

**Easing the Heavy Hand:
Humanitarian Concern, Empathy, and Opinion on Immigration**

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ABSTRACT

The bulk of the opinion research on immigration identifies the factors leading to opposition to immigration among the American public. In contrast, in this article we identify a key factor and condition under which citizens embrace more permissive and supportive positions on immigration. Past research indicates that humanitarianism is a core value orientation promoting support—albeit limited—for social welfare policy. Extending this research into another highly salient policy domain—immigration—we find that humanitarian concern serves as a significant source of support for permissive positions on government immigration policy. Relying upon secondary analysis of national survey data and an original survey experiment, we demonstrate that humanitarian concern significantly decreases support for restrictive immigration policy. Results from our survey experiment demonstrate that in an information environment evoking both threat and countervailing humanitarian concern regarding immigration, the latter can and does override the former. Last, our results point to the importance of individual differences in empathy in moderating the effects of both threat and humanitarian inducements.

Keywords: *Immigration, Public Opinion, Humanitarianism, Empathy*

Within the public opinion research on immigration, there is a distinct asymmetry with respect to the way scholarship has approached understanding the factors that shape mass attitudes—the research questions pursued are overwhelmingly framed in the negative: Why citizens *dislike*, are *threatened by*, and ultimately *oppose* immigration. The literature is replete with work addressing prejudice toward immigrant minorities (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Fetzer 2000; Hood and Morris 1997; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman 1999; Quillian 1995), the personality traits from which this prejudice stems (Guimond, De Oliveira, Kamiesjki, and Sidanius 2010; Hetherington and Wieler 2009; Thomsen, Green, and Sidanius 2008), the existence and impact of different types of threats posed by immigrants (Citrin, Green, Muste, and Wong 1997; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Fetzer 2000; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; McLaren and Johnson 2007; Newman, Hartman, and Taber 2012; Paxton and Mughan 2006; Sniderman et al. 2004; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, and Martin 2005), public beliefs about the negative impacts of immigration (Citrin, Reingold, and Green 1990; Hood and Morris 2000), studies focusing on public support for specific restrictive or ethno-nativist immigration policies (Campbell, Wong, and Citrin 2006; Citrin, Reingold, Walters, and Green 1990; Frandreis and Tatalovich 1997; Hood and Morris 2000; Huddy and Sears 1995; Tolbert and Grummel 2003), and the importance of the media in shaping opposition to immigration (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Branton, Cassese, Jones, and Westerland 2011; Chavez 2008; Dunaway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010; Hopkins 2010).

Within all of this work there is little to no research asking the question: What actually causes someone to be *supportive* of immigrants? Few published studies explicitly seek to explain pro-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. (cf., Haubert and Fussell 2006), and the only individual-level factor consistently identified throughout the opinion literature to weaken

opposition to immigration is education (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Haubert and Fussell 2006; Fetzer 2000). If anything, the question is left to be answered primarily by implication through inverting known findings; in others words, if opposition is predicted by prejudice, threat, and authoritarianism, for example, then support for immigration should exist among non-prejudiced, unthreatened, and non-authoritarian individuals. Even intergroup contact with immigrant minorities, which has been shown to reduce antipathy toward immigrant minorities (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Hood and Morris 1997; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000; Van Laar, Levin, Sinclair, and Sidanius 2005), is primarily theorized as an experiential factor connected to the varying situations of individuals (e.g., the density of immigrants in their residential context, the degree of workplace contact, etc.) rather than as an inherent characteristic of individuals (e.g., values or personality traits) that generates support for immigrants. In short, scholars have spent considerably more time informing us about the negative aspects of individual citizens that foster hostility toward immigrants and much less time theorizing and empirically exploring the range of positive characteristics, values, or capacities that promote support for immigration.

More importantly, the asymmetry in the opinion research is out of synch with the actual political battlefield over immigration, where historically and at present, there exist a myriad of pro-immigrant groups. In attempting to identify the sources of support for immigration, one need only look to the principles and messages of these groups. In sifting through the mission statements of many pro-immigrant organizations, there tends to be two common and preponderant themes that arise: Human rights and humanitarian concern. For instance, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a religiously-based social justice, peace, and humanitarian service organization founded in 1917, has long provided aid and relief to refugees and asylum seekers from countries around the world. When it comes to contemporary U.S.

immigration policy, the AFSC advocates “humanely reforming immigration policy,” a position founded by their religiously-based belief in the “worth of every human-being,” as well as their organizational commitment to working toward the “fair and humane treatment of all people, including immigrants.”¹ The AFSC vehemently opposes the detention and deportation of undocumented workers, has spoken out against controversial anti-immigrant state laws such as Arizona’s SB 1070, and vigorously advocates for the provision of pathways to citizenship for undocumented workers and the demilitarization of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The values of the AFSC are echoed by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Interest Coalition (MIRA), the largest immigrant rights organization in New England, which advocates for humanitarian relief of refugees and the reform of state and federal immigration laws toward more permissive policies aimed at upholding human rights. MIRA, for example, advocates for decreasing the severity and intensity of immigration and customs enforcement, as well as increasing immigrants’ eligibility and access to government services. Thus, in the battlefield over immigration policy, where anti-immigrant organizations argue for more restrictive policies often based upon notions of patriotism, nativism, or xenophobia, there are many pro-immigrant groups acting on behalf of concern for the welfare of others and the protection of their basic human rights. A compelling example of this exists at the U.S.-Mexico border, where there are the Minute Men and the Border Angels. The former group consists of armed volunteers who patrol border areas looking to seize undocumented migrants and protect our nation’s borders; the latter is a non-profit organization whose mission statement is to “support humanity” by enlisting volunteers along the border to establish and maintain storage bins of food, water, clothing, and other vital provisions for undocumented migrants entering the U.S. through particularly

¹ <http://afsc.org/>

dangerous desert and mountain areas. Thus, while immigration-related threat is a core impetus for anti-immigrant organizing and action, humanitarianism appears to be a common and powerful motivating force among those taking action on behalf of immigrants.

In this article, we seek to assess the impact of humanitarianism, as a core pro-social orientation, on public preferences over government immigration policy. First and foremost, we demonstrate, using national survey data, that individual-level variation in concern over the welfare of others and a sense of duty to help those less well-off than oneself significantly reduces general opposition to immigration. Next, with original survey data we test the boundaries of these effects and find that humanitarian concern appears to apply primarily to legal immigrants by increasing permissiveness toward the amount of legal immigration and the provision of public services to legal immigrants. We find one caveat with this boundary effect—humanitarian concern extends to the children of illegal immigrants in the form of supporting their access to public education. However, when it comes to policies aimed at policing illegal immigrants, restricting their employment eligibility, and generally determining their fate once discovered by authorities, the effect of humanitarianism breaks down and provides no permissive benefit.

Given the importance of media information in generating public concern over immigration, specifically in regards to the threats of immigration (Chavez 2008; Chomsky 2007), we seek to assess, beyond extant individual differences in humanitarian concern, whether media messages activating humanitarian concerns can generate permissiveness on immigration policies. More specifically, we aim to determine whether the effects of media information designed to generate humanitarian concern can counteract or even override the effect of more common threat-based messages and information. Utilizing a survey experiment, we demonstrate that exposure to information detailing the tribulations of an immigrant group in their home country

enhances support for opening the border and allowing legal immigrants to enter the country. Most importantly, we find that the effect of our humanitarian concern treatment holds even in the presence of threatening information.

Last, we seek to assess the effect of humanitarian concern with respect to the characteristics of citizens, and thus to determine whether individual variation in empathy for others conditions the responsiveness of citizens to information intended to activate humanitarian concern for immigrants. Relying upon our survey experiment, we find that receiving information about the struggles immigrants face in their home country leads to policy permissiveness only among those citizens highest in empathy—that is, those individuals who have a greater capacity to put themselves in the position of others, as well as understanding and predicting their thoughts and feelings. Interestingly, we also find that the effect of our manipulation inducing threat is only operative among the least empathetic citizens, suggesting that the ability to cast an outgroup as threatening and procure support for political action against them is seemingly conditional upon the relative absence of a general capacity to empathize with others.

HUMANITARIANISM AND IMMIGRATION

The immigration-threat framework that dominates the literature has undeniably enriched our understanding of the beliefs, personality traits, and contextual factors that enhance opposition to immigration. Despite this contribution, the threat framework appears insufficient as a comprehensive account of opinion on immigration given levels of support for immigration that exists among the mass public. The most basic policy in which citizens' preferences are routinely solicited pertains to the amount of legal immigration allowed by the government. A national poll conducted by Gallup in the summer of 2012 revealed that 21 percent of the public favors increasing the amount of legal immigration, 42 percent preferred keeping levels at their current

amount, and only 35 percent wanted to decrease legal immigration². Thus, despite some citizens' opposition to immigration, a large majority of Americans do not appear to be overtly anti-immigrant, and a sizable number of people even go out of their way to increase the number of immigrants living in the U.S.

The amount of the public holding permissive preferences noticeably increases on specific policy issues, such as deciding the fate of illegal immigrants currently residing in the country. For example, when it comes to the basic policy question of whether to deport discovered illegal immigrants or provide a pathway to citizenship, a CBS/NY Times poll conducted in the summer of 2012 revealed that roughly 43 percent of Americans favor allowing illegal immigrants to stay in the country and apply for citizenship rather than being immediately deported back to their home countries. Further, when it comes to deciding the fate of the illegal residents that are minors, support for immigrants increases: A Fox News Poll conducted in the summer of 2012 revealed that roughly 54 percent of Americans favor protecting the children of illegal immigrants from deportation³. In short, the threat perspective does not fully account for the nature of immigration policy preferences among the American mass public, as sizeable portions of the public hold permissive positions on even the most basic of policies, and this portion significantly increases on particular issues. To compliment the threat perspective, which provides a satisfactory account for those most opposed to immigration, we offer a values-based approach that emphasizes the role of humanitarian concern in generating support for immigration.

Humanitarianism has been defined as a “pro-social orientation” that consists of a sense of concern for the welfare of one’s fellow human beings that translates into the belief of personal responsibility to help those who are in need (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001; Staub 1989). The

² This poll can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1660/immigration.aspx>

³ Figures from these two polls can were accessed from: <http://www.pollingreport.com/immigration.htm>

relevance of humanitarianism to public preferences over government policy has been firmly established within the domain of social welfare policy in the U.S., as existing research demonstrates that individual variation in humanitarian concern strongly predicts support for government policies aimed at providing support to disadvantaged citizens in need of relief (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001). Building upon this work, we argue that humanitarianism should constitute an important foundation for shaping public opinion toward immigration policy. The principle basis for this extension, and thus the main source of the amenability of public preferences within the immigration policy domain to humanitarian concern, is that disadvantage and need tend to (1) underlie migration processes and (2) characterize immigrants as a general social category.

Historically and contemporaneously, a predominant motive among those immigrating or seeking entry into the U.S. (and other Western industrial democracies) is the evasion of some set of undesirable conditions in their country of origin. These conditions, conceptualized as “push factors” driving immigrants away from their home country (Cornelius and Rosenbaum 2005), may range from relatively poor access to education and gainful employment, which restrict opportunities for economic mobility, to more extreme degradations, such as acute poverty, pervasive violent crime, and severe political repression. At present, the majority of immigrants into the U.S. are from Latin American and Asian countries, many of which are undeveloped relative to the U.S., where several of these negative push factors are operative in motivating the exodus of citizens. Therefore, at the outset, foreign born individuals seeking entry into the U.S. tend to qualify as targets for the application of humanitarian concern given the moderate to acute state of need existing in their home countries, and thus their general disadvantage relative to the average American.

With this in mind, an initial immigration policy issue for which we believe humanitarian concern should come into play in shaping mass preferences, relates to the amount of legal immigration allowed in the country by the government. Indeed, the determination of the amount of legal immigration (i.e., whether immigration should be decreased, increased, or kept the same) is not only one of the most general policies for which citizens can clearly assume a permissive to restrictive position upon, but it is also the most analyzed policy dependent variable in the opinion research on immigration (e.g., Burns and Gimpel 2000; Brader et al. 2008; Citrin et al. 1997; Hood and Morris 1997). Prior research informs us of the factors stimulating support for restricting our borders; here, we argue that rejecting the restriction of our borders in favor of sustaining or increasing current levels of immigration may serve as an outlet for the expression of humanitarian motives and concerns. Expressing support for a policy of permitting relatively disadvantaged individuals residing in less well-off countries to enter the U.S. and potentially prosper constitutes a general position regarding immigration that embodies concern for the welfare of other human beings that are less well-off than oneself and the resulting motive to help those in need. Accordingly, we hypothesize that *individuals higher in humanitarianism should be more permissive with respect to the amount of legal immigrants entering the country and thus less likely to support a policy of restricting our borders (H1)*.

In extending the work on humanitarianism and social welfare into the immigration policy domain, however, it is important that we heed lessons learned about the potential limitations to the effect of humanitarianism in shaping policy preferences. An important insight by Feldman and Steenbergen (2001) is that humanitarianism does not lead to support for social welfare policies across the board; indeed, their work reveals important boundaries for the effect of humanitarianism aimed at aiding those in need and not as a general ideological commitment or

set of prescriptive norms. Thus, just as humanitarianism does not lead to support for a lenient and active social welfare state across the board, we should take pause in assuming that humanitarianism will lead to consistent support for permissive government policy across different immigration issues. One factor identified in the welfare literature that could potentially influence the operation of humanitarianism in terms of immigration is the perceived deservingness of those receiving government support (Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). With welfare recipients, one of the most important factors that shape the perception of deservingness is their existing or potential ability to work; with immigrants, we argue that one factor likely shaping perceived deservingness for government aid or leniency is their legal status.

An axiom emerging from public opinion research on immigration is that American citizens, on average, react more negatively to illegal versus legal immigrants (Hood and Morris 1998). First and foremost, the label “illegal” alludes to law-violating, criminal behavior. The conceptual parallel between an undocumented worker and criminal, which tends to connect the act of unauthorized migration to criminal disrespect for our nation’s laws, is actively seeded and cultivated by anti-immigrant pundits in popular political discourse, and as a result, these images and associations have clearly taken root in the public mind (Chavez 2001; Waldman et al. 2008). For example, when asked to report their biggest concern about *legal* immigration, about 7 percent of Americans report that it “contributes to crime”; however, when asked the same question in reference to *illegal* immigration, the figure shot up to about 19.8 percent⁴. When it comes to undocumented immigrants, their status as “illegal” may outweigh the operation of humanitarian concern by working against their image as deserving of support. We therefore hypothesize that *humanitarianism should enhance permissiveness on policies concerning legal*

⁴ Based upon a national poll on the topic of immigration taken in 2006 by the Pew Hispanic Center. The data from this poll is available online at: <http://www.people-press.org/2006/03/30/2006-immigration-survey/>

immigrants and the children of illegal immigrants but should provide no permissive benefit for policies concerning adult illegal immigrants (H₂).

For example, one major policy issue concerning legal immigration is eligibility for government programs and services. Across the country, there is wide variation in terms of eligibility waiting periods, with some states granting immediate eligibility with others requiring immigrants to wait several years before becoming eligible for taxpayer-funded services (Hero and Preuhs 2007). If **H₂** were correct, then humanitarian concern would bolster support for immediate eligibility. A related area of policy conflict concerns the children of illegal immigrants, and whether they should ever be eligible for government services, with one of the most debated being their ability to attend public schools. Given that the children of illegal immigrants are a vulnerable population, and more importantly, did not enter the country of their own volition—thus preserving their image as vulnerable *and* deserving—our hypothesis predicts that humanitarian concern should increase public support for allowing the children of illegal immigrants to attend public schools.

Turning to policies concerning illegal immigrants, public debate tends to focus on the issue of determining the fate of discovered illegal individuals, as well as issues of policing and enforcement. The former policy issue centers upon debate over embracing a more restrictive and punitive policy of immediately deporting any and all discovered illegals, or a more permissive and benign policy of allowing discovered illegals to stay in the country and/or providing them with some pathway toward citizenship. The latter set of policy issues pertain to the rigor of law enforcement efforts aimed at the discovery of illegals and laws shaping how difficult it is for illegal workers to operate in the U.S.—such as E-Verify laws and required worker ID cards. When it comes to these types of policies concerning illegal immigrants, there should be no

significant differences in preferences between high and low humanitarians, and this, according to our theory, is grounded in the tarnished deservingness of this later group due to their “illegal” status undermining their deservingness of support.

Humanitarian Concern, Threat, and the Information Environment

Thus far, we have issued hypotheses concerning the effect of individual differences in humanitarian orientation and concern on citizens’ immigration policy preferences. Moving beyond this individual-level factor, there are forces operating in citizens’ environments, such as media messages and information, which presumably have the capacity to generate humanitarian concern pertaining to immigration. Media discourse on immigration in the U.S. is replete with messages about the economic, national security, and cultural threats of immigration (Chavez 2008; Chomsky 2007), and extant research demonstrates that such messages are effective in generating support for restrictive immigration policies (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Branton, Cassese, Jones, and Westerland 2011; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, and Martin 2005). However, media messages may also activate humanitarian concern by focusing on the difficult conditions faced by many immigrants in their home countries, such as natural disasters, poverty, crime, drugs, political repression and violence, and the general absence of educational and economic opportunities.

For example, public debate over whether to grant temporary residence to tens of thousands of Haitians displaced by the massive earthquake that struck the country in January of 2010 focused heavily on the material devastation and humanitarian disaster caused by the earthquake (Dinan 2010; Gentile 2010). One question of substantive interest emerging from such crises that currently remains empirically unexplored is whether providing information about the trials and tribulations faced by immigrants in their home countries is effective in bolstering

support for permissive policies, such as the provision of sanctuary to Haitian refugees. In theory, such media messages may influence policy preferences by priming (Iyengar and Kinder 1987) concern for the welfare of others and activating the associated motive to help those in need. By presumably activating or priming humanitarian considerations for immigrants, media messages should enhance immigration policy permissiveness among the mass public, specifically with respect to levels of support for opening our borders to individuals attempting to flee harsh living conditions. Formally stated, we hypothesize that *humanitarian inducements—with one incarnation being exposure to information about negative conditions faced by immigrants in their home country—should enhance permissiveness over government policy concerning the amount of legal immigration (H3A).*

One reality of the political information environment to which citizens are exposed is the presence of countervailing information on any one policy issue. For example, in the welfare policy domain, the widespread diffusion of countervailing values throughout American political culture has resulted in considerable ambivalence among the mass public with respect to the social welfare state (Feldman and Zaller 1992). When it comes to media discourse on immigration, specifically in light of the preceding hypothesis, one question of key theoretical and practical interest is how citizens will react to a media environment with mixed messages. Extant work on media framing suggests a neutralization effect may occur when citizens find themselves in the midst of cross-cutting information regarding specific electoral or policy choices (Brewer 2003; Brewer and Gross 2005; Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2001, 2004; Druckman and Nelson 2003; Sniderman and Theriault 2004; see also Zaller 1992). With respect to media debates about immigration, it is a distinct possibility that encountering information about the hardships faced by immigrants in their home countries, and thus making humanitarian concerns

salient, may neutralize or potentially counteract the effect of threatening information that pervades the information environment. We hypothesize that *information about the negative conditions faced by immigrants in their home countries will counteract, or neutralize, the effect of threatening information (H3B)*.

Empathy and the Effect of Information

One last matter to consider is potential heterogeneity across individuals that could serve to moderate the effects of media messages aimed at generating humanitarian concern for the welfare of immigrants. One individual difference that should be relevant is the degree to which information describing the experiences of others—such as the hardships they face—has an emotional impact on the recipient. Extant research on empathy reveals that individuals differ in their natural capacity to (1) cognitively envision themselves in others' circumstances and (2) experience a vicarious emotional reaction (Baron-Cohen 2011; Dymond 1949; Kinderman, Dunbar, and Bentall 1998; Mehrabian and Epstein 1972; Stotland 1969). In the present case, the effect of a humanitarian inducement—incarnate by information about the trials and tribulations faced by immigrants in their home countries—may be most effective among citizens possessing higher levels of empathy. Citizens higher in empathy should be more likely to generate mental scripts involving themselves in the situations experienced by immigrants, as conveyed by media information, and to feel a negative emotional reaction as a result. Extant research on empathy indicates that one main consequence of possessing a greater capacity to empathize with others is a greater tendency to take action to help those in need (Batson 1998; Batson, Chang, Orr, and Rowland 2002). While the work on empathy has not seen much application to political behavior, one study on the Second Gulf War found that individuals higher in empathy were more supportive of a variety of humanitarian actions intended to enhance the welfare of the Iraqi

people (Pagano and Huo 2007). In view of this work, we hypothesize that *individual differences in empathy should moderate the effect of media information inducing humanitarian concern, such that the effects of such information on policy preferences will be the most operative among citizens highest in empathy (H4)*.

OVERVIEW OF DATA AND METHODS

To test our hypotheses, we rely upon two unique datasets. First, we draw upon national survey data to assess the effect of individual differences in humanitarianism on the preferred amount of legal immigration. This study allows us to test our first hypothesis with a national dataset and to generalize our findings to the American public as a whole. Second, we embedded an experiment in a statewide primary election survey in North Carolina. Our survey-embedded experiment exposed respondents with one of four fabricated news stories about a federal plan to allow a group of Hondurans to immigrate to North Carolina. The primary manipulation concerned whether respondents viewed a story containing information inducing threat or humanitarian concerns, or both simultaneously. This study allowed us to assess the effects of threat and humanitarian inducements on respondents' policy preferences, as well as analyze whether the effects of such media messages is conditioned by individual-level variation in empathy.

STUDY 1: THE 2005 CID SURVEY

To test *H1*, we utilize the 2005 Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy Study (CID) conducted by the Center for Democracy and Civil Society at Georgetown University. This survey is comprised of 1,001 face-to-face interviews of adult Americans throughout the contiguous U.S.. The survey was conducted between May 16 and July 19, 2005 and employed a cluster-sample design, achieving an overall response rate of 40 percent. Of the 1,001 survey

respondents, 725 identified their race as non-Hispanic, White. In keeping with prior opinion research on immigration aimed at assessing the dynamics of opinion among the Anglo majority toward immigrant minorities (Ayers et al. 2009; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Branton, Cassese, Jones, and Westerland 2011; Campbell et al. 2006; Citrin et al. 1990; Hood and Morris 1997, 1998, 2000; Perez 2010; Rocha and Espino 2009; Stein et al. 2000; Tolbert and Grummel 2003), the present analyses are restricted to these White respondents.

To measure humanitarianism, we relied upon a survey item asking respondents to report how important they believed it to be to “support people who are worse off than themselves.” This item strikes at the heart of the theoretical conceptualization of humanitarianism as a pro-social orientation consisting of the belief that one bears a personal responsibility to help others who are in need (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001). This item is comparable to items measuring humanitarianism from the 1995 NES pilot study that have been validated and used in prior research (e.g., see Feldman and Steenbergen 2001). The response options for this item range from (0)-“Extremely Unimportant” to (10)-“Extremely Important.” The mean for this variable, labeled *Humanitarianism*, is 7.2, with a standard deviation of 2.1, indicating considerable importance attributed to humanitarianism in the sample—a descriptive result consistent with leading research on the subject (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001). For ease of interpretation, *Humanitarianism* was recoded to range from 0 to 1.

The sole policy dependent variable for this analysis, labeled *Amount of Immigration*, is a standard item asking respondents to report their preferred level of immigration permitted into the country. Respondents were asked: “Should the number of immigrants from foreign countries permitted to come to the U.S. to live be (1) increased a lot, (2) increased a little, (3) left the same as it is now, (4) decreased a little, or (5) decreased a lot?” Two descriptive findings for this item

in the CID are consistent with past research (e.g., Hood and Morris 1997). First, when it comes to the most general issue of how many immigrants should be allowed to enter the U.S., white Americans lean toward a restrictionist position, as the mean response to the CID question is 3.6 on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Second, despite this restrictionist leaning, the median response among white respondents was to maintain the amount of immigrants admitted to the U.S. at its current levels. Twenty-eight percent of Whites in our sample upheld the most restrictive position of preferring immigration be “decreased a lot,” while only about 13% reported preferring the amount of immigration be either “increased a little” or “increased a lot.”

Our analyses also included a variety of relevant control variables. First, we sought to ensure that the observed effect of our measure of humanitarianism was not capturing other potentially related constructs, such as egalitarianism or political ideology. Thus, we included a measure of both in our analyses. *Egalitarianism* was measured using respondents’ reported level of agreement with the statement: “The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.” Response options ranged from (1)-“Agree Strongly” to (5)-“Disagree Strongly.” For clarity, we reverse coded this item from low to high support for reducing income inequalities. This measure of egalitarianism is roughly comparable in question wording to items from the NES used in prior research (e.g., see Feldman 1988, 1999; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001; Kluegal and Smith 1986). Consistent with past research (Feldman and Steenbergen 2001), this measure is uncorrelated with humanitarianism ($r=.06$). Thus, we can be reasonably sure that these two items are empirically distinct, and that the inclusion of both in our analysis will enable us to observe the effect of concern for the welfare of others on immigration policy attitudes after controlling for general beliefs about how equitably resources should be distributed in society.

Next, we included a control for liberal-conservative ideological self-identification, labeled *Ideology*, by using an item asking respondents to place themselves on an 11 point scale ranging from (0)-“extremely Liberal” to (10)-“extremely Conservative.” The correlation between humanitarianism and ideology is .005, indicating that our measure of concern for the welfare of others is empirically distinct from political ideology. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Feldman and Steenbergen 2001), we do find that egalitarianism is negatively correlated with ideology ($r=-.19$), such that liberals are more likely to support a more equal distribution of income throughout society.

In addition to these two core controls, we also included standard controls for *Education*, *Gender* (1=Male), *Age*, and partisanship, labeled *Party ID* (standard 7-point scale, 7=strong Republican). To control for the potential effects of personal economic concerns on preferences over immigration, we included controls for individual *Income*, *Unemployment* (1=Unemployed), and *Pocketbook Evaluations* (1=experiencing financial distress). Beyond these standard controls, several additional individual-level factors of known importance in shaping general attitudes toward immigrants we included in our analysis. First and foremost, prejudice toward ethnic minorities (Citrin et al. 1997; Huddy and Sears 1995) and the strength of national identity (Sides and Citrin 2007; Sniderman et al. 2004) are demonstrated predictors of opinion on immigration. Therefore, our analysis included an 11-category measure of general negative affect toward Hispanics, *Hispanic Affect*, and a measure of the strength of *National Identity*, with both variables coded to range from low to high levels of each. In addition to prejudice and national identity, research has demonstrated that personality traits, such as authoritarianism, influences attitudes toward immigration (Hetherington and Weiler 2009); given this, we include a control for *Right Wing Authoritarianism*. Last, intergroup contact theory suggests that having friends

who are immigrants may reduce threat perceptions and increase support for permissive policy positions. To control for this possibility, all analyses included a dichotomous measure—labeled *Immigrant Friend & Family*—which captures whether respondents report having any close friends who are recent immigrants (1=has immigrant friends/family). For ease of interpretation, all variables were recoded to range from 0 to 1. For more information about variable measurement and question wording, please see Appendix A.

Results

Given the ordinal nature of the *Amount of Immigration* item, we used an ordered logistic regression model to estimate the effect of humanitarianism on preferences over the amount of immigration. The results are presented in Table 1. As hypothesized, an increase in humanitarianism is associated with a significant decrease in support for restricting the amount of legal immigration into the country ($B = -.660$, $SE = .331$). In other words, citizens who find it very important to support people who are worse off than themselves, compared to those who find it of lesser importance, are significantly more permissive on immigration, as indicated by the decrease in their probability of endorsing a government policy of greatly reducing the amount of immigration. The magnitude of the effect of humanitarianism is provided in the bottom row of Table 1; as listed, moving from minimum to maximum levels of humanitarianism is associated with a .14 decrease in the probability of endorsing the most restrictive policy position with respect to the amount of immigration. Conversely, moving from the minimum to the maximum value of humanitarianism is associated with a .053 increase in the probability of preferring the amount of immigration be “increased a little” or “increased a lot.” Thus, in addition being statistically significant, the effect of humanitarianism is substantively meaningful, especially when it comes reducing opposition to immigration.

Turning to the controls, we find that, consistent with prior opinion research, educated citizens are significantly less opposed to immigration, while older adults, ideological conservatives, those very concerned about their personal finances, and those reporting higher levels of prejudice toward Hispanics and national identification are more likely to favor a reduction in the amount of immigration. We should also note that in estimating a series of moderated regression models, no significant interactions emerged between our measure of humanitarianism and partisanship, ideology, or prejudice toward Hispanics. To be sure, our analyses indicate that possessing high levels of concern for the welfare of others translates into heightened permissiveness toward immigrants and does so for democrats and republicans, liberals and conservatives, and the prejudiced and unprejudiced alike.

The results presented above provide initial support for our humanitarianism hypothesis. More specifically, the findings from Study 1 demonstrate that citizens who are more concerned about the welfare of others are not only much less likely to oppose immigration, but they are also more likely to go out of their way to support immigrants by endorsing a policy of opening the nation's borders, although it should be noted that this effect is more modest in magnitude. In the study that follows, we seek to replicate this finding using original survey data collected from respondents living in North Carolina, a state which has seen large influxes of Hispanics over the past decade. In addition to serving as a replication for Study 1, Study 2 afforded us the opportunity to probe preferences over a wide range of immigration policies. We also embedded an original experiment within the survey which enabled us to test our remaining hypotheses concerning the effects of media messages inducing threat and humanitarian concern on policy preferences.

STUDY 2: THE 2012 NORTH CAROLINA PRIMARY ELECTION SURVEY EXPERIMENT

We fielded our survey experiment roughly two weeks prior to the 2012 North Carolina Primary Election.⁵ Respondents were recruited on the Internet by uSamp, a global provider of online market research panels.⁶ To obscure the true nature of our study, respondents first answered a set of general questions about state politics such as their evaluations of the governor and state legislature, trust in state government, and attitudes toward local political issues. Next, respondents completed a series of items measuring three psychological constructs of interest, namely humanitarianism, empathy, and egalitarianism (details about these measures can be found later in this section). Following these items, subjects were then randomly assigned to one of four experimental treatment conditions that involved reading a (fabricated) press release about a federal program to allow a group of Hondurans to immigrate to North Carolina. After exposure to the primary manipulation, respondents completed a post-treatment questionnaire measuring their attitudes toward various immigration policies, as well as some basic demographics.

To ensure the quality of our data, we embedded a quality control question in the psychological item batteries to filter out bad data. Of the 1,069 respondents that completed our online survey, 86 individuals (8% of the sample) did not answer the quality control question correctly, so they were dropped from further analyses. In terms of demographics, our North Carolina sample is relatively diverse. For example, respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 85 years old (median age = 40 years old), and they reported living in 85 of the 100 counties within the state. Moreover, 34% of respondents identified themselves as Republicans, 37% as Independents, and 29% as Democrats. Ideologically, the sample consisted of 36% conservatives, 42% moderates, and 23% liberals. The median household income range of the sample is \$50,000

⁵ The NC Primary Election was held on May 8th, 2012. Data were collected from April 27th to May 3rd, 2012.

⁶ Recruiting from thousands of partners worldwide, they boast a panel of more than 9 million highly diverse respondents worldwide, with an average of more than 200,000 unique visitors to their consumer websites every day. Panelists are offered their choice of monetary incentives for their participation such as cash, gift cards, virtual currency, or charitable contributions.

to \$75,000, with 39% of respondents indicating that they had earned a 4-year college degree. The only apparent anomaly with our uSamp data is that the sample is skewed heavily toward female respondents (79%), which is likely a function of the websites from which uSamp recruits panelists. Eighty-six percent of the sample identified their race as White, and we will focus on this subsample for the remaining analyses to be consistent with Study 1 and prior research.

Replication and Expansion of Study 1

To replicate and expand our findings from Study 1, we analyzed the effects of individual differences in humanitarianism on immigration policy preferences for the 196 white respondents in the control condition of our survey experiment.⁷ In contrast to Study 1, which was limited to the single item measure of humanitarianism contained in the CID survey, we measured individual differences in humanitarianism using the same 8-item scale from the 1995 NES pilot study and also used by Feldman and Steenbergen (2001). From these items, we generated a scale, labeled *Humanitarianism* ($\alpha=.80$), coded so that high values reflect greater levels of humanitarianism.

The first immigration policy item asked in the NC statewide survey, labeled *Amount of Immigration*, asked respondents the following question: “In your view, should the number of immigrants permitted to come to the U.S. and live in North Carolina be increased, decreased, or kept at its current level?” We reordered this trichotomous item so that the highest category indicates a preference for reduction in the level of immigration. To test *H2*, we asked respondents to report their preferences over a range of additional immigration policy issues. We chose items that span across policies concerning legal and illegal immigrants, as well as the

⁷ We chose to use respondents in the control condition of our survey experiment because these respondents essentially comprise a sub-sample of observational data and were not subjected to messages inducing threat or humanitarian concern. Thus, the use of those in the control condition enables us to perform an analysis of the effects of individual differences in humanitarianism on policy preferences devoid of any influence of exposure to different stimulus materials.

children of illegal immigrants, allowing us to assess any boundary effects of humanitarianism. Beyond the obvious benefit of enabling us to test *H2*, these items were principally selected for their relevance to past and present immigration policy debates.

The first of these items, labeled *Delay Benefits*, has been used in prior research (e.g., see Citrin et al. 1997) and solicits preferences regarding whether legal immigrants should be immediately eligible for statewide government services and programs or should have to wait 1 year or more. We coded this three category ordinal item so that the highest value (3= “wait more than 1 year”) indicates a preference for greatly delaying (i.e., restricting) the access of legal immigrants to government services. The second policy item asks respondents whether they favor or oppose allowing the children of undocumented immigrants to attend public schools. This item, labeled *Attend Public Schools*, has 5 ordered response categories, ranging from (1)-“Strongly Support” to (5)-“Strongly Oppose.” The final three policy items concern law enforcement efforts aimed at detecting illegal immigrants, preventing them from working without documentation, and deporting them once discovered. First, respondents answered whether they think that undocumented immigrants who have lived and worked in North Carolina for at least two years should be “given a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status,” or “be deported back to their native country.” This dichotomous item, labeled *Deport Illegals*, was coded so that “1” indicates a preference for deporting illegals over the provision of a pathway to citizenship. Second, we asked respondents how much they supported or opposed requiring local police officers to check the citizenship status of individuals encountered during routine activities such as traffic stops. The resulting 5-category ordinal item, which we label *Local Police Checks*, is coded to range from (1)-“Strongly Oppose” to (5)-“Strongly Support.” Third, respondents were asked whether they supported or opposed requiring everyone living in North Carolina to

exchange their old driver's licenses for newer, fraud-proof cards that can be used to verify employment eligibility. The resulting 5-category item, which we label *Worker ID Cards*, is coded to range from (1)-"Strongly Oppose" to (5)-"Strongly Support." In sum, our survey contained 6 unique immigration policy items, and each was coded so that higher values indicate a preference for restrictive policy.

Results

To analyze the effect of humanitarianism on preferences across these six items, we estimated logistic and ordered logistic regression models. All models included controls for egalitarianism, education, income, age, gender (1=male), ideology (1=very conservative), and partisanship (1=strong Republican). For ease of interpretation, all independent variables—except age—were recoded to range from 0 to 1. For more information about variable measurement and question wording, please see Appendix B. The results from these analyses are presented in Table 2. The first row of the table lists the effects of humanitarianism on each policy, and the bottom row lists the magnitude of the effect of humanitarianism on each policy in the form of the change in the probability of favoring the most restrictive position on each policy associated with a 1 unit change (i.e., moving from low to high levels) in humanitarianism.

The results in column 1 of Table 1 corroborate the results from the CID survey by revealing that an increase in humanitarianism is associated with a significant decrease in the probability of preferring a reduction in the number of legal immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. In comparison to Study 1, however, the effect size is substantially larger, as moving from minimum to maximum levels of humanitarianism is associated with a .473 decrease in the probability of favoring a reduction in immigration. Thus, across two separate datasets, we find support for our first hypothesis that individuals who have higher levels of humanitarianism will

be less opposed to immigration and more supportive of opening the border. Further, in both studies, particularly Study 2, we find that these effects are substantively meaningful.

The results in columns 2 through 6 of Table 2 provide support for *H2* by revealing that the effect of humanitarianism observed for policies concerning legal immigrants and the children of illegal immigrants, does not hold for policies that might benefit adult illegal immigrants. Specifically, the results reveal that humanitarians are more likely to oppose making legal immigrants wait to receive government services, as well as barring the children of illegal immigrants from attending public schools. Moreover, the results in the bottom row of the table reveal that the magnitudes of these effects are quite large. Thus, when it comes to entry into the U.S. and access to government services, humanitarianism clearly provides a permissive benefit to legal immigrants. Interestingly, the largest effect of humanitarianism pertains to arguably the most vulnerable and deserving immigrant group—children of illegal immigrants. When it comes to providing support to these children by allowing them access to public schools, humanitarianism drastically augments permissiveness. This, however, is where the benefit provided by humanitarianism to immigrants appears to end, as individual differences in humanitarianism exerts no significant effects for policies concerning law enforcement efforts directed at illegal immigrants.

Survey Experiment

Having replicated and expanded upon the results from Study 1, we now turn to our survey-embedded experiment, in which respondents were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions (control, threat, humanitarianism, combined). All subjects were presented with a (fabricated) press release informing them that the “U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office has drafted a plan to begin allowing hundreds of Hondurans to

immigrate to North Carolina” (for the exact wording of all stimulus materials, see the Supplemental Appendix). The four experimental conditions vary by the information that was presented following this information. In the threat condition, subjects read about a non-partisan report indicating that these new immigrants “will require a wide range of tax-payer funded state services,” “may increase competition for jobs,” and “have limited English-language ability.” Our threat manipulation was designed to tap two distinct dimensions of immigration-related threat, namely realistic threats to the material well-being of the group (e.g., see Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993; Passel and Fix, 1994) and symbolic threats to citizens’ values, norms, and cultural identity (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior, 2004). Discussion of these types of threat pervade media discourse on immigration (Chavez 2008; Chomsky 2007), and reliance upon this type of information to experimentally induce threat over immigration has been demonstrated to be effective in prior research (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008). By contrast, subjects assigned to the humanitarianism condition read that the purpose of the immigration plan was to help these Hondurans “escape extremely harsh and unsafe conditions in their home country” such as abject “poverty,” “limited access to employment,” and brutal “government repression.” To be clear, our intention in this condition was to highlight the structural forces “threaten[ing] the lives of many Hondurans simply trying to survive.” In the combined condition, we included both of the threat and humanitarianism scripts, which serve to simulate a mixed message media environment. Finally, the control condition contained a relatively antiseptic description of Honduras’ climate, terrain, and natural resources.

Following exposure to these scripts, all respondents proceeded to complete the post-treatment questionnaire. In addition to filtering out respondents with a quality control item, we also filtered the data from the survey experiment based upon respondents’ recorded readings

times in each condition. Using estimates based upon average reading rates, and what we believe to be reasonable reading times for each condition, we opted to filter 220 respondents or (21% of the sample) from the data.⁸ This filtering procedure ensures that we removed respondents from the data who most likely did not read the assigned news passage, and thus did not receive the respective experimental treatment. The remaining sample used to evaluate the effects of our experimental treatments contained 726 respondents, of which we restrict our analyses to the 618 non-Hispanic Whites.

To assess the effects of our experimental treatments on respondents' immigration policy preferences, we created three dichotomous treatment dummy variables to correspond to being in either the threat, humanitarian, or combined condition, with the control condition serving as the baseline category of comparison. To test our hypotheses concerning the effects of media information on citizens' immigration policy attitudes, we focus on respondents' preferences for the *Amount of Immigration*, whose question wording and coding is described in the prior section. To test *H4* pertaining to the potential role of individual differences in empathy in moderating the effect of our humanitarian treatment on policy preferences, we relied upon 5 items taken from the short-form of the empathy quotient (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004; Wakabayashi et al. 2006). From these five items, we generated an *Empathy* scale ($\alpha=.715$, $N=618$), recoded from 0 to 1 and ranging from low to high levels of empathy.

Results

⁸ Research on adult reading rates suggests that the average person can read approximately 200 to 250 words per minute (Taylor, 1965). Using these speeds as a baseline, we estimated that "slow" readers would be able to read at least 100 words per minute (or half of the 200-word average), while "fast" readers would be able to read no more than 500 words per minute (or double the 250-word average). We acknowledge that these figures are somewhat arbitrary cutoffs; yet, we felt that the benefits of removing non-attendant subjects outweighed the exclusion of a few exceptionally fast or slow readers from our analyses. Thus, based upon the word length of each experimental condition, our cutoffs were as follows: 1) Threat (136 words): 16 to 82 seconds; 2) Humanitarianism (151 words): 18 to 91 seconds; 3) Combined: 28 to 151 seconds; and 4) Control: 10 to 54 seconds. One way to check whether these estimates are accurate is to compare the expected with the observed (median) reading rates for each condition (using 250 words per minute as the baseline): 1) Threat: 33 vs. 35 seconds; 2) Humanitarianism: 36 vs. 35 seconds; 3) Combined: 56 vs. 54 seconds; and 4) Control: 22 vs. 29 seconds. By all accounts, our estimates seem very close to the actual median reading rates in the data.

Table 3 displays the results from an ordered logistic regression of subjects' preferences for the amount of immigration by experimental treatment Condition. For additional illustration, the results from this analysis are also presented graphically in Figure 1. The results reveal that survey respondents who were exposed to threatening media messages about the material and cultural consequences of allowing Hondurans to immigrate to North Carolina were significantly more likely to prefer a reduction in the amount of immigration ($B=.345$, $SE=.229$, $p<.10$) than those in the control condition. This finding is entirely in keeping with prior research in the opinion literature on immigration, where induced economic and cultural threats were found to generate opposition to immigration (Brader et al. 2008; Sniderman et al. 2004; Stephan et al. 2005). The second row of Table 3 presents the effect of our humanitarian inducement on policy preferences. Consistent with **H3A**, the results reveal that subjects receiving the humanitarian treatment, compared to those in the control, were significantly less likely to support a restrictive policy of reducing the amount of immigration ($B= -.481$, $SE=.224$, $p<.05$). And last, the results reveal that subjects receiving both treatments were also significantly less likely ($B= -.385$, $SE=.221$, $p<.05$) than those in the control to prefer restricting the amount of immigration. This last finding is particularly interesting given that prior research suggested a neutralization effect when exposed to countervailing information—that is, threatening information and humanitarian concern. Rather than being statistically indistinguishable from those in the control condition, receiving information about the hardships faced by immigrants actually increased permissiveness *even in the presence of threatening media information about immigrants*. This finding is indeed noteworthy and surpasses our prediction (i.e., **H3B**) in that, rather than merely neutralizing threat, our humanitarian inducement completely overrode it.

The bottom of Table 3 lists the effect sizes of the different treatments, which are estimated as the change in the probability of preferring immigration be “decreased” associated with moving from the control condition to each of the three respective treatment conditions. As can be seen, the effect of our humanitarian treatment, directionality aside, was .04 larger than that observed for our threat treatment. Given this, it makes sense that receiving both treatments (i.e., the combined condition) would still lead to a reduction in restrictiveness, but a reduction smaller than that obtained when humanitarian concern is induced in the absence of countervailing threatening information. One question that looms is whether these observed effect sizes, and thus our finding for those in the combined treatment condition, are merely due to our humanitarian inducement being stronger as a manipulation than our threat manipulation.

We do not believe that our results are merely a function of differential strength of our two manipulations in delivering their respective treatments. To be sure, we view our threat treatment as a strong manipulation, as it was based upon and is entirely comparable to proven stimulus material used in leading research (e.g., Brader et al. 2008; Stephan et al. 2005). Second, no obvious disparities stand out between our two treatments in terms of script length, as the two scripts are roughly equal in this regard. Rather, we view our two treatments as roughly equal in strength and believe that inducing humanitarian concern, for several reasons, may simply be a more powerful force in shaping policy preferences in the current political environment. One such reason may be the presence of a “ceiling effect” (Lipsey 1990) for threat induction. Given the pervasiveness of threat-messages in media discourse and the resulting saturation of the public mind with threat over immigration, experimental inductions of threat may, in contrast to those inducing humanitarian concern, be activating or increasing the salience of a set of concerns very likely to already be present and operative in shaping reported policy preferences. In contrast,

humanitarian oriented information is less ubiquitous and more sporadic relative to threat; thus, our manipulation of humanitarian concerns maybe more likely, relative to our threat manipulation, to be activating concerns not already present to some degree by default. We view this as the likely explanation for the observed differences in the magnitude of the effect of our treatments on policy attitudes.

So far, the results from our survey experiment reveal that media messages inducing humanitarian concern for immigrants by, conveying information about the hardships they face in their home countries, can increase permissiveness for policies concerning the amount of immigration, and that this effect, though slightly weakened, holds in the presence of information intended to activate economic and cultural threat from immigration. Now, we consider the question of whether these types of messages about immigration resonate with citizens' differently depending on their ability to empathize with others—such as the immigrants for whom they are receiving information about. To assess whether individual differences in empathy moderates the effect of our experimental treatments, we interacted our treatment dummies with empathy and regressed preferences for the amount of immigration on the treatment dummies, empathy, and constituent terms. The results from this regression analysis are presented in Table 4.

The results in Table 4 offer several interesting findings. Consistent with *H4*, the results reveal that the reduction in support for decreasing the amount of immigration associated with receiving the humanitarian treatment only occurred among respondents high in empathy. When empathy is at its minimum value, subjects receiving the humanitarian treatment were not significantly different from those in the control condition in terms of their probability of preferring restricting the amount of immigration. However, the coefficient on the interaction

term ($B = -2.03$, $SE = 1.55$, $p < .10$) indicates that the effect of receiving the humanitarian treatment significantly changes when moving from minimum to maximum levels of empathy, such that receipt of the humanitarian treatment among those highest in empathy significantly decreases support for restrictive policy. In essence, this interaction confirms the theoretical intuition that providing information about the tribulations of immigrants would generate humanitarian concern for the welfare of others, and consequently, policy permissiveness, only among citizens most able to empathize with the plight of others.

While this effect is in line with theoretical expectations, the significant interaction between the threat treatment and empathy was not theoretically anticipated. Interestingly, the results for the interaction between the threat treatment and empathy indicate that our threat induction was most effective in augmenting opposition to immigration among those lowest in empathy. The sign and size of the interaction term of threat and empathy indicates a seeming “backfire,” where the provision of information intended to induce a sense of economic and cultural threat over immigration actually *reduced* opposition to immigration among those highest in empathy. At present, we can only speculate as to the process underlying this finding, but one distinct possibility is that the effect is being partly driven by an association between empathy and political orientations, such as partisanship. In running a moderated regression model where we interacted our three treatment dummies with partisanship rather than empathy, we did find that, while the effect of our humanitarian inducement *did not* vary across Democrats and Republicans, the effect of our threat treatment varied across partisan groups in a manner similar to its variation across levels of empathy, with the treatment augmenting opposition to immigration among strong Republicans and reducing opposition among strong Democrats. Within our sample of white respondents, however, empathy and partisanship are only weakly correlated ($r = -.19$), with

those highest in empathy manifesting a slight leaning toward being a Democrat. Despite having the benefit of random assignment serving as a control for differences in partisanship across experimental groups, we re-ran the model interacting the treatments with empathy and included partisanship as a blocking factor. The results from this model revealed that the interaction between threat and empathy remained intact, suggesting that the effect is not due to empathy capturing the effects of partisanship. One remaining possibility, then, is that those high in empathy may react negatively to attempts to vilify others, specifically under-privileged or vulnerable groups, such as immigrants. Holding aside variation in the effects of our threat inducement across levels of partisanship and empathy, one finding that should be re-iterated is that while our humanitarian inducement was most effective among those most empathetic to others, the effect was, similar to the effect of individual-level differences in humanitarianism observed in Study 1, equally operative among Democrats and Republicans alike.

CONCLUSION

To date, scholars examining the determinants of immigration attitudes have focused exclusively on the negative—how factors such as perceived threats, prejudice, and authoritarianism predict anti-immigrant sentiment. While undoubtedly crucial to our understanding of public opinion on immigration, this one-sided approach ignores the other half of the political debate, which centers on humanitarian concern for the plight of immigrants in their home countries, as well as within the U.S. Analyzing two distinct datasets, we address this void in the literature by demonstrating that concern for the welfare of one’s fellow human beings is a strong predictor of white Americans’ immigration policy preferences. In Study 1, we revealed that humanitarianism significantly increases opposition to policies aimed at reducing the amount of immigration into the U.S., even after controlling for important variables such as

ideology, egalitarianism, prejudice, and a slew of other demographic and experiential factors. In Study 2, we replicated and extended this finding by showing that humanitarianism provides a permissive benefit to legal immigrants across two key policy areas, and that this effect also extends to the children of illegal immigrants, who are arguably the most vulnerable and deserving of humanitarian concern. However, we discovered that there are limits to this pro-social orientation, as there is no evidence that humanitarians are willing to extend a helping hand to illegal immigrants when it comes to law enforcement policies.

Another novel contribution of our research is that we examined how different media environments, which were specifically designed to mimic the dominant arguments from pro- and anti-immigration groups, affect immigration attitudes. Utilizing a survey-embedded experiment, we showed that if the media were to highlight the plight of prospective immigrants, public opinion would shift in favor of more permissive policies. More interestingly, our research suggests that humanitarian appeals have the potential to mitigate opposition to immigration, even in the presence of countervailing threats. In addition, we identified empathy as an important personality trait that makes humanitarian-inducing media messages more effective. One limitation of our research is that our experimental results are based upon data from the state of North Carolina. Although North Carolina is an attractive location to study the dynamics of opinion on immigration given the novel and large influx of immigrants into the state over the past decade, and the resulting high degree of salience of immigration in the state, the results from our survey experiment can technically not be generalized to the American public as a whole. Indeed, future research could work to replicate the results from our survey experiment using a national sample.

Future research could also expand upon our research by exploring additional bases for inducing humanitarian concern for immigrants, such as the difficulties they face living and working within the United States. In addition, the present study presented theory and evidence suggesting that the legal/illegal divide defines one boundary with which humanitarianism operates to shape immigration policy attitudes. It is possible, however, that this boundary is not as stark and clear cut as we believe. Indeed, future research could explore whether there are situations where humanitarian concern would benefit illegal immigrants despite their status. For example, one well known problem associated with undocumented migrant labor is the unsafe and often unsanitary conditions of the make-shift shelters built near the fields they work when migrating with harvests. Public revelry of these shelters have led to discourse and efforts to get public entities and/or private farm employers to create actual living structures to provide more humane living space for legal and illegal migrant workers alike. It may be possible that humanitarian concern could augment support for this type of effort, and others, despite their serving illegal individuals. One final direction for future research could be to build upon our research by moving beyond the attitudes of the Anglo majority to assess whether the dynamics observed for Whites in this study hold among minorities groups—particularly African Americans. Future research could conduct a focused sample of minority respondents to determine the effects of individual differences in humanitarianism, as well as media messages inducing threat and humanitarian concern, on minority opinion on an array of immigration policies.

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Table 1. Humanitarianism and Support for Restrictive Immigration Policy, 2005 CID Survey

	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>[p-value]</i>
Humanitarianism	-.660	(.331)	 [.046]
Egalitarianism	.226	(.241)	[.348]
Education	-.789	(.295)	[.007]
Income	.311	(.358)	[.384]
Age	.626	(.310)	[.044]
Gender	-.189	(.142)	[.183]
Unemployed	-.411	(.294)	[.161]
Pocketbook Evaluations	1.07	(.305)	[.000]
Ideology	1.29	(.366)	[.000]
Party ID	.046	(.233)	[.843]
National Identity	.314	(.460)	[.495]
Hispanic Affect	1.53	(.393)	[.000]
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	1.74	(.390)	[.000]
Immigrant Friends & Family	.296	(.228)	[.194]
Thresholds			
Cut 1	-.874	(.628)	
Cut 2	.430	(.613)	
Cut 3	2.48	(.619)	
Cut 4	3.68	(.626)	
N		721	
<i>Effect Size</i>			
Δ Pr (Y="decreased a lot") due to Δ Humanitarianism			-.14

Notes: Entries are unstandardized coefficients from an ordered logistic regression. The dependent variable is Amount of Immigration, coded so that highest category indicates support for decreasing the amount of immigration into the U.S. Reported effect sizes are based upon post-estimation analysis of predicted probabilities using CLARIFY (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000) in Stata®. Reported effect represents the change in the probability of preferring the amount of immigration be "decreased a lot" associated with a 0 to 1 change in Humanitarianism. *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001. Significant tests based upon two-tailed hypothesis tests.

Table 2. Humanitarianism and Immigration Policy Preferences (2012 NC Primary Election Statewide Survey)

	<u>Policies Concerning Legal Immigrants & Children</u>			<u>Policies Concerning Illegal Immigrants</u>		
	<i>Amount of Immigration</i>	<i>Delay Welfare Benefits</i>	<i>Attend Public Schools</i>	<i>Deport Illegals</i>	<i>Local Police Checks</i>	<i>ID Card for Workers</i>
Humanitarianism	-2.31* (.975)	-2.77** (.965)	-4.41*** (.892)	-1.41 (1.06)	-.843 (.930)	.235 (.918)
Egalitarianism	1.31 (.858)	1.39† (.831)	-.227 (.798)	-.270 (.906)	-1.65* (.829)	-.893 (.802)
Education	-.351 (.599)	-1.65** (.585)	-.516 (.535)	-1.06† (.645)	-1.42* (.566)	-.905† (.555)
Income	.033 (.679)	.883 (.673)	-.322 (.590)	.894 (.750)	-.339 (.638)	.595 (.644)
Age	.016 (.011)	.018† (.010)	.023* (.010)	.018 (.012)	.008 (.010)	.010 (.010)
Gender	-1.11** (.355)	.056 (.343)	.060 (.318)	.128 (.395)	.087 (.334)	.560† (.338)
Ideology	1.13 (.890)	.084 (.864)	1.33† (.820)	1.65† (.939)	1.07 (.812)	-.193 (.821)
Party ID	1.28 (.832)	2.18** (.815)	1.01 (.775)	1.44 (.905)	1.44† (.771)	1.15 (.778)
Constant				-.280 (1.33)		
Thresholds						
Cut 1	.212 (1.26)	-1.51 (1.16)	-3.48 (1.15)		-3.74 (1.24)	-3.66 (1.07)
Cut 2	2.70 (1.27)	.184 (1.16)	-1.99 (1.14)		-2.88 (1.22)	-2.20 (.977)
Cut 3			-.554 (1.13)		-1.93 (1.21)	-.646 (.956)
Cut 4			.942 (1.13)		-.326 (1.21)	.633 (.958)
N	194	195	195	195	195	195
<u>Effect Size</u>						
Δ Pr (Y=Max Value) due to Δ Humanitarianism	-.473	-.576	-.629	---	---	---

Notes: Entries are unstandardized coefficients from logistic and ordered logistic regressions. Results based upon 196 non-Hispanic white survey respondents in the control condition of the survey experiment that answered the quality control question correctly. Reported effect sizes are based upon post-estimation analysis of predicted probabilities using CLARIFY (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000) in Stata®. Reported effects represent the change in the probability of selecting the highest category of each dependent variable associated with moving from 0 to 1 on the recoded Humanitarianism Scale. †p<.10 *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001. Significant tests based upon two-tailed hypothesis tests

Table 3. Effects of Experimental Treatments On Support for Restrictive Policy

	<i>B</i>	<i>(SE)</i>
Threat Condition	.345†	(.229)
Humanitarian Condition	-.481*	(.224)
Combined Condition	-.385*	(.221)
Thresholds		
Cut 1	-2.45	(.199)
Cut 2	-.266	(.161)
N		616

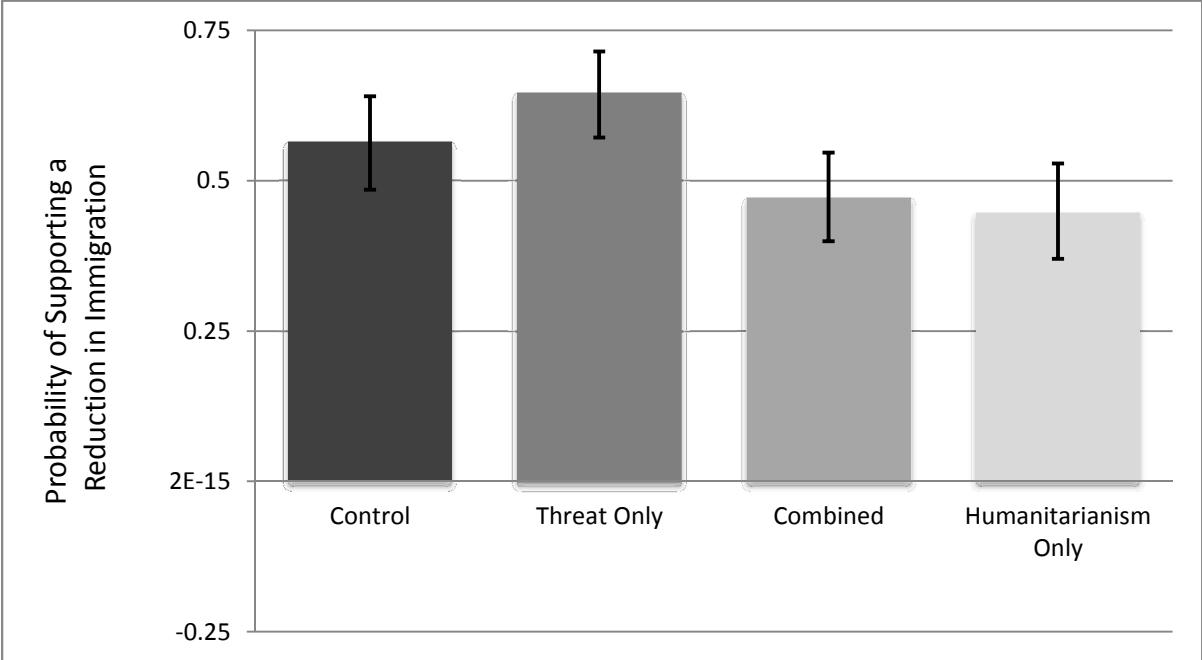
Effect Sizes

Δ Pr (Y= “decreased”) due to:

Δ Control→Threat	.081
Δ Control→Humanitarian	-.120
Δ Control→Combined	-.098

Notes: Entries are unstandardized coefficients from an ordered logistic regression. The dependent variable is *Amount of Immigration*, coded so that highest category indicates support for decreasing the amount of immigration into the U.S. Reported effect sizes are based upon post-estimation analysis of predicted probabilities using CLARIFY (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000) in Stata®. Reported effect represents the change in the probability of preferring the amount of immigration be “decreased” associated with moving from the control group to each respective experimental condition. †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001. Significant tests based upon one-tailed hypothesis tests.

Figure 1. Support for Restrictive Immigration Policy by Experimental Condition



**Table 4. The Impact of Experimental Treatments
Conditional on Levels of Empathy**

	<i>B</i>	(<i>SE</i>)
Threat Condition	2.58**	(1.06)
Humanitarian Condition	.791	(.999)
Combined Condition	.161	(.988)
Empathy Scale	-.659	(1.10)
Threat X Empathy	-3.39*	(1.59)
Humanitarian X Empathy	-2.03†	(1.55)
Combined X Empathy	-.866	(1.54)
Thresholds		
Cut 1	-2.89	(.716)
Cut 2	-.659	(.703)
N	615	

Notes: Entries are unstandardized coefficients from an ordered logistic regression. The dependent variable is *Amount of Immigration*, coded so that highest category indicates support for decreasing the amount of immigration into the U.S. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, $p < .001$. Significant tests based upon one-tailed hypothesis tests.

Supplemental Appendix (Stimulus Materials)

Introduction—All Conditions (48 words, excluding title and date)

HONDURANS TO IMMIGRATE TO NORTH CAROLINA

April 9, 2012 - Raleigh, NC – In collaboration with local law enforcement and other state agencies, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office has drafted a plan to begin allowing hundreds of Hondurans to immigrate to North Carolina. Honduras is a republic in Central America with an estimated population of almost eight million people.

Threat Condition (88 words)

A report from the non-partisan Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) noted that these Honduran immigrants will require a wide range of tax-payer funded state services to help them begin their new lives in North Carolina. The report also indicated that the influx of Hondurans may increase competition for jobs in various sectors of the economy. Finally, the CIS report stated that these immigrants have limited English-language ability and exposure to American culture, so it is very likely they will take some time to fully assimilate into the U.S.

Humanitarianism Condition (103 words)

A report from the non-partisan Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) noted that the purpose of the plan is to help these Honduran immigrants escape extremely harsh and unsafe conditions in their home country. Nearly two-thirds of the Honduran population live below the poverty line and have limited access to clean drinking water, food, and employment. The Honduran government is also known for brutally repressing its citizens, whose rights are routinely violated by excessive use of police force that often ends in fatalities. In short, the CIS report suggests that poverty and government repression threaten the lives of many Hondurans simply trying to survive.

Combined Condition (Threat and Humanitarianism; 186 words)

A report from the non-partisan Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) noted that these Honduran immigrants will require a wide range of tax-payer funded state services to help them begin their new lives in North Carolina. The report also indicated that the influx of Hondurans may increase competition for jobs in various sectors of the economy. Finally, the CIS report stated that these immigrants have limited English-language ability and exposure to American culture, so it is very likely they will take some time to fully assimilate into the U.S.

Yet, the CIS report also noted that the purpose of the plan is to help these Honduran immigrants escape extremely harsh and unsafe conditions in their home country. Nearly two-thirds of the Honduran population live below the poverty line and have limited access to clean drinking water, food, and employment. The Honduran government is also known for brutally repressing its citizens, whose rights are routinely violated by excessive use of police force that often ends in

fatalities. In short, the CIS report suggests that poverty and government repression threaten the lives of many Hondurans simply trying to survive.

Control Condition (42 words)

The climate is generally pleasant and temperate, with dry and wet seasons. The terrain includes mountainous areas, coastal beaches, and jungle lowlands. It is notable for its production of minerals, tropical fruit, and recently for exportation of clothing for the international market.