How far does social group influence reach? Identities, elites, and immigration attitudes

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Abstract

Identification with a social group can operate as a powerful heuristic, allowing an individual to easily make political judgments. But, a person can identify with multiple groups, which may be mobilized toward different political ends. How do opinions and behaviors change when a person's identities are in competition with each other, creating cross-pressures? The Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT)–a broad coalition of evangelical Christian leaders supporting liberal immigration policies–has been working to mobilize evangelical Christians on immigration; however, many evangelical Christians also hold competing partisan identities that push them to maintain their existing conservative immigration opinions. Using both experimental and panel data, I show that the EIT can influence evangelicals' immigration attitudes; however, these changes in attitudes do not correspond to an increased willingness to act politically in support of reform. Instead, I find the EIT has been more successful at demobilizing evangelical opponents of immigration reform.

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Cohesive political blocs are often forged from existing social groups. Group leaders-whether religious figures, union organizers, or community activists-serve as liaisons between social and political worlds, providing voters with cues as to how their identification with a particular group should translate into political preferences and activities. This political activation of social identities can create highly unified political blocs as group members bound together by shared beliefs and outlooks mobilize behind a common political cause (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Miller et al. 1981; Simon and Klandermans 2001). But, a person can belong to multiple groups and hold multiple identities, which may be mobilized toward different political ends. Although many scholars have explored how a person's identity can shape her political beliefs and actions, less is known about how opinions and behaviors change when someone's identities are in competition with each other, creating strong cross-pressures.

To understand how social identities interact politically, I look at a particular instance in which two identities–political and religious–that frequently operate in concert provide conflicting attitudinal cues. On the one hand, having a partisan identity is akin to being a part of a political team (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002), and partisan identities can operate as "enduring" commitments (Campbell et al. 1960) that shape the way partisans view and interpret the world (Bartels 2002). The research on religious identites' relationship with political attitudes, on the other hand, is also well documented (Campbell et al. 1960; Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Guth et al. 2006). So how does partisanship compete against another salient social identity that we know matters for political attitudes? The Evangelical Immigration Table offers an opportunity to answer this question.

Since its inception in 2013, the Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT)–a broad coalition of over 140 evangelical Christian leaders and groups in support of comprehensive immigration reform–has both been urging Congress to pass progressive immigration policies and working to rally evangelical Christians under the banner of immigration reform. The EIT's aim is to activate religious identities to change political attitudes; however, most of the EIT's intended audience also holds a competing partisan identity that pushes them toward a very different

set of political opinions. A majority of white evangelical Christians are also Republican and have consistently taken a correspondingly conservative position on immigration policy.

The EIT's lofty goal of bringing about immigration reform raises two important questions. First, can (and how do) counter-attitudinal messages from elites change group members' established opinions? Although elite messages and identity activation can influence political attitudes, these identities often complement a pre-existing political identity. We know little about the effect of group cues when they run counter to most group members' existing attitudes. I use three types of data to show that: while born-again Christians are not persuaded by any pro-immigration message, the EIT's religious message influenced attitudes; the source of immigration message matters to evangelical voters; and evangelical Republicans' immigration attitudes diverged from other Republicans over time, with evangelical Republicans becoming more supportive of immigration reform while non-evangelical Republicans became less so.

The EIT's ultimate aim, to mobilize its members under the banner of progressive immigration reform, raises a second question: can elites' influence extend beyond changing opinions to also begin changing behaviors? I find that pro-reform attitude shifts do not increase evangelicals' willingness to act in support of reform. I also find that exposure to counter-attitudinal messages demobilizes reform opponents even when their attitudes do not change. Taken together, the EIT's strength lies in its ability to demobilize opponents rather than mobilize supporters. In the next sections, I provide background on evangelical Protestants' involvement with immigration reform and lay out the current state of the literature.

Evangelicals and immigration

When Matthew Soerens and Jennifer Hwang Yang began writing a book in 2007 calling on Christians to support compassionate immigration reform, they knew they were facing an uphill battle. The book's intended audience–white evangelical Christians–was strongly op-

posed to immigration reform and many evangelical groups, such as the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) which has a membership of 45,000 congregations from 40 denominations, had remained silent while President Bush tried to push through immigration reform in 2006 and 2007 (Jordan 2013; Rubin 2013; Soerens 2014). Despite the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 offering a pathway to citizenship and increased border enforcement–two positions the EIT currently supports–President Bush did not have a vocal evangelical support base.

The publication and distribution of Soerens and Yang's book, titled *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion, & Truth in the Immigration Debate*, spurred years of discussion and debate among evangelical leaders. Meetings of evangelical leaders to coordinate a "Christian response" to undocumented immigrants in the United States culminated with the creation of the Evangelical Immigration Table in June 2012.

The Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT) is an umbrella group of roughly 140 evangelical organizations and leaders advocating for immigration reform that reflects biblical values. The group calls on politicians to create immigration reform that: Respects the God-given dignity of every person; Protects the unity of the immediate family; Respects the rule of law; Guarantees secure national borders; Ensures fairness to taxpayers and; Establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents (Evangelical Immigration Table 2013). EIT leaders include Leith Anderson, President of the NAE and Russell D. Moore, President of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, and signatories include hundreds of evangelical leaders.

Starting in February 2013, the EIT began trying both to influence elected officials' and evangelicals' immigration opinions. One example is the EIT's "40 day challenge"–a nationwide campaign to encourage pastors and congregants to study one biblical passage on immigration per day for 40 days. The EIT has also hosted grassroots "Pray4Reform" events (Woodruff 2013) and purchased hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of billboard, radio, and website advertisements to reach evangelical Christians throughout the country. If it is

to succeed, the EIT must change mass-level immigration attitudes; however, scholars know little about whether their appeals, which are based on religious-group membership but run counter to the group's existing political inclinations, can transform attitudes.

Activating identities through group cues

Identities may shape public opinion when a person sees how her identity relates to a political candidate, party, or policy issue (Campbell et al. 1960). Elites help create a linkage between an identity and an opinion by disseminating information, framing the debate in the media, and serving as a group representative (Hogg and Reid 2006; Lee 2002; Zaller 1992) to a generally uninformed electorate (Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996) looking to form political judgments without much cognitive effort (Miller, Wlezien and Hildreth 1991; Nisbett and Ross 1980; Popkin 1991; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). Much of the literature on identity activation, group cues, and the political cohesion of social groups, however, does not consider the possibility of competing identities (for an exception, see Klar (2013)).

What happens when the group leadership proposes a policy position that stands in opposition to an existing opinion and another identity? The EIT's aim is not to shore up evangelicals' current opinions on immigration reform but to transform the religious group least supportive of liberal immigration reform (Jones et al. 2014) and more supportive of a deportation policy than the general public (Djupe 2013) into champions of immigration reform. This poses a challenge for the EIT as individuals reject dissonant information (Zaller 1992) and interpret new information in a biased fashion in order to reach their desired conclusion (Kunda 1990). Moreover, many white evangelical Christians are also Republicans. These people therefore hold immigration attitudes consistent with their partisanship; another strong and stable identity that influences political preferences and behaviors (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). The EIT has created a misalignment between many white evangelicals' religious and political identities, and the EIT's success rests on the ability of

religious cues to overwhelm any partisan influence.

The religion and politics literature offers little insight into how evangelical Christians should respond to the EIT because the effects of religious messaging on public opinion are still relatively unknown. For example, consider abortion politics in the United States. Though there are strong correlations between being an evangelical Christian, a Republican, and pro-life, researchers do not know exactly what exactly makes these correlations so strong. We do not know whether evangelicals' pro-life attitudes develop on account of their deep commitment to a religious tradition and its corresponding beliefs (Guth et al. 2006; Kellstedt et al. 1996) or because of channeled communications through religious organizations (Djupe and Calfano 2013). Moreover, scholars do not know if evangelical abortion attitudes become stronger through political reinforcement by Republican elites who also take vocal pro-life positions. Together, researchers are left wondering how the relationship came to be and whether religious elites, themselves, actually had any influence.

Researchers have faced difficulty isolating the effect of religious messages on attitudes, in part, because religious and political attitudes often move in concert. Adkins et al. (2013) do not find evidence of religious cues influencing evangelicals' attitudes on cultural policies, such as homosexual rights. Similarly, Robinson (2010) shows that messages from evangelical leaders in favor of capital punishment and stricter immigration policy do not influence evangelical Protestants' levels of political tolerance. From these studies, it remains unclear whether religious cues fail to shape opinions or that religious cues exerted an influence prior to the experiments.

Other studies that have tried to measure whether religious leaders can effectively change attitudes have produced qualified results. While overtly political cues from religious elites are generally ineffective (Djupe and Gilbert 2009), elites can influence attitudes by priming a particular value (Djupe and Calfano 2013), when a political position comes with a specific religious justification (Djupe and Gwiasda 2010), and when there is vocal consensus among religious leaders (Campbell and Monson 2003). These studies highlight that

although religious messages can influence opinions, religious messages do not have a direct and unmitigated effect on attitudes, even among the most highly devout.

In particular, there have been few studies that directly explore the linkage between religion and immigration attitudes. Knoll (2009) and Daniels and von der Ruhr (2005) find that church attendance is positively associated with liberal immigration attitudes. Knoll claims that the relationship between religiosity and immigration attitudes occurs because religious respondents take cues from their religious leaders, who likely take liberal stances on immigration. Nteta and Wallsten (2012) build on Knoll's work and show that self-reported exposure to clergy messages is correlated with less restrictive immigration attitudes. From these findings, the authors conclude that "...America's largest religious denominations are sending clear messages regarding liberal immigration reforms to their parishioners and...these signals are picked up by parishioners" (906).

Although this research is among the first to look at environmental influences affecting immigration attitudes, it leaves much unresolved. Most notably, these works rely on single cross-sectional data sources. First, this raises the concern of self-selection, as people may choose a church or to attend services more frequently on account of their pre-existing attitudes. Second, when looking at church attendance's correlation with immigration attitudes, it is impossible to attribute the correlation to religious leaders' actions and not to another influence, such as other congregation members or individual-level religious values. Third, self-reported measures of exposure are unreliable, particularly within houses of worship. Djupe and Gilbert (2009) find a low correlation between clergy's reported sermons and congregants' recollection of sermons. This discrepancy likely occurs because people more readily remember messages that agree with their pre-existing beliefs (Nickerson 1998). Self-reported exposure, therefore, captures both the clergy's influence on attitudes in addition to congregants' tendency to remember sermons that match their own beliefs. Together, there is still a great deal to learn about religious elites' influence on opinion in general and influence on immigration opinion in particular.

Moreover, while all of the work on religion and immigration has focused on attitudes, the EIT wants to go beyond changing opinions: The organization wants evangelical Christians to act. Research on cross-pressured voters highlights the difficulties the EIT likely faces. Early voting studies found that individuals who face conflicting pressures, coming from identities such as partisanship, religion, class, and social status, are less likely to vote, more likely to delay in making a decision about candidate to support, and generally be less politically involved (Campbell et al. 1960; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). Social interactions–a primary way to activate a group identity–that include political disagreement also result in lower levels of political participation (Mutz 2006; 2002). Although hearing the other side of an argument can legitimize an opposing viewpoint, the mixed messages prove detrimental for political engagement by increasing ambivalence about the attitude object (Lavine 2001) or by wanting to avoid interpersonal conflict (Mutz 2006; 2002).

Djupe and Gilbert (2009) find similar evidence when looking at clergy's influence on church members' political participation. A clergy member's political speech is correlated with higher levels of member political participation only when a churchgoer shares the same political outlook as both the clergy and a majority of the congregation. Put more directly, only in a politically homogenous religious environment with a politically consonant clergy message do the authors see a related increase in participation. When there is any sort of political disconnect–either between churchgoer and the clergy or the churchgoer and other members of the congregation–political messages from the pulpit do not correspond with changes in political engagement. The research suggests that even if the EIT successfully transforms immigration attitudes of white evangelicals, their Republican partisan identities and exposure to cross-cutting messages may inhibit individuals from acting on their new-found opinions. Further, cross-cutting messages may also demobilize immigration reform opponents even if their opinions do not change. The survey experiment, presented below, begins to test the EIT's influence on immigration attitudes.

Can the EIT message marshal supporters?

In this section I describe and present the results from a survey experiment designed to test if and how the EIT's radio advertisements–different versions of which ran in 20 states–would affect potential listeners. The 1,000 person experiment ran from March 7 - 14, 2014 using a national sample recruited through Survey Sampling International (SSI).[1]

Respondents were told that the study was interested in how individuals react to political advertisements. All respondents first watched a video advertisement for a fictitious Congressman running for re-election, which did not mention immigration reform, and provided their impressions of the politician. Respondents were then randomized into one of three conditions. Respondents in the religious advertisement condition listened to the EIT radio advertisement that aired in Colorado. In the unedited advertisement, two pastors asked listeners to join a movement of Christians that support immigration solutions rooted in biblical values. After listing the EIT's goals for immigration reform–including a pathway to citizenship–the advertisement asked listeners to pray for their elected officials and tell their representatives that they support immigration reform. Respondents in a second, secular, treatment condition listened to an edited version of the EIT advertisement. Here, the religious language was stripped away and respondents only heard the pro-immigration reform message. By separating the religious component from the immigration message itself, I isolate the religious appeals' effects. The advertisement text is available in the Appendix. Finally, respondents in the control condition watched the congressional re-election advertise-

[1] SSI recruits participants through various online communities, social networks, and website ads. SSI makes efforts to recruit hard-to-reach groups, such as ethnic minorities and seniors. I did not employ quotas but asked SSI to recruit a target population that matched the (18 and over) census population on education, gender, age, geography, and income. The resulting sample is not a probability sample but is a diverse national sample. Numerous studies using SSI sample have been published in political science (Berinsky, Margolis, and Sances 2014; Kam 2012; Malhotra and Margalit 2010).

ment but did not listen to an immigration radio spot.

The dependent variable, asked approximately five minutes after hearing the radio advertisements, asked respondents about their attitudes on immigration reform. The main measure of immigration reform support asks: "The current policy in the United States is to deport illegal immigrants. Some people suggest changing the law so that illegal immigrants could apply for legal status and possibly stay in the country permanently. Do you support or oppose this kind of change to the law?" The responses options were: strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose. The question taps into the most controversial part of the immigration reform debate: what to do with the estimated 11 million people living in the United States without legal documents. When I discuss support for immigration reform below, I am referring specifically to whether or not respondents support allowing undocumented immigrants to remain in the country legally. I present experimental treatment effects on two additional immigration policy attitudes, support for the DREAM Act and support for allowing undocumented immigrants who have American-born children to remain in the country, in the Appendix.

I am particularly interested in how white born-again Christians respond to the radio ad, as they represent the core group the EIT is attempting to persuade. I identify these individuals with a question asking white self-identified Christians if they consider themselves to be "born again" or not. In contrast to non-white born-again Christians who strongly support reform, their white counterparts are generally more opposed.[2]

Baseline comparisons of control-group respondents show that white born-again Christians are more opposed to immigration reform than other religious groups. These baseline results, presented in the Appendix, are consistent with other opinion polls and reflect EIT's ambitious goal to change opinions. The left panel of Figure 1 plots the experimental treatment effects for white born-again Christians. The experimental conditions are denoted along the x-

[2] 28% of white born-again Christians support immigration reform (either strongly or somewhat) in the control condition, while 72% of non-white born-again Christians do.

axis and the y-axis represents the percent of respondents who support immigration reform (either strongly or somewhat). I present the percent of respondents in the control condition supporting immigration reform in the center of the graph, 28%. The average level of reform support for respondents in the religious and secular conditions are plotted to the left and right of the control group, respectively. Support among those who received the full, unedited EIT message increased dramatically, by just under 21 percentage points. I present the difference-in-means estimate, along with its p-value (0.03) between the two points on the figure.[3] Although the religious condition significantly affected immigration attitudes, the same message without the religious rhetoric did not. The difference between the secular and control conditions is both substantively small–about three percentage points–and statistically insignificant. These results indicate that while born-again Christians can be persuaded when their religious identities are activated, they are not otherwise open to liberalizing their immigration attitudes.

The EIT's efforts were aimed at evangelicals–for example, its ground campaign partnered with evangelical churches around the country–but there was undoubtedly spillover from the radio, billboard, and website advertisements as well as from mainstream news outlets covering the EIT. How might non-group members react to the different immigration messages? The right panel of Figure 1 presents the same results for all those who are not born-again Christians. This includes both Christians who do not identify as born again as well as non-Christians. I find that the EIT's religious appeal did not dramatically change the reported immigration attitudes of those who are not born-again Christians. The religious treatment increased the percentage of respondents who supported immigration reform (either strongly or somewhat) relative to the control condition (difference = 4.69, p-value = 0.29). The results trend in the pro-reform direction; however, the results are statistically indistinguishable

[3] All results presented are robust to the inclusion of control variables. In the Appendix I replicate all findings including controls for education, gender, income, age, age-squared, and political ideology.

from zero at conventional levels and substantively smaller than the effects found for born-again Christians. I also find no evidence that the radio advertisement stripped of religious language persuaded listeners (difference = -3.11, p-value = 0.48). In a direct comparison of the two treatment conditions, the religious radio ad resulted in slightly more support for immigration reform relative to the secular radio ad (difference = 7.79, p-value = 0.09). Considering both panels together, the EIT's message successfully changed immigration attitudes among born agains–the EIT's intended audience–while doing little to others' viewpoints.

Table 2 replicates and expands on Figure 1's results. The regressions use the four-point dependent variable and coefficients are interpreted as the difference-in-means between each treatment condition and the excluded control condition, whose mean is represented in the regression intercept. I present OLS results for ease of interpreted but ordered logistic models produce identical results. Columns 1 and 2 corroborate Figure 1 which used a collapsed measure of support: the religious message had a large positive effect on born again support for immigration reform (column 1) and virtually no effect on non born agains (column 2). For neither group does the secular message produce a meaningful shift in immigration support. Among Christians who are not born again (column 3), neither treatment resulted in immigration attitudes that are significantly different from the control group. Finally, column 4 looks at religious non-identifiers. Adkins et al. (2013) find evidence of a backlash effect in which religious non-identifiers used the evangelical label as "a negative political referent in shaping policy attitudes" (255). One unintended consequence of the EIT's strategy, therefore, might be increasing reform opposition among seculars. Despite previous results, I do not find evidence of a backlash effect. Neither the secular nor the religious immigration message produced a detectable change in reported attitudes.

To directly test whether attitudes conformed to the EIT's stated goal of providing a pathway to citizenship, I asked respondents specifically about what should happen to citizens without legal documents. White born-again Christians' support for a pathway to citizenship increased by 17-percentage points after having heard the unedited EIT radio ad (24% of

white born agains supported a pathway to citizenship in the control condition, while 41% supported a pathway in the religious treatment condition). Again, the secular version of the ad did not change support levels for a pathway to citizenship relative to those in the control condition (difference = -3.9, p-value = 0.65). I present detailed results in the Appendix.

The survey experiment answers how the EIT's religious messages can affect its evangelical audience, but leave open an important question about the EIT's strategy: to what and whom are evangelicals responding? First, the radio advertisement offered two distinct source cues–one from the EIT, who explicitly sponsored the radio advertisement, and one from the pastors, who identify themselves as religious leaders at the ad's outset. The literature on elite persuasion has explored both how the perceived credibility and expertise of a cue provider affects individuals' responses to elite messages (Kuklinski and Hurley 1994) and how groups themselves offer valuable decision-making information (Hutchings, Walton, and Benjamin 2010). But little is known about the relative effectiveness of cues from groups–which represent a broad class of people–and an individual who serves as a leader or stereotypical member of the group. Second, the EIT used two pastors in their radio ad, but we do not know whether their religious titles provided additional source credibility or whether the religious message alone is largely responsible for the effects found.

To what are evangelicals responding?

I explore relative strength of the EIT and individual religious leaders by testing how evangelicals respond to e-mails that use either the Evangelical Immigration Table or an individual as the sender. Pursuant in their goals to mobilize evangelical Christians, the EIT commissioned an independent political firm to send out six e-mails about immigration reform to evangelical Christians around the country.[4] To maximize its reach, each of the six main e-mails was first

[4]The independent political firm works with political candidates and non-profit organizations to reach out and mobilize faith-based voters from across the ideological spectrum.

piloted with between six and eight subject lines. The subject line that produced the highest rate of opened e-mails became the subject line used in the full campaign, with e-mails going out to approximately 9 million people around the country.[5]

Importantly, the sender of the e-mails was also randomized in the pilot phase. For example, in the first e-mail test the subject line "What does the Bible say about immigration reform?" was sent to two groups of people. Half of the people who received this subject line had the Evangelical Immigration Table as the sender of the e-mail, while the other half received the e-mail from Reverend Samuel Rodriguez. The same is true for the other seven subject lines tested before the first e-mail campaign. Approximately 1,500 people received each subject line-sender combination. The identity of the individual sender also changed across e-mail campaigns. Three of the individual senders–Reverends Samuel Rodriguez, Gabriel Salguero, and Jim Wallis–were all identified as reverends, while Jenny Yang and David Beckmann, two people affiliated with the EIT's efforts but without a religious title, also sent e-mails. I test whether evangelicals were more responsive–measured by opening the e-mail–to a message from the EIT or from these two types of individuals.

In total, 47 pairs of e-mail subject lines were piloted over the course of the campaign, with each subject line randomly sent by either the EIT or an individual. Each subject line, therefore, represents an experiment that allows me to test whether these different cues affect an individuals' willingness to open an e-mail about immigration reform. Open rates for the EIT's campaign varied between 0.6% to 3.1% with an average of approximately 1.6%.[6]

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[5]The 9 million evangelicals came from the private political organization's nationwide list of evangelical e-mail addresses. E-mails were sent to addresses who had previously opened an e-mail for a previous (unrelated) campaign as well as to people living in Congressional districts that the EIT thought would be beneficial to target: AL-6, AR-3, AR-2, FL-2, FL-3, GA-9, IN-3, LA-1, LA-5, MO-2, MS-1, OK-3, OK-4, OK-5, SC-4, SC-5, TN-7, TN-8, TX-2, TX-3, TX-6, TX-8, TX-10, TX-17, TX-31, TX-32, VA-6, VA-7.

[6]Although the raw open percentages are quite low, the variation in open rates dramatically affects the EIT's reach. With 9 million individuals receiving the final version of these e-mails,

E-mail recipients are more responsive to e-mails from individual senders, particularly reverends, than e-mails sent by EIT. In a comparison across all 47 pairings, the e-mail sent by the individual produced a higher open rate than the e-mail sent by the EIT in 46 cases. In all six piloted e-mails the most successful subject line-sender combination had an individual send the e-mail, not the EIT. Consequently, none of the six e-mails sent out on behalf of the EIT and in support of the EIT and its policies used the EIT as the e-mail sender.

Formal tests, presented in Table 2, provide more detailed results. Column 1 reiterates the average open rate, approximately 1.6%. The second column presents OLS results for a model that includes a dummy variable to distinguish whether the e-mail sender was an individual or the EIT along with subject line fixed effects to allow the open rates to vary on account of the subject line text or the timing of the six e-mail blasts. About 1.3% of recipients opened an e-mail from the EIT. Having an individual sender increased open rates by about two-thirds of a percentage point (difference = 0.67, p-value < 0.01), increasing the average open rate to 2%, a 50% increase over the EIT sender.

The third column breaks out the individual sender into religious versus secular individuals, categorized by whether the sender had "reverend" as part of his title. This second specification produces two interesting results. First, e-mails from a nonreligious sender still resulted in a half a percentage point increase in opened e-mails relative to e-mails from the EIT (difference = 0.54, p-value < 0.01). These e-mail recipients–despite being religious and likely to respond to evangelical messages–were more likely to act based on an e-mail from a random, religiously unaffiliated person over the EIT. The result highlights the EIT's limited ability to serve as an effective source cue in this instance of digital outreach. Second, e-mails from a religious sender produced an even higher open rate. The change in open rate when the EIT is the sender (1.3%) compared to an e-mail sent by a religious individual (2.34%) represents an 80% increase in e-mail openings (difference = 1.04, p-value < 0.01). The difference in open rates between religious individuals and secular individuals is also statistically

the open percentages would translate into between 54,000 and 279,000 opened e-mails.

significant (p-value = 0.01), with the religious senders garnering more e-mail openings.[7] The results build on the survey experiment by showing the importance of source credibility, in the form of religious, leaders and highlights that the EIT name alone is not poised to influence evangelical attitudes. Instead, the EIT gains its strength and credibility through its membership of religious elites.

Have immigration attitudes changed over time?

The third empirical strategy takes a step back from exploring the causal process through which cues might influence attitudes and tests whether evangelicals' immigration attitudes have actually changed over time. I do so using three-wave nationally representative panel data collected by The American Panel Study (TAPS) at Washington University in St. Louis. TAPS uses a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults in the United States.[8] Respondents were recruited by and the surveys were conducted through Knowledge Networks. In addition to capturing attitudes on immigration reform, the survey collects religious and

[7]One concern related to the direct comparison of religious and non-religious senders is that the six piloted studies occurred at different time periods and no individual data collection effort includes both a religious and non-religious individual sender. The differences found between the groups, therefore, may be a function of when the e-mails went sent or the subject lines of a particular pilot test. If the timing of the e-mails or the specific subject lines affected the open rates, I should find evidence of this when looking at those who received an e-mail from the EIT as well. I find no evidence that open rates varied across the piloted studies. Among those who received an e-mail from the EIT, 1.30% opened the e-mail when the alternative was a non-religious individual while 1.36% opened the e-mail when the alternative was a religious individual (difference = 0.06%, p-value = 0.65).

[8]The panel was recruited in Fall, 2011 using an address-based sampling frame. The TAPS surveys are administered online, however, panelists without a computer or Internet service are provided with both by TAPS.

demographic information.

The first wave took place in February 2013. The data were collected just weeks after the EIT announced its large-scale campaign, but before it took effect. The first wave also took place before the "Gang of Eight" introduced the bipartisan Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (better known as S.744) in April 2013. The second wave was collected seven months later in September 2013. Between the two waves, the EIT had organized and promoted the "40 Day Challenge", held a rally in Washington, D.C., met with leaders on immigration reform, and purchased radio and billboard advertisements throughout the country. Also during the intervening months, the Senate passed the immigration bill; however, debated stalled in the Republican-controlled House. The third wave was collected in February 2014 just days after Representative John Boehner (R) announced House Republican leaders' reform principles, which stressed border enforcement as a precursor to handling those living in the country without legal documents and criticized a special pathway to citizenship. While immigration reform was initially touted as a bipartisan effort in the Senate, Republicans in the House became vocally opposed to the reforms over the course of 2013. With a large majority of white evangelicals identifying as Republicans and evangelicals being twice as likely to trust the Republican Party to handle immigration compared to the Democrats (Djupe 2013), white evangelicals may have received conflicting messages from their political and religious leaders. I test how immigration attitudes of white evangelical Republicans, who may have had their political and religious identities pushing them in opposite directions, change compared to Republicans who are not white evangelicals. I present and describe analyses using the full sample of respondents in the Appendix.

The main measure of immigration reform support is again a question asking whether individuals without legal documents should be allowed to remain in the country legally. The only wording change from the experimental version of the question is the addition of a "neither support nor oppose" response option. In the results that follow, I categorize respondents' religious identification using Steensland et al.'s (2000) religious denominational coding

scheme to classify evangelical respondents. All results are weighted using a dynamic weighting scheme. Although the TAPS study is designed to be nationally representative, panel attrition poses a problem for researchers trying to make claims about the broader population. The dynamic weighting approach uses population margins on age, gender, ethnicity, education, region, metropolitan status, and income from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and Annual Social and Economic Supplement to account for panel attrition and item nonresponse over time. The results are substantively and statistically similar to unweighted results.

I first present the raw results graphically to show trends without making any modeling assumptions. The left panel of Figure 2 presents the immigration opinions of white evangelical Republicans between February 2013 and February 2014, while the right panel presents the same opinion data for Republicans who are not white evangelicals. The circular points and solid lines represent the percentage of respondents who support–either strongly or somewhat–immigration reform. The square points and dashed lines represent the percentage of respondents who neither support nor oppose immigration reform. And finally, the triangles and dotted lines represent the percentage of respondents who oppose, both somewhat and strongly, immigration reform. The lines connecting each set of points is the best fit line between the two waves of data and the vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

These data show that white evangelical Republicans and other Republicans shifted in opposite directions over time. Among white evangelical Republicans, opposition to reform decreased from 60% in wave 1 to 49% in wave 3, while support for reform increased from 22% to 29% over the same time period (left panel). This attitude shift does not extend to other Republicans, however. Support increased slightly between waves 1 and 2 (29 to 32%) but then declined to 25% between waves 2 and 3, while opposition rates rose from 51% in wave 1 to 57% in wave 3 (right panel). As non-evangelical Republicans decreased support for immigration reform, their white evangelical counterparts became more supportive.

I build on the graphical results using parametric tests, presented in Table 3. Here, the

dependent variable is the five-point measure of immigration reform support, ranging from 0 (strong opposition) to 100 (strong support). Each row of data represents an individual in a particular wave, the coefficients are from ordinary least squares (OLS) models, and standard errors are clustered at the individual level.[9] In particular, I am interested in how white evangelicals' attitudes changed relative to Republicans who are not white evangelicals. More specifically, I estimate the following model:

$$support_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta_1\ W2 + \beta_2\ W3 + \beta_3\ white\ evan_i + \beta_4\ W2 * white\ evan + \beta_5\ W3 * white\ evan + \epsilon$$

in which β_1 and β_2 are dummy variables indicating whether the response came from wave 2 or wave 3, respectively, with wave 1 serving as the reference category. β_3 is a binary variable coded as 1 if the respondent is a white evangelical, and 0 otherwise. And finally, β_4 and β_5 are interactions between being a white evangelical and the survey wave. The interaction terms do not test whether white evangelical Republicans and other Republicans hold the same opinion. Rather the coefficients indicate whether the two groups' attitudes moved in the same direction over time or not. Positive coefficients mean white evangelicals became more pro-reform over time relative to non-evangelicals, negative coefficients mean white evangelicals became more opposed over time relative to non-evangelicals, and coefficients near zero indicate that the initial attitude gap remained constant over time. Another estimation strategy would be a fixed-effects model in which the time-invariant variables are interacted with the wave variables. The alternative model specification produces virtually identical results and is available in the Appendix.

Column 1 presents a parsimonious model without control variables, the first three rows of which show the mean difference in immigration attitudes for white evangelical Republicans compared to Republicans who are not evangelicals for each survey wave. The initial attitude gap between evangelicals and non-evangelicals is roughly -6 points. The statistically in-

[9] I present OLS results for ease of interpretation; however, ordered logit models produces the same substantive results.

significant result demonstrates that Republicans–evangelical and non-evangelical alike–held similar views on immigration in Wave 1 of the survey. And to the extent that there is a difference across the groups, the results trend in evangelical Republicans taking a more conservative (i.e. more opposition) position on reform. The size of the gap, however, shrinks over time. The -6 difference in wave 1 is a +8-point difference 12 months later in wave 3. I present the interactions from the model specified above in the subsequent two rows. Between waves 1 and 2, white evangelical Republicans became slightly more supportive of immigration reform compared to non-evangelical Republicans ($\beta_4 = 4$, se $= 4$), but these results do not reach statistical significance. Between waves 1 and 3, however, the change in immigration attitudes is more noticeable between the two groups ($\beta_5 = 14$, se $= 5$). By wave 3, a 14-point gap–representing more than one-half the distance between two response options–emerged between white evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans.

Of course, white evangelicals differ from other Republicans on a host of characteristics, and these differences could impact the estimated relationship between religious identification and immigration views. To address this possibility, models 2-5 include individual-level characteristics and opinions that may change immigration attitudes over time. Column 2 includes demographic variables of gender, race, age, age-squared, education, income, and whether the respondent lives in a border state. Column 3 includes respondents' perceptions about their personal financial situation and the financial situation of the country as a whole. To account for feelings toward groups frequently linked with immigration, column 4 includes feeling thermometer scores toward Hispanics and Asians. And finally, column 5 includes political ideology. Each control variable is interacted with the wave variables to allow its effect to vary over time. All control variables were measured prior to the first wave of the immigration study.[10] The inclusion of control variables does not change the results from

[10]As a further robustness check, I classified all respondents that are part of the "not white evangelical" category based on their religious faith and re-ran the analyses dropping individual faiths from the sample. I did this to ensure that one religious group does not

the parsimonious model in column 1. In each specification, white evangelical Republicans became more supportive of immigration reform over time compared to their non-evangelical counterparts. White evangelicals' attitudes diverged from the rest of the Republican population, with the former becoming more supportive while the latter simultaneously became more opposed.

Do attitudes translate into actions?

Both the survey experiment and panel data show that evangelical Christians' religious identities are open to activation, even in the face of a competing partisan identity. But do these attitudinal shifts correspond to an increased willing to act? In the survey experiment, I answer this question using a quasi-behavioral measure asking respondents whether or not they would be willing to sign a petition sharing their immigration views with their member of Congress. I find the strong 20-point change in reported attitudes does not carry over into action. While 22% of white born-again Christians in the control condition were willing to sign a petition in favor of a pathway to citizenship, 26% of their counterparts hearing EIT's message–including the religious rhetoric–were willing to do so. This 4% shift is both substantively small and statistically insignificant (se = 0.08, p-value = 0.61). The EIT's counter-attitudinal message influenced reported attitudes on a survey, but the message did not affect respondents' willingness to act on behalf of the immigration cause.

Conversely, the EIT's message demobilized those born-again Christians holding the most conservative immigration opinions. Whereas the secular pro-immigration advertisement actually energized pro-deportation respondents, increasing the likelihood of a respondent signing a petition to nearly 50%, the EIT's message decreased the likelihood to 30% (difference =

drive the comparison between white evangelicals and the rest of the population. Dropping each subgroup within the "non-evangelical" category produces substantively and statistically similar results.

18%, se = 9, p-value = 0.04). Whether demobilization occurred because respondents' resolve in their pro-deportation position waned or because the increased salience of a cross-cutting identity decreased general political participation is unclear; however, the results point to the EIT's unexpected strength and ability to demobilize opponents even when a secular, yet otherwise similar, message cannot.

Turning to the panel data, I test whether the electoral importance of immigration changed over time. In all three waves respondents answered: "How likely is it that your views about illegal immigration will influence your vote in the 2014 midterm elections?" I code this variable as 1 if respondents answered "very likely" and 0 if respondents answered "somewhat likely" or "unlikely." Looking specifically at evangelicals who support immigration reform, I run a logistic regression model to assess how evangelicals' behavioral responses changed across the three waves. The top panel of Table 4 displays the predicted probabilities for an evangelical reform supporter. A supporter had only a 0.15 probability of acting on her views in wave 1. This probability increases to 0.24 in wave 2. This 0.09 change is substantively meaningful despite not being significant at conventional levels (p-value = 0.17). The mobilization around immigration reform, however, stalls. By wave 3, the probability that a supporter's immigration views would influence her vote dropped to 0.21, a probability that is statistically indistinguishable from wave 1 levels (p-value = 0.48).

These null results are particularly striking given that a self-reported measure of vote influence represents a particularly easy test of political mobilization. Voters only need to say that their views on immigration will influence their vote to count as an action, which allows respondents to engage in cheap talk and expressive responding. Despite the low bar, the results are weak. If white evangelicals were mobilized around the issue of immigration reform at all, the energy faded quickly. Consistent with the experimental findings, becoming more supportive of immigration reform does not correspond to changes in the likelihood of acting on these opinions.

The bottom panel of table 4 runs the same analyses on evangelical respondents who

are opposed to immigration reform. While the probability decreases between waves 1 and 2 somewhat (0.62 to 0.58), the probability decreases dramatically by wave 3 (0.36; both changes between waves 1 and 3 and waves 2 and 3 have p-values < 0.01). Importantly, this demobilization of reform opponents only occurs among evangelicals: the probability of immigration reform influencing the vote of non-evangelical opponents is unchanged between in waves 1 and 3 (0.33, p-value of difference = 0.97). Just as pro-deportation respondents who heard the EIT's radio ad became less likely to share their views with their member of Congress, evangelicals opposed to immigration reform became less likely to report that their position would influence their vote over time.

Discussion and conclusion

A great deal of research has looked at how group cues can make social identities politically relevant, but we know little about what happens when a group cue runs counter to another identity or pre-existing opinion. The EIT taking on a prophetic role, espousing a religious truth about immigration reform, provides the opportunity to study the reaches and limits of social group influence.

I began with an experiment testing how the EIT's message affected different religious groups. While born-again Christians were not responsive to a secular pro-reform message, the EIT radio advertisement resonated with group members. These results comport with Djupe and Gwiasda (2010) who find that evangelicals respond to environmental appeals when the appeal includes both a religious identity cue and a decision-making process cue in which the religious leader describes how he reached his stated position. The field experiment further shows that the EIT itself is not operating as a strong group cue; rather, it is individual religious leaders who are more likely shaping evangelicals' attitudes. Importantly, the pastors (in the radio advertisement) and reverends (in the e-mail campaigns) are not known quantities to many evangelicals. Evangelicals are therefore responding to religious leaders,

identified only by their title. Together, these results show how group leaders can overcome the commonly noted barriers to persuasion, even when presenting dissonant information.

The experimental results also show that religious political campaigns do not necessarily produce a backlash effect among more secular citizens. Bolce and De Maio (2008; 1999) find that the growth of "anti-fundamentalist" sentiment in the U.S. is linked to evangelical involvement in politics. Adkins et al. (2013) find evidence of this when non-religious individuals exposed to a conservative evangelical cue moved in the liberal direction, away from the evangelical leaders' stated position. In contrast, I do not find evidence of a backlash among religious non-identifiers, despite the religious message making explicit references to Christ, the Bible, and evangelicals. These results indicate that less religious Americans do not blindly react against religious cues; they also consider the ideological direction of the message. Evangelical cues do not inevitably divide the electorate, as a reader of the culture wars literature might assume.

I also test whether attitudes have changed over time. Whereas cross-sectional analyses look at religion and immigration attitudes at a single point in time, I follow the same individuals as the immigration debate unfolded. The nature of the data limits the inferences I can draw about the EIT's role in changing attitudes over time, but the data offer descriptive insight into attitudinal trends. Despite being a key Republican constituency, white evangelical Republicans became more supportive of reform while other Republicans became less supportive over time. By the third wave of the data, Republicans who were not white evangelicals held immigration attitudes that more closely resembled the rhetoric of Republican elites than their white evangelical counterparts. Possibly on account of having two salient identities, Evangelical Republicans diverged in their immigration position relative to other Republicans despite holding similar immigration attitudes at the start of the panel.

Although counter-attitudinal messages can change attitudes, I find that actions do not necessarily follow. The radio advertisement successfully shifted reported attitudes, but the experimental treatment did not change whether born-again Christians would sign a petition

expressing their support for immigration reform. The panel data similarly show that supporters have not mobilized around immigration reform, even in a nominal sense. Increased support for immigration reform did not correspond to immigration becoming a more salient electoral consideration. These results, which are consistent with previous work on cross-pressured voters and exposure to dissonant messages, highlight the limits of group influence in general and the difficulties the EIT face in particular. Even when successful at changing opinions, leaders of social groups may struggle to mobilize members around an issue whose position conflicts with another salient identity.

Instead, the EIT's strategies are better suited to demobilize opponents. In both the survey experiment and panel data, reform opponents became less likely to act on their stated position. This is particularly important as reform opponents in both the experimental control condition and wave 1 of the panel data reported a much greater readiness to act compared to reform supporters. Curbing opponents' behaviors, although likely an unintended consequence of the EIT strategy, may therefore allow evangelical Christian leaders to speak with a unified voice on immigration even with limited mobilization on their part. The demobilization findings also provide an important example of how group cues or a salient social identity can exert political influence even without changing attitudes.

This paper begins to answer an important question, but also opens the door for future research. First, what, if anything, can group leaders do to successfully mobilize a cross-pressured voter? Is group-level political mobilization possible when group members are exposed to dissonant viewpoints? Klar (2013) finds that an identity's impact on opinion is larger when the identity is perceived to be under threat. This result is consistent with social identity theorists who note that "...shared interests (perceived or actual) and related grievances play a role in producing political cohesion..." (Huddy 2003). It is therefore possible that group cues that threaten a particular identity are strong enough to not only change opinions but also encourage group members to act on these opinions. Second, when can group leaders influence opinion by the nature of their role as community leaders and

when do leaders need to justify their position to their community before successfully shaping attitudes? By separating source cues from effective messaging, scholars will gain a better understanding of how people use group cues as a simple way to develop complex policy opinions.

The results from this paper along with avenues for future research address important, yet unexplored, questions related to identities, group influence, opinion change, and participation. Immigration reform is one policy domain that cuts across traditional partisan lines and has created unlikely bedfellows. More generally, when elites change their position or new issues emerge on the scene, group members must decide whether to update their views or hold onto their previously held stances. The findings from this paper provide insight into whether, how, and to what extent these group cues can influence group members' attitudes and prospects of mobilization.

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Tables

Table 1: Experimental treatment effects on different religious groups

	(1) White born-agains	(2) Non born agains (all religions)	(3) Non born-again Christians	(4) Religious non-identifiers
Religious message	14.81**	3.06	3.79	-3.80
	(6.68)	(3.11)	(6.70)	(5.28)
Secular message	-3.29	-1.70	-7.59	-3.06
	(6.64)	(3.08)	(6.18)	(5.04)
Intercept	29.08**	50.69**	47.49**	55.56**
	(4.92)	(2.09)	(4.41)	(3.43)
Observations	160	741	191	249

Notes: The dependent variable is a four-point measure of immigration reform support ranging from strongly oppose (0) to strongly support (100). The coefficients are OLS estimates. The intercept represents the average immigration support for respondents in the control condition. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Columns 1 and 2 replicate the results from Figure 1 using the four-point scale, while columns 3, 4, and 5 extend the analysis to additional religious categories. * = p<0.1 ** = p<0.05

Table 2: E-mail recipients respond to religious leaders, not groups

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Average	1.6		
	(0.06)		
Individual		0.67**	
		(0.14)	
Secular individual			0.54**
			(0.08)
Religious individual			1.04**
			(0.12)
E-mail pairing fixed effects		X	X
Constant		0.67**	0.73**
		(0.07)	(0.04)

Notes: The dependent variable is the percentage of e-mail recipients who opened the e-mail. The coefficients are OLS estimates. Standard errors are clustered by e-mail campaign. * = p<0.1 ** = p<0.05

Table 3: Republicans' immigration attitudes diverged over time

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
White evangelicals - not white evangelicals					
Wave 1	-6	-6	-5	-6	-4
(standard error)	(6)	(4)	(4)	(4)	(5)
Wave 2	-2	-4	-3	-3	-2
(standard error)	(6)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)
Wave 3	8	6	6	6	9*
(standard error)	(7)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(5)
Change in religion gap over time					
Between Wave 1 and 2 (β_4)	4	1	2	3	2
(standard error)	(4)	(4)	(4)	(4)	(4)
Between Wave 1 and 3 (β_5)	14**	12**	12**	12**	13**
(standard error)	(5)	(4)	(5)	(5)	(5)
Controls					
Demographics	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Perceptions of economy	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Feelings toward immigrant groups	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Politics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	807	807	807	807	807

Notes: Sample is restricted to Republicans. The dependent variable is a five-point measure of immigration reform support ranging from strongly oppose immigration reform (0) to strongly support immigration reform (100). The coefficients are OLS estimates. Clustered standard errors are in parentheses. "Demographics" include: gender, race, age, age-squared, education, income, and whether the respondent resides in a border state. "Economic perceptions" include a question about one's personal financial situation and the financial situation of the country as a whole. "Feelings" include respondents' feeling thermometer scores toward Hispanics and Asians. "Politics" include respondents' political ideology. * = $p<0.1$ ** = $p<0.05$

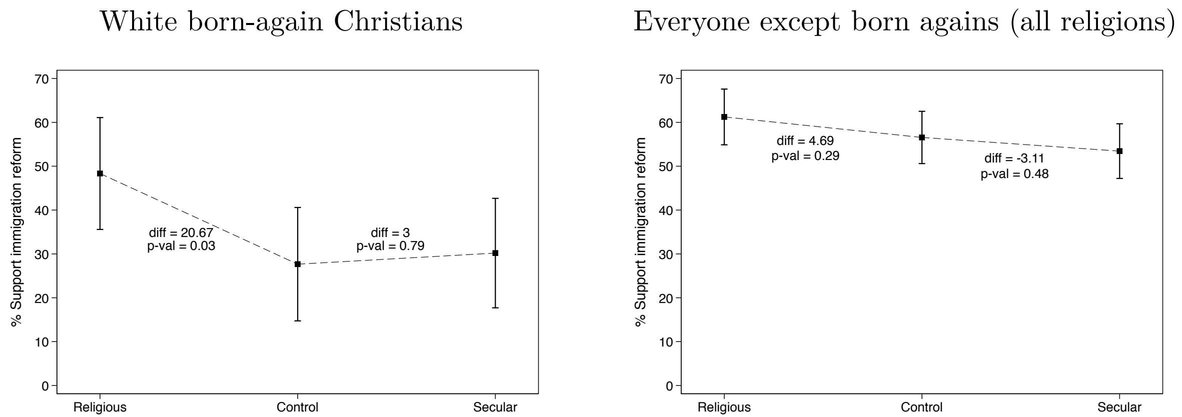
Table 4: Immigration did not become a larger electoral concern

	Probability that reform supporters will vote on immigration
Evangelicals in wave 1	0.15
(95% confidence interval)	(0.07, 0.24)
Evangelicals in wave 2	0.24
(95% confidence interval)	(0.14, 0.35)
Evangelicals in wave 3	0.21
(95% confidence interval)	(0.07, 0.24)
	Probability that reform opponents will vote on immigration
Evangelicals in wave 1	0.62
(95% confidence interval)	(0.52, 0.71)
Evangelicals in wave 2	0.58
(95% confidence interval)	(0.47, 0.68)
Evangelicals in wave 3	0.36
(95% confidence interval)	(0.25, 0.47)

Note: Top portion of the table is restricted to white evangelicals who support immigration reform. The bottom portion of the table is restricted to evangelicals who oppose immigration reform. The dependent variable is a binary variable asking whether illegal immigration would likely influence the respondent's 2014 midterm vote (1) or not (0). Cell entries represent the probabilities for each of the panel waves. Models include the demographic, economic perception, feelings, and political variables in previous models.

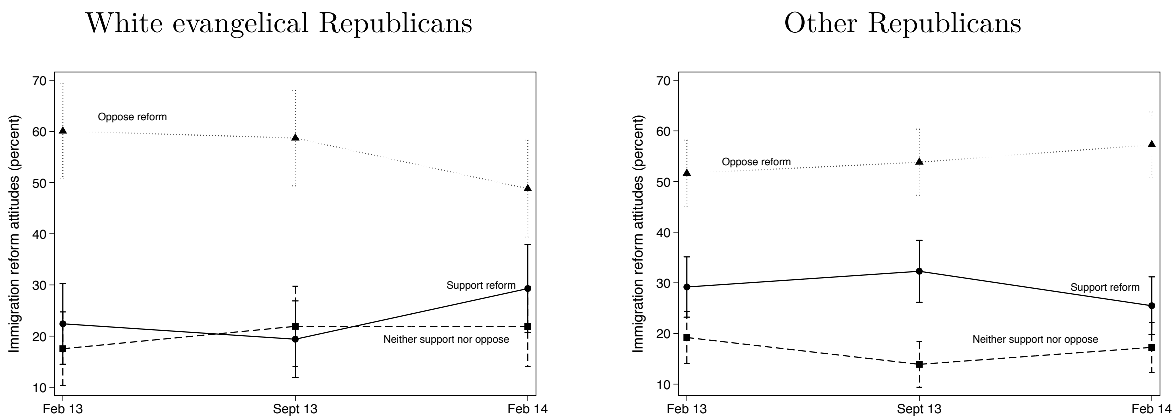
Figures

Figure 1: EIT radio ad affects immigration support



Note: The graphs plot immigration attitudes based treatment condition. Vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The differences and p-values correspond to the difference-in-means estimate between the relevant treatment group and control condition.

Figure 2: Republicans' immigration attitudes diverged over time



Note: The graphs plot immigration attitudes over time along with a line of best fit between each wave. Vertical bars represent 95% confidence intervals.