Anti-Immigrant Voting in the Global South: A Curvilinear Approach in Costa Rica

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Despite being the target of extensive scholarly inquiry, the study of anti-immigrant voting continues to have some rather significant 'blind spots.' I set out to address two of these. First, rather than assuming that the relationship between immigrant population size and anti-immigrant party voting is linear, I propose and find support for a curvilinear approach. Second, I explore the topic in the context of South-South immigration (from Nicaragua to Costa Rica), rather than the more commonly studied South-North migration pattern. One major finding indicates that curvilinear assumptions may provide a parsimonious way to reconcile two theories of anti-immigrant sentiment (competition and contact theory) that are generally portrayed as mutually exclusive. The other significant discovery is that the dynamics of anti-immigrant party support appear quite different in the largely unexamined global South than in the more widely studied North.

Introduction

When the topic of political backlash against immigration arises, a common image is that of advanced industrial democracies confronting waves of irregular immigration from countries wracked with poverty and instability.[1] In other words, the issue tends to be framed predominantly in terms of the political responses of North Americans and Europeans to migratory influxes from the developing world. This tendency prevails not only in general political discourse, but to some degree as well in the realm of academic research where the countries of the South are rarely treated as migrant destinations. As a consequence, the literature has very little to say about whether response patterns to migrant influxes are essentially similar or markedly different across recipient nations in the global North and South. This analysis is an effort to begin addressing that question.

A second, related question addressed here concerns the nature of the relationship between immigration and anti-immigrant political behavior.

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[1] Survey research shows that citizens of developed countries routinely overestimate the size of the immigrant population in their countries, sometimes wildly. For example, "On average, U.S. respondents guessed the share of immigrants in their country to be 42.1%; in fact, only 13% of the U.S. population is foreign-born. Portuguese respondents said 34.6% of their country's residents were immigrants (actual number: 8.3%)" (German Marshall Fund 2014, 16).

The vast literature developed to account for the reaction of ingroups (such as natives) to outgroups (such as immigrants) is dominated by two well-established schools of thought: realistic threat theory and intergroup contact theory. To grossly oversimplify, when describing the relationship between immigrant population size and anti-immigrant sentiment, the argument is that either more equals more (competition for resources fuels out-group hostility) or more equals less (contact with out-group members mitigates hostility). While the posited causal relationships are effectively the inverse of one another, implicit in both frameworks is a core assumption of linearity. Given the enormous amount of attention that has been devoted to the topic, it is rather surprising that research based on non-linear assumptions is almost non-existent.

My analysis is designed to address these two areas that remain underexplored in the existing research on anti-immigrant reactions, particularly in the area of electoral behavior. First I propose an alternative to the linear assumptions of competition and contact theory designed to produce a more parsimonious and intuitively appealing conceptualization of the relationship under study. There is an unspoken but logical implication within both theories that as values of the independent variable (immigrant population size) approach their minimum and maximum limits, we should expect comparable values on the dependent (hostility or tolerance) variables. Realistic conflict theory would predict a maximum level of hostility and contact theory the maximum level of tolerance as the immigrant population neared 100%, which seems to strain credulity. I suggest conceptualizing the relationship in curvilinear terms wherein the hypotheses embedded in the two theories reconciled rather than pitted against one another.

With regard to the geographic limitations noted earlier, I extend the literature by examining a case in which both the sending (Nicaragua) and receiving (Costa Rica) countries are part of the developing world.[2]

There are, of course, any number of other cases both within Latin America and beyond where such migration is taking place. Indeed, worldwide South-South immigration occurs at a rate roughly equal to (and possibly even surpassing) that of South-North immigration, as noted recently by the World Bank:

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[2] As of 2015, the World Bank classifies Costa Rica as an upper-middle-income economy (gross national income (GNI) per capita of $4,126 to $12,735), in the same category as Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador and Cuba. Nicaragua is in the next lowest category, lower-middle-income economies (GNI per capita of $1,046 to $4,125) (World Bank 2015).

> …current estimates indicate that 74 million, or nearly half, of the migrants from developing countries reside in other developing countries. However, we believe this estimate is likely to be low, as the official data tend to undercount irregular migrants. Irregular migration is probably even more common in South-South than South-North migration. (Ratha and Shaw 2007, 2)

Explicitly anti-immigration parties appear to be less prevalent in the South than in the North, but clearly the essential precondition (immigrants) for the emergence of such parties is present in much of the developing world. Given this, there are compelling reasons to explore anti-immigrant voting dynamics in the South beyond the simple benefit of applying existing analytical frameworks to new cases. I suggest that it is plausible to argue that the manifest differences in the political environments of South versus North could mediate underlying anti-immigrant behavioral patterns. The most obvious of these environmental contrasts is the enormous difference in the economic gaps separating sending and receiving countries in South-North versus South-South immigration. According to the World Bank, for example, the average wage gain for a South-North migrant is 2,314%, while the equivalent for a South-South migrant is 60% (Ratha and Shaw 2007, 24).

Despite this enormous difference, for a host of reasons nearly 40% of all immigrants from low-income countries migrate to other low-income countries, a figure roughly equal to the number from such nations who move to high-income countries (Ratha and Shaw 2007, 16).[3]

Moreover, the bulk of South-South immigration is intra-regional and in most cases, the income differences between the sending and receiving countries tend to be modest.[4] Given this, it is reasonable to presume that in such situations, the difference in the economic status of immigrants and many, though not all, natives is much smaller than that seen in the

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[3] Approximately 20% settle in middle-income countries.
[4] The exception is when there is what Ratha and Shaw call "major middle-income migration poles," such as Argentina, Thailand, Jordan or Malaysia. They note that, "differences in country incomes are likely much greater, on average, for migrants traveling outside their native region than for intra-regional migration, partly because larger income differentials are required to overcome higher costs associated with traveling over greater distances (geographic and cultural). In the lowest-income regions (Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia), almost all identified intra-regional migration from lower- to higher-income countries is to countries with only slightly higher income levels" (Ratha and Shaw 2007, 16).

developed world.[5] The absence of a significant gap between the groups would, I argue, be expected to lead to a very different type of anti-immigration dynamic than that heretofore identified in the developed world. Additionally, there is a parallel narrowing of the gaps in the sociocultural separation of immigrants and natives that is more associated with intra-regional versus extra-regional migration. In the main, South-North migration features pronounced social and cultural differences between the newcomers and natives in terms of skin color, language, religion, etc. By contrast, in South-South migration such differences tend to be much more understated and may actually be so subtle as to be undetectable by outsiders.

Costa Rica provides a good example of this phenomenon. Shared language, religious traditions, and colonial forebears aside, natives in that country have little difficulty identifying Nicaraguans in their midst by relying primarily on two cues: skin color (Nicaraguans tend to be darker than most natives) and accent. Such markers, though well recognized, lie along a much finer gradient that allows for some classificatory murkiness unlikely to be seen, say, when native Swiss identify Angolan immigrants in their country.

Nuanced as they may be, the differences in Costa Rica have proven sufficiently salient to provoke a sometimes powerful anti-immigrant backlash. Costa Rican media, particularly the broadcast media, have been heavily criticized for perpetuating a narrative linking immigrants with rising rates of violent crime. The near constant reinforcement of this message has contributed to a disturbing attitudinal shift within the historically very tolerant Costa Rican citizenry, an extreme and particularly gruesome display of which occurred just months before the 2006 elections: "In November 2005 a Nicaraguan immigrant, Natividad Canda, was allowed to be attacked, killed and partially eaten on private property by two Rottweiler dogs. It was witnessed by bystanders, including armed Costa Rican authorities" (Minority Rights Group International 2008).

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[5] To my knowledge, there are no broadly comparative studies of the immigrant-native wage differentials, but some individual country analyses appear to lend credence to my claim that the gap in economic status between the two groups is smaller in South-South versus South-North migration. Gindling (2009), for example, finds that Nicaraguan immigrants to Costa Rica earn between two-thirds to three-quarters of what natives earn (30). By contrast, male Mexican immigrants to the United States only earned between 37% (for recent arrivals) to 58% (for those who had lived in the United States for more than 10 years) of their American counterparts (Edmonston and Smith 1997, 177).

Though the attack was notable for its extremity, there is no shortage of polling data indicating the resonance of a rather less malignant anti-immigrant message. Nicaraguans constitute roughly three quarters of the immigrant population in Costa Rica, so when a poll finds that a majority of Costa Ricans consider immigration to be a "serious problem," everyone understands that the problem has a Nicaraguan face (*La Nación* 2006). In the year following the release of this poll several Costa Rican parties adopted platforms with varying degrees of hostility toward immigrants. That development provides an opportunity to expand the scope of the anti-immigration literature into the global South.

The literature on support for anti-immigrant parties arose largely in the developed world and is dominated by two perspectives: realistic conflict theory and contact theory. A review of that literature suggests that these two theories are viewed as incompatible, with a broadly shared assumption that either one or the other (but not both) accurately explains the phenomenon. I propose an alternative interpretation that reconciles the two such that elements of both can simultaneously be operant. The key to such an interpretation lies in conceptualizing the link between the size of the immigrant population and anti-immigration voting as curvilinear rather than the standard assumption of a linear relationship.

I then propose an accommodation threshold conceptualization designed to capture a curvilinear relationship and set out to test how well such a model works in comparison to linear models. I use both the size of the Nicaraguan immigrant population at the municipality level and the change in that size (i.e., growth or decline) as my primary independent variables and include a series of control variables common in the literature. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models are estimated for a series of different configurations in order to test for curvilinear vs. linear relationships. Across all configurations, curvilinear models outperform linear ones, with higher overall explanatory power (R^2) and great numbers of variables reaching significance. I close with a discussion of these findings and their implication for future research in this area.

Theory and Literature

The two dominant perspectives in the literature on anti-immigrant attitudes and behavior construct arguments that appear fundamentally at odds with one another. Realistic conflict theory suggests that prejudice is rooted in a perceived threat among natives that immigrants pose to their

existing prerogatives, be they material (e.g., jobs, social services) or sociocultural (e.g., status, cultural hegemony), which increases as the out-group size expands (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Sherif 1967). By contrast, intergroup contact theory posits that as intergroup contact grows, fears of outsiders dissipate as nationals come to see immigrants as co-workers and neighbors rather than as an abstract threat (Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

Realistic conflict theory proceeds from an initial assumption that given a finite amount of resources, any increase in the size of the demand pool will be seen as threatening by pre-existing beneficiaries. In turn, the threat perception will be greatly magnified when newcomers are considered an "outgroup." Such threats can be rooted either in a perceived materialistic competition over public resources such as employment, access to public services and education (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Campbell 1965; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Sears and Funk 1991; Sherif 1967) or in the less tangible but still salient contest over cultural or identity resources. In the latter, anti-outgroup attitudes are the product of fears that the ingroup's cultural hegemony is threatened by a sudden influx of 'others' (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner et al. 1987). Of whatever type, these threat perceptions translate directly into anti-outgroup behavior (Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002; Schlueter, Schmidt, and Wagner 2008; Semyonov et al. 2004) and are almost always a product of wildly exaggerated estimates of the actual size of the outgroup (Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005; Semyonov et al. 2004). Though a product of misinformed apprehensions, this gap between objective and subjective immigrant population estimates can of itself exacerbate anti-immigrant sentiment: "The greater the discrepancy between actual and perceived size, the greater is the perceived threat and the more pronounced are the exclusionary attitudes toward foreigners" (Semyonov et al. 2004, 696).

The hypothesized causal chain of conflict theory, then, leads from immigrant or outgroup population size to threat perception to anti-outgroup behavior, such as voting for anti-immigrant parties. In other words, conflict theory at its core pictures a positive linear relationship between immigrant population size and anti-immigrant behavior.

The other dominant framework, intergroup contact theory, begins from an assumption that as cross-group interaction increases, negative preconceptions rooted in the objectification of an outgroup will give way to more personified and more positive attitudes. They thus see growth in the

size of an outgroup community as mitigating rather than fostering fears among nationals.

Earlier research generally argued that ameliorative effects could only be realized by discrete individuals under very restrictive and infrequently seen circumstances (Allport 1954; Forbes 1997; Powers and Ellison 1995). Subsequent research has, however, greatly broadened this view, indicating that even relatively coincidental contact can set the stage for the development of more positive intergroup relations (Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) and that individual transformations will occur at some point within a community such that ecological fallacy problems are rendered moot (Brown and Hewstone 2005; see also Danso, Sedlovskaya, and Suanda 2007; Stephan et al. 2005; Wagner et al. 2006).

If we accept the premise that group-level analysis is likely to be productive, the question then turns to how to define said groups. Compelling arguments have been made for a bias in favor of lower orders of aggregation where data permits. The logic here is that attitudes are more closely informed by local contexts (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000) and that selection bias problems arising from residential segregation are less pronounced at lower levels (Schmid et al. 2008).

A related but distinct discussion has to do with the most appropriate contextual level of analysis. This plays out in discussions of whether the generalizability of macro-context (i.e., cross-national, national or regional) studies comes at the expense of masking the sort of variation that can be identified in smaller contexts, such as counties, municipalities or even neighborhoods. As Quillian (1996) notes, "The correct unit is at which to measure the influences is difficult to define precisely, since people probably picture relations between their own racial group and other racial groups at more than one level (city, state, region, or nation) depending on the context" (829; see also Nadeau, Niemi, and Levine 1993). Several authors have made compelling cases for using smaller settings, in part because attitudes tend to be much more informed by the immediate context rather than higher level orders of aggregation (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). At any level, intergroup contact theory confronts a selection bias issue that can be problematic when there is significant residential segregation between populations that limits contact opportunities. In other words, a community with an immigrant population of 10% that is residentially mixed is very different from one in which there is an immigrant enclave. Schmid et al.

(2008) use this problem to justify using smaller contextual levels, suggesting that segregation is likely to increase as one moves to higher levels.

Ultimately, contact theorists share with their realistic conflict theory counterparts an essentially linear view of the relationship between immigrant population size and anti-immigrant behavior, differing only in the direction of that relationship. Intergroup contact theory posits that as these populations increase, such behaviors will decrease, a negative linear relationship. This has the consequence of cementing the idea that competition and contact theories are irretrievably at odds. The attachment to linear explanations has seemingly become so ingrained that alternative formulations are apparently never considered. What makes this reluctance curious is that a number of scholars appear to have in fact found rather convincing evidence of curvilinear relationships, and more curious still is that when such evidence is found it is either ignored or even actively discounted.

For example, in a rigorous and well-crafted study, Schlueter and Scheepers (2010), "subjected several, contradictory hypotheses derived from group threat theory and intergroup contact theory to a simultaneous empirical test" (292). What they found was strong and significant support for the hypotheses derived both theories.[6] Despite the implication that non-linear explanations should be investigated, the authors report the findings with no discussion along those lines. Giles and Evans (1986) construct a model to test for white hostility resulting from growth in the black population that includes a quadratic term (indicating curvilinearity). Yet when that term is found to be both significant and in the correct direction (negative), they interpret the result to mean that after black population reaches a certain point (60%), whites, "become resigned to their power loss and, hence, less hostile" (Giles and Evans 1986, 478). Similarly, Wagner et al. (2006) report findings consistent with curvilinearity but appear to dismiss them in favor of traditional linear explanations: "The quadratic term is significant, indicating that the effect of percentage of minorities on ethnic prejudice grows weaker as the percentage increases. Nevertheless, the linear effect of percentage of minorities remains significant" (383-384; see also Rink, Phalet, and Swyngedouw 2009; Schneider 2008).

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[6] The authors concluded that, "outgroup size operates in a dual way: objective outgroup size parallels perceived outgroup size, which relates positively to anti-outgroup attitudes via perceived group threat. Likewise, both objective outgroup size and perceived outgroup size are positively associated with intergroup contact which, conversely, lowers anti-immigrant attitudes" (Schlueter and Scheepers 2010, 292).

Hypotheses, Variables and Data

My hypothesis is based on the assumption of a curvilinear relationship between immigrant population size and anti-immigrant party voting that is consistent with the suggestive (though underexplored) evidence of such a link in the literature. I posit the existence of an accommodation threshold which demarcates a sort of transition zone between competition and contact stimuli, suggesting these effects are better conceptualized as a continuum rather than two discrete and unrelated phenomena. At one end, in a venue with relatively small but growing numbers of immigrants, natives will increasingly see, but not interact with, the newcomers. In that context, threat perception will be largely unchallenged by contact effects and will thus dominate. At the other end of this conceptual continuum, where immigrants comprise a substantial segment of the population, they will be increasingly viewed by natives as neighbors, co-workers, and even friends rather than an ill-defined and remote "threat." In such situations, anti-immigrant politicians will find little traction once their rhetoric is no longer perceived as a call to arms against an amorphous 'other' and instead is seen as a personal attack aimed at someone the listener knows well. It is in the middle of that continuum, or the top of the curve, that anti-immigration sentiment will be maximized. In that context, immigrants will have reached such salience that fears of being 'overrun' may be seen as warranted, but will still be so few that intergroup contact will be relatively limited. My hypothesis, then, is that the relationship between the size of the immigrant population and electoral support for political parties with anti-immigrant planks is curvilinear. The percentage of the vote for such parties will be lowest in communities that have either a very small or very large immigrant population and will be highest in communities with a moderately sized immigrant population.

My dependent variable is the percentage of the vote obtained by the most analytically appropriate anti-immigration party, *Unión para el Cambio* (UPC) in 80 of Costa Rica's 81 *cantones*.[7] As noted below, I rely on data provided by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to classify parties as anti-immigration based on their party manifestos (*Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones* (TSE) 2005). Since voters can split their ballot, I estimate different sets of models, for UPC presidential votes and legislative assembly votes as reported by the TSE (2006).[8]

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[7] One *canton*, Jimenez, was identified as an outlier using a test of Mahalanobis distance and was subsequently removed from the analysis.

[8] Estimates of split-ticket voting in Costa Rica consistently hover around the 40% level (see Urcuyo 2010).

National elections to fill virtually every elected office (president, members of the unicameral legislature and city council members) in Costa Rica are held every four years. Parties can be inscribed at one of three levels, depending on the scope of the slate of candidates they run: national (all offices), provincial (legislative and city council offices within one of seven provinces) or *cantonal* (city council within a single municipality). The number of parties competing at all levels has increased dramatically in the last few electoral cycles, with 14 national, 14 provincial and 28 *cantonal* parties contesting the 2006 race.[9] As the 'provinces' in Costa Rica are nothing more than a statistical convenience with no elected offices and municipalities have next to no autonomy, immigration issues are *de facto* exclusive to national level parties.

Of the 14 nationally inscribed parties in the 2006 elections, three to four took positions which could reasonably be characterized as 'anti-immigration,' at least in the context of traditional Costa Rican discourse on the issue, while the remainder adopted more neutral stances.[10] Two of the four largest and most competitive parties, *Partido Liberacíon Nacional* (PLN) and *Partido Acción Ciudadana* (PAC), offered support for the traditional 'social-democratic' and relatively open status quo policy (i.e., Costa Rica as a haven for the oppressed of other nations, vigilance in protecting human rights of immigrants, legalization, social tolerance and integration, etc.). Of the other two, *Partido Unidad Social Cristiana* (PUSC) took a line which represented a moderate 'hardening' of the status quo (e.g., need for "normalization" of immigration to stem its effect on social services) while *Movimiento Libertario* (ML) was the only major party staking out a position that seems to warrant the 'anti-immigration' label. It is important to reiterate that such a characterization is contextual. Thus, while the ML's stances might be considered fairly tepid in comparison to the more rabidly xenophobic

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[9] I analyzed the 2006 contest because it was the only election in which an explicitly anti-immigrant party (UPC) competed. The party was only registered to run in the 2006 election and disbanded after it was over. Aside from the presence of a semi-viable anti-immigration presidential candidate (Antonio Álvarez of the UPC), the 2006 election was typical of other such contests. For example, voter turnout in 2006 was 65.4%, consistent with both the preceding election in 2002 (68.8%) and the subsequent one in 2010 (69.1%). Likewise, in two of the three elections (2006 and 2010), the historically dominant *Partido Liberación Nacional* (PLN) won the presidency. In 2002, the traditional challenger to the PLN, the *Partido de Unidad Socialcristiana* (PUSC) came out on top (TSE 2015).

[10] Two of these, *Patria Primero* and *Unión Nacional*, offered planks with sometimes ambiguous anti-immigration components (TSE 2005). They were left out of the analysis in part because of this ambiguity, but principally because they were small and largely unknown to Costa Rican voters (*Centro de Estudios de Opinión* 2005, 7).

parties seen elsewhere, they were nevertheless perceived as out of the mainstream in Costa Rica. The national media noted as much, identifying the party's presidential candidate, Otto Guevara, as one of the two contenders (the other being the UPC candidate Antonio Álvarez) taking the hardest line against immigration. Guevara is quoted as suggesting that the generous benefits offered by the state were to blame for chain migration, with "easy to find work" attracting immigrants who then bring their children (for the "free education, scholarships and food") and elderly relatives (for "free social security") along (Alvarado 2006). The party's platform included such measures as prohibiting the children of undocumented immigrants from attending public schools and denying access to state-run hospitals and clinics except in cases of emergency (TSE 2005).

Despite a relatively clearly defined anti-immigration stand, the votes cast for the ML pose serious problems from an analytical perspective. Because the anti-immigration component of the party's platform is just one element in a larger ideological framework, libertarianism, it is all but impossible to attach meaning to votes for the ML in a disaggregated fashion.[11] One cannot assume *a priori* that someone supporting the party is doing so on the basis of its position on immigration as opposed to other elements of its libertarian agenda.[12]

One party, the aforementioned UPC, does seem to offer a degree of analytical viability for a number of reasons. First, like the ML (and perhaps even more so), the UPC campaigned on a fairly straightforward anti-immigration platform. Among the items offered in its manifesto (*Partido Unión para el Cambio* 2005, author's translations):

> A central point of concern of the party is to return my country to the Costa Ricans. I propose a restrictive

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[11] It is also important to point out that the ML's ideological foundation and positions on major policy issues can only be charitably called 'flexible.' The party has been notably erratic in terms of their platforms across electoral cycles, with one political analyst calling the party an 'ideological chameleon' ("*camaleonismo ideológico*") that regularly reverses its positions on important issues such as gay marriage, abortion and social spending from one election to the next (Álvarez 2014).

[12] In the interest of thoroughness, I did estimate models using the ML vote as the dependent variable. Across all possible configurations (e.g., presidential vs. legislative, linear vs. curvilinear), these models demonstrate little explanatory power, with negligible R^2 values (ranging from a high of .083 to a low of -.002) and few if any independent variables reaching levels of significance. Models which added the votes of the two smaller anti-immigrant parties (*Patria Primero* and *Unión Nacional*) to the UPC totals performed much better than those ML models, but were less robust (i.e., fewer independent variables reached significance) than models with only the UPC as dependent variable.

immigration policy to control illegal immigrants who deprive Costa Ricans of health care and employment. To achieve this, I will push a combination of constitutional, legal and administrative reforms which limit the right to services provided by the state to Costa Ricans and to those residents allowed in under properly regulated migratory regimes (5).

Elsewhere in the questionnaire, the party calls for "immediate deportation of undocumented aliens" and restricting immigration to "only [those] areas that do not displace nationals" (56). To the question of how the party, "would confront the challenges of social integration for the immigrant population," Álvarez responded: "To the contrary, I believe that I should defend Costa Rican uniqueness ['*idiosincrasia*']" (TSE 2005). In the article labeling the UPC as one of the two parties taking hard line anti-immigration positions cited earlier, UPC presidential candidate Antonio Álvarez argued that Costa Ricans felt "cornered and marginalized" by the rising tide of immigrants (Alvarado 2006).

What is interesting from an analytical standpoint is that aside from its hardline stance on immigration, the UPC's positions on issues such as the economy, education, infrastructure, and foreign affairs were largely indistinguishable from the social democratic positions taken by the PLN, PAC and even PUSC. This suggests that UPC voters supported the party on the basis of the one issue on which it offered an alternative not available from other parties: anti-immigration.

A final analytical advantage offered by the UPC is how broadly well-known it was among voters. Its presidential candidate Álvarez had a 91% name recognition (and a 53% favorable rating) and he was one of only five candidates (of a possible 14) included in televised national debates (*Centro de Estudios de Opinión* 2005, 7; Inside Costa Rica 2005).

My primary independent variable is immigrant population, specifically the percentage of foreign-born Nicaraguan population in each municipality at the *cantonal* level. My accommodation threshold hypothesis asserts that as immigrant populations increase, anti-immigrant sentiment will grow until a tipping point is reached and decline thereafter. I thus expect to see a

curvilinear relationship between immigration and the response to it.[13] For this and all other independent variables, data are derived from the 2000 Costa Rican *Encuesta de Hogares* [National Household Survey], compiled by the *Centro Centroamericano de Población* [Central American Population Center] in collaboration with the government's *Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos* [National Statistics and Census Institute] (*Centro Centroamericano de Población* n.d.).

In addition to immigrant population, I tried to select control variables (given data limitations) for which the literature provides precedent, particularly those which are congruent with threat and contact theories. One variable that was available but not used is unemployment. Though this variable is oft-used, the findings in regard to an unemployment and anti-immigration voting relationship have been consistently inconsistent. Research has identified a positive relationship (Lubbers and Scheepers 2002), a negative relationship (Knigge 1998) and no relationship at all (Alekseev 2006; Golder 2003). In all of my model estimations, unemployment and underemployment failed to demonstrate any explanatory value whatsoever, including when it was used in interaction with immigrant demographic variables among others.

As to the variables that met my criteria for inclusion, I turn first to education, an independent variable extensively used by researchers. In fact, it is almost axiomatic within the literature that the relationship between educational level and anti-immigrant (or anti-outgroup) sentiment is negative (see Alexseev 2006; Branton et al. 2007; Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2002; among many). This research consistently finds that as educational attainment rises at either the individual or collective level, support for anti-immigrant policies or parties drops. I would suggest there are at least two possible reasons to expect a difference between the developing and developed worlds with regard to the impact of education on anti-immigrant party support. First, higher education in much of the global South (and certainly in Costa Rica) tends to be very segmented and specialized. Matriculating students must select a major field of study and are required to stay in that field until graduation. Additionally, students must take classes directly related to their major exclusively. Business majors do not take anthropology courses and philosophy students do not enroll in

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[13] I also analyzed a closely related variable, the change in immigrant population size between the 1984 and 2000 national censuses. All of the findings for this variable were highly consistent with the static immigrant population figure, albeit slightly weaker.

chemistry classes, producing highly stratified cohorts. Consequently, the majority of students will not be exposed to the academic disciplines intuitively expected to mitigate xenophobic attitudes (e.g., social sciences, humanities), thus canceling out the tolerance-enhancing effect of education seen where the traditional liberal arts model applies.

Polling research by Vargas-Cullell, Rosero-Bixby, and Seligson (2005) appears to lend support for this argument. Their research on the one hand, notes an 18 point difference on a 'tolerance scale' between the least educated (51) and the university educated (69), seemingly confirming the prevailing wisdom. Yet elsewhere, there are findings that appear consistent with my assertion. They find a statistically significant and strong positive link between acceptance of Nicaraguans and horizontal (e.g., friends, co-workers, etc.) interaction and no relationship at all for vertical (e.g., employees, security guards, etc.) interaction. They also find no relation between university education and horizontal interaction but a strong relation between higher education and vertical interaction. In other words, it appears that those with a university education tend not to be engaged in the most powerful predictor of tolerance, horizontal interaction. They are instead strongly linked to the type of interaction (vertical) which these data (and intergroup contact theory) suggest has no mitigating impact on anti-immigrant sentiments.

The second control variable I include is the percent of the local population defined as living in poverty. Here the expectations of competition versus contact theories point in different directions. Realistic conflict theory argues that as poverty levels rise, so too do anti-immigration sentiments, as immigrants are perceived as competitors for the scant resources available (Blalock 1967; Coenders 2001; Schnieder 2007). Conversely, intergroup contact theory would appear to suggest that in conditions of greater poverty, interaction opportunities among those in similarly precarious conditions would be maximized as a consequence of class-based residential segregation. Under such circumstances, inter-class solidarity may act to mitigate inter-group tensions. This, though, appears to be a largely empirical question as I cannot assume *a priori* that the poor are only segregated along class lines and not ethnic ones as well. Consequently, I hypothesize a positive relationship between local poverty levels and UPC support as suggested by the competition literature.

My third control variable is the 1984-2000 change in the percent of a *canton* classified as living in 'urban' areas. This variable was included on the

basis of its relevance to both 'competition' (i.e., greater visibility yields greater economic or cultural threat perception) and 'contact' (i.e., more proximity leads to more opportunity for interaction and transculturation) models. The former would predict a positive relationship to anti-immigration voting and the latter a negative. For reasons described below, I regard the positive prediction of realistic conflict theory to be more plausible.

Because as the old bromide goes, size matters, the smaller the demographic venue, the easier it is for residents to approximate the local universe, thus making the gap between perceived and actual immigrant levels (and perhaps, immigrant impact) much smaller. As the demographic venue becomes larger (i.e., shifts toward urbanization), the capacity of a citizen to gauge the contours of the local universe becomes more tenuous, widening the gap between subjective and objective evaluations of immigrant levels. Likewise, the degree to which horizontal as opposed to vertical integration becomes possible may be minimized as a result of residential segregation patterns in increasingly urbanized areas. In more rural *cantones*, residential segregation patterns are quite distinct from those in urbanized areas in terms of geographic separation. In the latter, immigrant "ghettos" are segregated but in close proximity to the native population, while in the former, immigrant enclaves are frequently far removed geographically, especially in agricultural zones where immigrant seasonal workers live in plantation housing far from native-populated towns.[14] Put differently, in urbanizing *cantones* Nicaraguans are residentially separate but regularly visible. In largely rural *cantones* experiencing no increase in urbanization, however, immigrants are both separate and invisible by virtue of geographic disconnection. In terms of how I hypothesize the relationship, then, the assertion of realistic conflict theory that salience without contact will lead to greater support for anti-immigration parties seems most appropriate.

The fourth control variable I utilize is ethnic diversity. According to intergroup contact theory, a more diverse community should offer a more receptive environment than one which is ethnically homogeneous. This measure is defined by census authorities in purely racial (or biological) terms, as the categories make clear: Indigenous, Black, and Asian.[15] The indicator is flawed in its failure to recognize diversity along other than racial

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[14] Brenes-Camacho (2003) finds strong support for this sort of residential distribution of immigrants in agricultural *cantones* in northern and coastal Costa Rica.

[15] The figure reported is, "an indicator that measures the relative number of blacks, mulattos, Indians or Chinese for every 100 people of other ethnicities" [i.e., "white or mestizo"] (*InfoCensos* 2004b).

lines, yet nonetheless provides at least one indicator of homogeneity versus heterogeneity. At the *cantonal* and national level, Costa Rica skews dramatically toward the former. With the exception of several Black and Asian communities on the Atlantic Coast and a concentration of the country's fairly miniscule indigenous population in the south, the data are overwhelmingly centered close to zero when it comes to ethnic diversity as defined by the census (*InfoCensos* 2004a). Because of this, I use the log of the variable in my models. I also estimate two separate models to explore the possibility that the relationship between diversity and UPC voting is curvilinear, as I expect immigrant population to be.

My final control variable is Social Security access, measured as the percentage of the local population with that access. Unlike the U.S., in Costa Rica the term Social Security (*Seguro Social*) refers to the state-run health care system, which is not age-restricted. Because this variable represents one of the most significant arenas of potential inter-group conflict over access to government services, it lies at the heart of realistic conflict theory. That theory would clearly posit a negative linear relationship: more widespread access will reduce the size of the anti-immigrant vote and vice versa. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of the variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable		Min	Max	Mean	SD
Votes	UPC Presidential Vote	0.86%	3.68%	2.12%	.75
	UPC Deputies Vote	0.37%	6.08%	2.07%	1.04
Immigration	Nicaraguan-born	0.40%	27.10%	5.15%	4.62
	Δ Nicaraguan-born (1984-2000)	-0.20%	13.40%	3.34%	2.77
Demographic	Total Population	4,877	309,672	47,039	49,750
	Urban Population	8.30%	100.00%	46.65%	27.17
	Total Poverty	3.32%	40.51%	14.88%	.069
Education	None or Primary	26.53%	91.41%	57.91%	.15
	Only Secondary (any level completed)	8.06%	47.94%	27.40%	.093
	University (any level completed)	0.00%	38.38%	12.66%	.082
	Literacy Rate	84.60%	99.00%	94.03%	3.18
Employment	Unemployed	2.00%	13.10%	4.92%	2.03
	Total Un/Under-employed	2.22%	13.33%	5.15%	2.03

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

To test my hypotheses, I estimated a total of six different models, based on curvilinear versus linear assumptions in regard to both immigrant population and local ethnic diversity and the vote at the presidential and legislative levels (For descriptive statistics, see Table 1). In those models, I see fairly strong and consistent indications that models predicated on curvilinear rather than linear assumptions about the immigrant demographics and anti-immigrant voting relationship perform more robustly. In all instances, models which include a quadratic term for the immigrant population variable are superior to those which do not in terms of both the variance accounted for and the significance of the variable itself (see Tables 2 and 3). While the linear models demonstrate a not inconsequential ability to account for variance, they consistently fail to reach levels of significance on the crucial immigration demographic variable. To accept these results, one would have to assume that immigrant population size has no causal impact on anti-immigrant voting, a stance that strains credulity. In both of the curvilinear models, the demographic variable reaches

Table 2: Curvilinear versus Linear Models of UPC Presidential Vote

Variable	Linear		Curvilinear			
	B	t	*B*	T	*B*	t
% Nicaraguan Population	.011	.649	.093*	2.266	.093*	2.247
% Nicaraguan Population²	—	—	-.004*	-2.184	-.004*	-2.168
% University Educated	.060***	4.597	.054***	4.097	.053***	3.906
% Poverty	-2.844**	-2.728	-2.248*	-2.135	-2.247*	-2.119
% Change Urban Pop.	.014**	2.127	.014*	2.211	.014*	2.191
Log of Ethnic Diversity	.115	.966	.078	.665	.062	.134
Log of Ethnic Diversity²	—	—	—	—	-.005	-.035
% With Social Security	.019	1.331	.023	1.641	.023	1.623
(Constant)	.463***	.375	-.224***	-.180	2.30***	1.182
R²	.441		.476		.476	
Adj. R²	.395		.425		.417	

Note: Coefficients are unstandardized OLS regression values. *<.05; **<.01; ***<.001

Table 3: Curvilinear versus Linear Models of UPC Legislative Vote

	Linear		Curvilinear			
Variable	B	t	B	T	B	t
% Nicaraguan Population	.026	.926	.155*	2.352	.153*	2.307
% Nicaraguan Population²	—	—	-.006*	-2.153	-.006*	-2.194
% University Educated	.026**	2.664	.046*	-2.171	.040	1.826
% Poverty	-3.143	-1.880	-2.200	-1.302	-2.165	-1.281
% Change Urban Pop.	.020*	1.836	.020*	1.911	.019*	1.852
Log of Ethnic Diversity	.142	.743	.084	.442	-.609	-.822
Log of Ethnic Diversity²	—	—	—	—	-.222	-.967
% With Social Security	.015	.653	.022	.947	.020	.877
(Constant)	.667**	.337	-420***	-.211	-.678***	-.337
R²	.241		.287		.296	
Adj. R²	.179		.217		.217	

Note: Coefficients are unstandardized OLS regression values. *<.05; **<.01; ***<.001

significance and exerts a moderate impact on the dependent variable. In the presidential race, for every 10% increase in the Nicaraguan population, the UPC would gain slightly less than 1% of the vote. In the legislative contest, the party would pick up an additional 1.5% vote share.

Turning to my additional independent variables, I begin with perhaps one of the most studied measures in this area of research: education. The percentage of university-educated residents in a *canton* demonstrates a significant impact that is both strong and durable. In every model I estimated with various arrays of independent variables, this one never failed to reach a high level of significance. What is most interesting is the positive direction of this relationship, meaning that as the educational profile of a *canton* rises, so too does its propensity to support anti-immigrant candidates. This runs squarely against the widely accepted characterization of the relationship as negative.

How to account for such a finding? Recall the earlier description of a higher education system that is highly compartmentalized and stratified in the sense that students only take classes directly related to their major. This

means that the majority of college graduates will never be exposed to coursework in areas that might intuitively produce higher levels of tolerance, such as the social sciences and humanities. As well, that majority of university graduates, with degrees in business, engineering, architecture and the like, constitute a segment of the social elite, largely isolated from contact with the immigrant community and prone (like other sectors of the elite) to prejudice and xenophobic attitudes.

A second somewhat surprising result is the finding with regard to poverty levels. As noted earlier, the significant inverse relationship between poverty rates and anti-immigrant party voting that I identified is at odds with the contentions of threat theory. Further, this variable exerts a very substantial impact on UPC electoral support. For every 1% rise in the poverty rate, the UPC would be expected to lose roughly 2.2% of its vote, basically the equivalent of its actual vote total in the 2006 election. Though earlier I briefly suggested a hypothesized negative relationship that is conceptually consistent with intergroup contact theory, I also noted that much more data would be needed (e.g., class and ethnic segregation distributions) before such a hypothesis could be tested. The finding does, however, provide an indication that the dynamics of anti-immigration voting may be very different in the South than in the North.

The final independent variable for which I find evidence of a significant relationship (though only in the presidential model) was the urbanization measure. The direction of that relationship is consistent with my assertion that realistic conflict theory offered a more compelling theoretical argument for a positive relationship than did intergroup contact theory for an inverse one. Note, though, that the impact of the variable is quite small. The UPC would be expected to see its vote share increase by only 0.15% for every 10% rise in increased urbanization. This is a meager figure to be sure, but somewhat less so considering the party's actual overall level of electoral support.

Neither of the remaining two variables, ethnic diversity (tested in both linear and non-linear fashion) and access to Social Security, demonstrated significance. Though these two measures are highly relevant in conceptual terms, the empirical reality of the Costa Rican context makes the findings less than surprising. In regard to diversity, racial minorities (a category that does not include Nicaraguans) constitute a mere 5% of the population and they are highly concentrated in spatial terms. This means that the conditions upon which the effects of contact are predicated (i.e., a racial distribution

that at least somewhat approximates normal) are largely non-existent in Costa Rica. Instead, we see a situation in which non-mestizos are either altogether absent or constitute the preponderant majority at the *cantonal* level. The lack of a significant finding, then, is unremarkable.

The picture is likewise complicated with regards to the second variable that appears to have little explanatory power, access to Social Security. As noted earlier, the actual or perceived struggle over access to government services between natives and immigrants is at the core of realistic conflict theory. As per that theory, we would expect to see an inverse relationship between access and anti-immigrant voting. But in the 16 years prior to the 2000 census, the Costa Rican state embarked on an ambitious and largely successful campaign to expand Social Security access dramatically. Looking across municipalities during that period, the average increase in the percentage of those covered was 13% and the national average for coverage was 82%. Only two of 81 *cantones* saw access decline and seven saw increases of more than 30%. In such a climate, anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric describing nationals as somehow being 'pushed aside' by immigrants in terms of health care would appear to have little chance of gaining political traction. There is, of course, variation in the measure insofar as some municipalities saw a greater percentage increase than others. Yet it seems rather awkward to propose that *cantones* which saw a 20% rise in access would be twice more unlikely to vote for the UPC than those receiving only a 10% jump. A more intuitive explanation would be that either the variable has no effect or that whatever impact it may have exerted was mitigated by temporal circumstances.

Conclusion

The first major finding of my research is that the relationship between immigrant population sizes and anti-immigrant party support is best described as curvilinear. In a narrow sense, this is important because it suggests that moving beyond the traditional linear descriptions may afford us greater explanatory capacity than has been realized to date. In a larger context, my finding may provide a 'missing link' of sorts that connects two theoretical schools that are generally depicted as mutually exclusive under a single comprehensive framework. I make no claim to having realized that here, but the support I found for my accommodation threshold hypothesis suggests a parsimonious mechanism for merging competition and intergroup contact theory with no diminution of either. Earlier work has implied, and even directly suggested the possibility of a continuum rather

than a dichotomy. Schlueter and Scheepers (2010) note, for example, "intergroup contact appears to be an antecedent condition of perceived group threat, which in turn mediates the relationship of intergroup contact with unfavorable intergroup attitudes" (287). Yet none as I can tell has actually based an analysis *a priori* on an assumption of curvilinearity.

My second major finding has to do with the nature of the underlying forces which drive anti-immigrant party support in alternative developmental settings. As noted, several control variables that consistently find empirical support in the literature based on South-North immigration do not appear significant in the case of Costa Rica. And for one such variable which did reach significance, education, the direction of the relationship is reversed.

On the basis of these findings, I would argue that it is entirely possible (though clearly not certain) that patterns of anti-immigrant voting in the developed world may well be different in the developing world. As noted earlier, both income gaps and sociocultural differences between native and immigrant are generally speaking significantly smaller in South-South migration than in South-North migration. Given that these factors are central to both realistic group conflict theory and intergroup contact theory, it seems intuitive to assume that such differences would shape patterns of anti-immigrant sentiment and behavior in important ways. That said, the empirical support I find for a non-linear model of anti-immigration voting in Costa Rica may prove to be an outlier as additional South-South cases are investigated. It may be that such cases indicate a higher degree of similarity to South-North anti-immigrant voting than I have found here. Nonetheless, at least in the case of Costa Rica, some familiar causal arrows are pointing in the 'wrong' direction and some of them are curves.

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