislation helps ensure that immigrant children are provided health care coverage, allows undocumented immigrants to attend public universities in Illinois while paying in-state tuition, and makes it easier for eligible permanent residents to become naturalized US citizens.¹⁰

In a companion paper in this series, we will more specifically examine the adaptation of Mexican and other Latino immigrants to life in Chicago and how black and white Chicagoans perceive them.

¹⁰ See "America's Immigration Quandary," The Pew Research Center, March 30, 2006. Available online at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/274.pdf>.

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A series of policy and research briefs from the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame

About the Researchers *continued from cover*

Timothy Ready is senior researcher at the Institute for Latino Studies. Before coming to Notre Dame, he was senior program officer in the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education at the National Research Council of The National Academies. During the 1990s he directed the campaign of the Association of American Medical Colleges to increase racial and ethnic diversity in US medical schools and created a national network of community partnerships to increase the number of students both interested in and academically prepared to pursue careers in the health professions. He was a faculty member in the Department of Anthropology at the Catholic University of America and has researched and written on Latino health and education issues in South Texas, Washington DC, and Chicago.



Gia Elise Barboza is a senior research analyst at the Institute for Latino Studies. A native of Los Angeles, California, she received her PhD in American politics and political methodology from Michigan State University. She also has a JD and a master's degree in family studies from MSU. In addition to holding several teaching positions at MSU, she was adjunct faculty at the Law College where she taught Analytical Method for Lawyers: Statistics. Her interests include immigrant political incorporation, political behavior, racial politics, and quantitative methods for public policy and analysis. She has written extensively on issues such as Latino national identity, political socialization in the family, and the relationship between ties to one's country of origin and political assimilation in the United States.



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