Description: Past scholars find that there is a public consensus in the U.S. on the traits of ideal immigrants. Nevertheless, is there also a consensus on the perceived traits of actual immigrants living in the U.S.? We inductively assess how whites perceive immigrants in the U.S. and examine these perceptions' attitudinal impacts. We find mixed consensus among whites regarding the composition of the immigrant population. Further, we find that the immigrant traits they perceive are correlated in their minds in specific stereotypical patterns that we label “immigrant archetypes.” Using Latent Class Analysis, we find five archetypes. Two of them are extreme—one represents a low status, undocumented Latino man, which is associated with the most restrictionist immigration views. The other extreme represents a higher status, documented non-Latino immigrant, which is associated with the most positive immigration attitudes. Archetypes do not seem rooted in objective reality and are stronger predictors of immigration attitudes than most other independent variables. Their existence has significant implications for public opinion dynamics. When researchers, politicians, or journalists reference a single immigrant trait, they may knowingly or unknowingly conjure up entire archetypes in people’s minds.

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