

Fear of Immigrants, Support for Exclusionary Immigration Policies & Police Stops against Illegal Immigrants with a Criminal Background in the US

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Abstract

Most studies suggest that the fear of immigrants strongly influences public opinion about immigrants and immigration policies in the United States. Despite this knowledge, there is a lack of depth in the literature examining the effect of the fear of immigrants on police stops against undocumented immigrants and immigrants with criminal backgrounds. The present study fills this void in the literature by examining the effect of public fear of immigrants on public support for policing immigrants, specifically, undocumented immigrants with a criminal record, while controlling for other factors. Results from the regression analysis suggest that fear of immigrants, illustrated in exclusionary immigration policies, coupled with some socio-demographic factors, influence public attitude towards police stops against undocumented immigrants with criminal records. Theoretically, the present study fills a gap in the existing literature on the fear of immigrants, immigration, and policing, by exclusively focusing on undocumented immigrants with a criminal record. Policy-wise, the findings of these studies can be useful in developing more pragmatic and inclusionary immigration policies void of sentiments.

Keywords: Fear of immigrants; exclusionary immigration policies; policing; illegal immigrants; criminal backgrounds

Introduction

Irrational fear has shaped the American criminal justice system since its colonial conception (Fields, 2019). In the words of Powell and Menendian, “stoking anxiety, resentment, or fear of the ‘other’ is not a new electoral strategy in American Politics” (2017). Immigration policy in the U.S. is not void of fear mongering. Inflammatory rhetoric, as seen and used frequently by the previous U.S. President Trump, has reinforced the narrative of immigrants as “lawbreakers, competitors for U.S. jobs, and welfare dependents” (Capps & Fix 2020). Discourse surrounding immigration focuses on the consequences for taxes, cultural norms, and crime (Brader, Valentino & Suhay, 2009), cultivating a culture of fear while negating the benefits.

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The federal government's and immigrant enforcement's fight against immigration is ongoing. In the fiscal year of 2013 ICE deported over 216,000 people with a criminal conviction on their record (NBC, Reyes, 2021). In 2019 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) performed 360,00 removals of 'aliens', a 9.5% increase from 2018. 43% of these removals involved undocumented immigrants who had a prior criminal conviction. Additionally, the DHS made 77% more apprehensions in 2019 than in 2018 (DHS, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2019). According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as well as the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcements, the U.S. government spends more on immigration enforcement than all other principal criminal law enforcement agencies combined. These removals have become possible through anti-immigration legislation in the 1980's and 90's. "Expedited removal" legislation allows convicted aggravated felons to be deported without seeing an immigration judge (Cook, 2003). More recently the Trump administration has tried illegal border crossings as criminal cases, and because this is considered a misdemeanor and not a felony, the government is not required to provide counsel (PBS, Frazee, 2018). According to Stumpf, deportations and anti-immigration legislation has been expanding in response to the rise of "crimmigration law". This has been made possible through the conflation of immigration law with criminal law, immigration enforcement with criminal law enforcement, and with prosecution processes of immigration and criminal law (2006).

Proposition 187 is a key example of immigration policy driven by racialized fear and reinforced by immigration enforcement's growing distribution of power. As national demographics were changing, with 22% of California's population being born abroad in the 1990s, nativist backlash emerged. Proposition 187 attempted to deny public benefits such as education and healthcare to undocumented immigrants. It would also allow for state employees such as teachers, healthcare workers, and police to be responsible for determining the resident status of "apparent illegal aliens" (Santa Ana, 2002). Santa Ana attributes the support for Prop 187 as well as an increase in nativist sentiments to the role of metaphors and rhetoric, reinforcing a fear of a "rising brown tide" and of immigration itself (2002).

Research on the crime-immigration nexus, public perception of immigration, and racialized fear are expansive. Many attribute the fear of immigrants and immigration to culture balkanization, national security, terrorism, rhetoric, racialized news coverage, and financial stress (Citrin, Green, Wong, 1997; Brader, Valentino & Suhay, 2009; Gulasekaram & Ramakrishnan, 2012). In the interest of examining a less researched path, the dominant focus of this paper examines how public perception of immigration and immigrants is tied to fear, and further how that impacts support for immigration policies. This study is assessing support for policies on undocumented immigrants and immigrants with a criminal record. There have been studies linking immigration policy in the U.S. to have unethical impacts on immigrant communities such as higher rates of mental illness. For example, of sampled Latino youth living in fear of immigration enforcement, 30% do not engage in driving, extracurriculars, religious services, and community events. Additionally, they reported high levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD, with many having experienced more than seven traumatic life events (Capps & Fix, 2020). Our work addressing the fear of immigrants' relationship with public support for anti-immigration policies is important because it can lead to a greater understanding of why the public supports policies that have damaging effects on immigrant communities. This work is an additional resource to begin discrediting the climate of fear around immigration.



Literature Review

A Brief Historical Overview of Crime-Immigration Policies

Despite the existence of numerous empirical evidence that debunks an association between crime and immigration in the United States (Hernández, 2021; Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021; McCann, Zhang & Boateng, 2021), public attitudes and opinion continues to state otherwise (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Since public opinion influences public policy making in the United States, such as the impact of issue salience on government responsiveness (Burstein, 2003), it is not surprising to see that several restrictionist and get-tough immigration policies abound in the United States (Hernández, 2021). For example, from 1908 to 1980, the United States deported approximately 56,000 immigrants based on criminal or narcotic convictions (Reyes, 2021; Hernández, 2021). Most recent deportation evidence in 2013 suggests that about 216,000 immigrants were deported based on criminal or narcotic convictions (Hernández, 2021). The rise in deportation policies since the 1990s in the U.S. can be attributed to factors such as expansion of deportable crimes, increase in immigration officials' detention powers, and the federal government's conflation of the criminal justice system with immigration policy and control (Reyes, 2021).

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 and further amendments to the Act allowed for the aggravated felony provision, which broadened the qualifications for 'serious crimes' committed by immigrants (Cook, 2003). Furthermore, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act (ADAA) of 1988 strengthened the aggravated felony provisions and created an association between crime and immigration in the United States (Cook, 2003). Both acts had severe provisions for immigrants who commit crimes, such as ensuring that readmission for immigrants with a criminal background can only happen after 10 years (Cook, 2003). The aggravated felony provision was expanded under the Immigration Act of 1990 to include lesser drug and violent crimes committed by immigrants and increased the readmission period to the United States from 10 to 20 years (Cook, 2003). The provision also postulates that if an immigrant was convicted and served for 5 years, they are ineligible for readmission and reentry (Cook, 2003).

The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) of 1996 had two major provisions that specifically address 'immigrant crime'. The act broadened the aggravated felony provisions to include crimes such as bribery, obstruction of justice, and gambling offenses among others. AEDPA also barred immigrants with a criminal background from applying for discretionary relief (Cook, 2003). Furthermore, growing public anti-immigration sentiment coupled with a Congressional commission report led to the creation of Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). This act created harsher punishments for immigrants with a criminal background and undocumented immigrants (Cook, 2003). The rise in punitive policy during the 1980s and 90's is noted as a turning point for crimmigration law, expanding the power of enforcement and reasons for deportation (Tosh, 2021).

The passage of the Arizona SB 1070 Law and the recent anti-immigration policies under the Trump administration support historical evidence of anti-immigration policies against immigrants, specifically immigrants with a criminal background and undocumented immigrants (Ramakrishan & Gulasekaram, 2012). For example, Arizona SB 1070 allowed law enforcement agencies to demand documentation from immigrants to show their legal and

criminal background status in the U.S. (ACLU, n.d.). Since the passage of Arizona SB 1070, there has been a proliferation of such anti-immigration laws in states like Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, and South Carolina (Wang, 2012).

In conclusion, historical and empirical evidence suggest a long trajectory of anti-immigration policies in the United States, specifically targeting immigrants with a criminal background and undocumented immigrants (Ramakrishan & Gulasekaram, 2012). Evidence also suggests that such policies in the U.S. are supported by the public because of the fear of immigrants, false knowledge, xenophobia, racism, immigrant-crime perceptions, and other factors (Brader, Valentino & Suhay, 2008; Ramakrishan & Gulasekaram, 2012). In the present study we seek to understand the factors that influence public support for immigration policies targeted at immigrants with a criminal background and undocumented immigrants in the United States (Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021).

Fear of Immigrants & Other Predictors of Public Attitudes towards Immigrants: A Review

There has been extensive research done to address why there is public fear surrounding immigration in the United States (see Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021). Public and political discourse on immigration often emphasizes consequences for jobs, taxes, crime, and social harmony (Simon & Alexander, 1993). Often immigrants are perceived as criminogenic, which negates the benefits that immigrants provide (Light & Miller, 2018; McCann, Zhang & Boateng, 2021). Some scholars contend that public hate for immigrants can be influenced by stressors such as anxiety, unemployment, and financial stress (Citrin, Green & Wong, 1997).

Furthermore, some studies attribute public fear of immigrants as an exploited tool used to gain power by the media and politicians (Harley, 1994; Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008). Ramakrishan & Gulasekaram (2012) assert that immigrants are framed as a threat to domestic prosperity, security, and American cultural values. Group conflict and instrumental group conflict theories suggest that socio-economic competition between the public and immigrants presents an opportunity for anti-immigrant sentiments to grow among the public (Pryce, 2018; McCann & Boateng, 2020). Group conflict and instrumental group conflict theories are criticized for over focusing on external conflicts between the public and immigrants while neglecting internal conflicts with each group (Meuleman, Davidov, & Billiet, 2009).

Some scholars argue intergroup and demographic contact theories allow the public and immigrants to come together and debunk misconceptions and false knowledge about each other, but more specifically about immigrants (Higgins et al., 2010; McLaren, 2017). Demographic contact theories are not void of their own criticism and challenges, such as their failure to produce lasting solutions to public-immigrant conflicts and to acknowledge the process of putting together immigrants and the public can produce negative consequences (Dixon et al., 2007; Crisp & Turner, 2017). Beside these factors several studies have found a significant relationship between some socio-demographic characteristics of the public and public fear for immigrants, specifically, immigrants with a criminal background and undocumented immigrants (see Pryce, 2018; McCann & Boateng, 2020; Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021). In a recent study, Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins (2021), contend that the United States' international reputation, as well as the country's immigration policies, influence public attitudes and fear towards immigrants.



Concomitantly, the present review suggests that the United States has a long history of harsh and tough immigration policies against immigrants, specifically against immigrants with a criminal background and undocumented immigrants. Furthermore, the review examines the causes of public fear of immigrants in the United States and how that affects public attitudes towards immigrants. In conclusion, the review enumerates previous works done to aid our understanding of the relationship between public fear of immigrants and public attitudes towards immigrants, specifically immigrants with criminal backgrounds and undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Method

Data Source & Sample Size

We analyzed individual-level data of 1,018 respondents (407 interviewed by landline and 611 interviewed by cell phones) obtained from the June 2018 national representative survey of adults 18+ years in the United States on immigration by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI). PRRI² is a nonpartisan, independent research organization that conducts public opinion polls on a variety of different topics, specializing in the quantitative and qualitative study of political issues as they relate to religious values. The survey was based on a probability sampling to ensure results are broadly representative of the entire U.S. population. The surveys were administered to respondents either in English or Spanish. Overall, the survey includes Americans' views related to several immigration issues, including building a wall along the border between the United States and Mexico, banning refugees from entering the U.S., the belief that America sets a good moral example for the world today on issues of immigration, among other useful questions about immigration and the population characteristics of the respondents.

Study Variables

Outcome variable:

The outcome variable for this study is *public attitude towards police stop targeted at illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background*.³ The variable was measured and coded as a dichotomous variable with 0 representing the public favor police stop targeted at illegal immigrants & immigrants with a criminal background and 1 representing public oppose police stops targeted at illegal immigrants & immigrants with a criminal background.

Predictor variable:

The predictor variable for the present study is *the fear of immigrants*. The fear of immigrants' variable was measured using five (5) questions from the survey. Measure 1 gauges the *publics' attitude towards public support for a border wall against immigrants entering the United States*.⁴ This measure was coded as 0 representing the public favor border walls and 1 representing border walls. Measure 2 gauges the *publics' attitude towards laws that prevent immigrants from entering the United States*.⁵ This measure was coded as 0 representing the public favor laws preventing

² Data source was from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) – <https://www.prii.org>. Accessed: Sept. 19, 2021.

³ **Q1b:** Requiring police to check the criminality and immigration status of a person they have stopped or detained if they suspect the person of being in the country illegally: strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose.

⁴ **Q1a:** Building a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico: strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose.

⁵ **Q1c:** Passing laws to prevent refugees and immigrants from entering the U.S.

refugees and immigrants entering the U.S. and 1 represents the public oppose laws preventing refugees and immigrants entering the U.S.

Measure 3 gauges the *publics' attitude towards laws and policies that separate parents from children at the border*.⁶ This measure was coded as 0 representing the public favor laws and policies that separate parents from children at the border and 1 representing the public oppose laws and policies that separate parents from children at the border. Measure 4 gauges the *publics' attitude towards the U.S. not accepting refugees and immigrants facing danger in their home countries in the U.S.*⁷ This measure was coded as 0 representing the public agree and 1 representing the public disagree. Measure 5 gauges the *publics' attitude towards making conditions difficult for illegal immigrants to force them to return to their home country*.⁸ The measure was coded as 0 representing the public agree and 1 representing the public disagree. Overall, the five variables used to measure public fear of immigrants in the U.S.

1. publics' attitude towards public support for a border wall against immigrants entering the United States.
2. publics' attitude towards laws that prevent immigrants from entering the United States.
3. publics' attitude towards laws and policies that separate parents from children at the border.
4. publics' attitude towards the U.S. not accepting refugees and immigrants facing danger in their home countries in the U.S.
5. publics' attitude towards making conditions difficult for illegal immigrants to force them to return to their home country.

Control variables:

We also controlled the effect of several variables that can influence our understanding of public support of police stops against immigrants in the United States. *Gender* was measured as 0 = female and 1 = male; *age* was measured in actual years at the time of survey administration. *Region* was also measured as 1 = northeast, 2 = north central, 3 = south and 4 = west. *Home ownership* was measured as 0 = owned and 1 = rented. *Registered voter* was measured as 0 = no and 1 = yes. *Marital status* was measured as 1 = single/never married, 2 = divorced/separated, 3 = married and 4 = widowed. *Education* was measured as 1 = high school, college = 2 and 3 = graduate school or more. *Race* is measured as 1 = black, 2 = white, 3 = Asian, 4 = native American, Hawaiian & pacific islanders, 5 = Hispanic and 6 = mixed race/other races. *Political party identification* was measured as 1 = democrat, 2 = independent, 3 = republican, and 4 = others. *Sexual orientation* was also measured as a dichotomous variable, with 0 = heterosexual/straight and 1 = not heterosexual/ straight. *Rural-urban status* was measured as 0 = rural and 1 = urban. The *religious affiliation* of respondents was measured as 1 = no religion, 2 = Christian, 3 = Muslim/Islamic, 4 = Buddhist/Hindu, 5 = Jewish/Judaism, 6 = other religions. *Employment status* of respondents was measured as 0 = Employed and 1 =

⁶ **Q1d:** An immigration border policy that separates children from parents and charges parents as criminals when they enter the country without permission.

⁷ **Q4a:** We should provide refugee and protection to all people who come to the U.S. when they are facing serious danger in their home country.

⁸ **Q4c:** The best way to solve the country's illegal immigration problem is to make conditions so difficult for illegal immigrants that they return to their home country on their own



Unemployed and finally *income* was measured as 1 = up to \$24,999, 2 = \$25,000 - \$49,000, 3 = \$50,000 - \$100,000, and 4 = \$100,000 or more. We also controlled for the effect of *trust in political institutions to handle immigration in the United States*. The variable was measured and coded as 1 = *trust in congress*, 2 = *trust in Trumps' presidency*, and 3 = *no trust*.⁹ We also controlled for *the U.S. a good moral example for other countries in the world when it comes to immigration issues*. The variable was measured and coded as 0 = *agree* and 1 = *disagree*.¹⁰ Finally, we also controlled for the effect of *the political ideology of respondents* which was measured and coded as 1 = *conservative*, 2 = *moderate*, 3 = *liberal*. Overall, we controlled for sixteen (16) variables in the present study with the goal of examining their effect of public support against illegal immigrants in the United States.

Plan of Analysis

Several analyses were conducted to examine the factors that predict public attitude towards police stops targeted at illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. First, we conducted a descriptive analysis to assess the distribution of scores across the variables included in the present study (see Table 1). Second, the presence of collinearity (occurrence of high intercorrelations among two or more independent variables) in the data was accounted for by conducting a multicollinearity test. The results of this analysis showed no existence of collinearity because the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were greater than 10 and none of the tolerance values were closer to zero. In addition to the multicollinearity test a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationship between the study variables. Finally, we conducted a binary logistic regression to assess the effect of the predictor variable – fear of immigrants, on the dependent variable – public attitude towards police stops targeted at illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background while controlling for other variables (see Table 2).

Results

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 below presents the descriptive statistics of the variables used in the current analysis. In terms of the number of respondents that support or oppose police stops targeted at illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background, a significant number (52.7%) expressed support while 47.3% were against it. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was (M = .47; SD = .49). Again, most of the respondents disagree with building a wall to prevent immigrants in general from entering the country (63.4%) compared to 36.6% who support building a wall to prevent immigrants from entering the U.S. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was (M = .63; SD = .48). Likewise, most of the respondents (64.2%) opposed laws that prevent immigrants from entering the United States in contrast to 35.8% that favor such laws. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was (M = .64; SD = .47). Regarding public support for laws and policies that separate parents from children at the border, 25% of the respondents favor the policy while 75% opposed the policy. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was (M = .75; SD = .43). Also, with public support for the U.S. not accepting refugees and immigrants facing danger in their home countries into the U.S., majority of respondents (76.2%) agree with such

⁹ Q.3: Who do you trust most to handle immigration issues? Democrats in Congress or Republicans in Congress or the Trump administration or None.

¹⁰ Q4b: America today sets a good moral example for the world? Completely agree or mostly agree or completely disagree or mostly disagree.

policies and laws opposed to 23.8% that disagree. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was ($M = .23$; $SD = .42$). Finally, regarding public support for making conditions difficult for illegal immigrants to force them to return to their home country, majority of the respondents disagree (67.5%) compared to 32.5% of the respondents who agree. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was ($M = .67$; $SD = .46$).

Furthermore, based on the descriptive statistics, it is logical to argue that most of the study respondents were female (51.4%) with an average score and standard deviation of ($M = .48$; $SD = .50$), between the ages of 18 and 94 with an average age of 53 years. Most of the respondents were married (48%) opposed to not married/single (27.2%), divorced/separated (13.7%), and widowed (11.2%). The average score and standard deviation for this variable was ($M = 2.88$; $SD = .95$). Additionally, most of the respondents were employed (54.9%) in contrast to being unemployed (45.1%) at the time of the survey. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was ($M = .45$; $SD = .49$). Furthermore, most of the respondents have a college degree (49.8%) compared to a high school degree (31.9%) or a graduate/advanced degree (18.4%) with an average score and standard deviation of ($M = 1.82$; $SD = .88$). Also, most of the respondents are white (71.7%), then followed by blacks (12.6%), then Hispanics (6.6%), then mixed or other races (4.2%), then Native Americans (2.8%), and finally Asians (2.1%). The average score and standard deviation for the race variable was ($M = 4.91$; $SD = 1.86$). The yearly income distribution for respondents is presented as follow in a descending order: 29% for respondents that earned between \$50,000 – \$99,999; 24.5% for respondents that earned between \$25,000 – \$49,999; 23.6% for respondents that earned between \$100,000 or more; and 21.9% for respondents that earned below \$25,000 with an average score and standard deviation of ($M = 2.42$; $SD = 1.08$). Also, most of the respondents identified themselves with the Republican party (38.4%), then followed by respondents who identify themselves as Democrats (33.7%), then respondents without any party affiliation (26.6%) and lastly respondents that identify themselves with other political parties (1.34%). The average score and standard deviation for this variable was ($M = 2.14$; $SD = .82$). It is not surprising to observe that party affiliation closely aligns with the political ideology of respondents: conservative (38.5%), liberal (30.6%), and independent (30.7%). The average score and standard deviation for this variable was ($M = 2.07$; $SD = .82$).

Furthermore, most of the respondents are Christians (76.4%), followed by respondents with no religious affiliation (17.4%), then other types of religion (2.3%), then Judaism (2.0%), then Buddhism & Hinduism (1.4%), and finally Muslim or Islam (0.6%). Also, most of the respondents are homeowners (70.9%) as opposed to those who rent (29.1%) at the time of the survey. The average score and standard deviation for religious affiliation was ($M = 2.05$; $SD = 1.95$). Again, most of the respondents also dwell in urban American (74.5%) compared to rural America (25.5%) with an average score and standard deviation of ($M = .74$; $SD = .43$). Most of the respondents were registered voters (82%) in contrast to those that were not registered to vote (18%). The average score and standard deviation for this variable was ($M = .82$; $SD = .38$). Likewise, most of the respondents were heterosexual (91.1%) compared those that are non-heterosexual (8.9%) with an average score and standard deviation of ($M = .91$; $SD = .28$). Finally, the distribution of respondents by region is as follows starting from the most: south (37%), west (22.7%), north central (22.4%), and northeast (17.9%) with an average score and standard deviation of ($M = 2.64$; $SD = 1.02$).



Table 1. Description of Study Variables (N = 1018)

Variable	N	Valid%	M(SD)	Min.	Max.
Police stops targeted at illegal immigrants & immigrants with a criminal background			.47(.49)	0	1
Favor	508	52.7%			
Oppose	456	47.3%			
Laws/policies that separates parents from children at the border			.75(.43)	0	1
Favor	239	25.0%			
Oppose	718	75.0%			
Accepting refugees and immigrants facing danger in their home countries in the U.S.			.23(.42)	0	1
Agree	747	76.2%			
Disagree	233	23.7%			
Making conditions difficult for illegal immigrants so they return to their home country			.67(.46)	0	1
Agreed	315	32.5%			
Disagreed	655	67.5%			
Building walls against immigrants			.63(.48)	0	1
Favor	354	36.6%			
Oppose	613	63.4%			
Laws preventing immigrants from entering the U.S.			.64(.47)	0	1
Favor	326	35.8%			
Oppose	585	64.2%			
U.S. a good moral example on immigration			.57(.49)	0	1
Agreed	422	42.7%			
Disagreed	566	57.3%			
Trust political institutions			1.93(.65)	1	3
Congress	527	56.5%			
Presidency	231	24.7%			
None	174	18.6%			
Political ideology			2.07(.82)	1	3
Conservative	372	38.5%			
Moderate	297	30.7%			
Liberal	296	30.6%			
Age	992	100%	52.96(19.05)	18	94
Rural-urban residency			.74(.43)	0	1
Rural	238	25.5%			
Urban	697	74.5%			
Home ownership			.29(.45)	0	1
Own a home	707	70.9%			
Rent a home	290	29.1%			
Marital status			2.88(.95)	1	4
Single	272	27.2%			
Divorced/separated	137	13.7%			
Widowed	112	11.2%			
Married	481	48.0%			
Employment status			.45(.49)	0	1
Employed	554	54.9%			
Unemployed	455	45.1%			
Educational status			1.82 (.88)	1	3
High school	321	31.9%			
College	501	49.8%			
Graduate school & more	185	18.4%			
Income			2.42(1.08)	1	4
Up to \$24,999	196	21.9%			
\$25,000 – \$49,999	220	24.5%			
\$50,000 – \$99,999	269	29.9%			
\$100,000 & more	212	23.6%			

Race			4.91(1.86)	1	6
White	713	71.7%			
Black	125	12.6%			
Hispanic	66	6.6%			
Native American	28	2.8%			
Asian	21	2.1%			
Other/mixed race	42	4.2%			
Party identification			2.14(.82)	1	4
Independent	258	26.6%			
Republican	372	38.4%			
Democrat	327	33.7%			
Others	13	1.34%			
Registered voter			.82(.38)	0	1
Yes	826	82.0%			
No	181	18.0%			
Gender			.48(.50)	0	1
Male	495	48.6%			
Female	523	51.4%			
Religion			2.05(1.95)	1	6
No Religion	169	17.4%			
Christian	743	76.4%			
Muslim	6	0.6%			
Buddhist/Hindu	14	1.4%			
Judaism	19	2.0%			
Other	22	2.3%			
Region			2.64(1.02)	1	4
Northeast	182	17.9%			
North Central	228	22.4%			
South	377	37.0%			
West	231	22.7%			
Sexual orientation			.91(.28)	0	1
Heterosexual	927	91.1%			
Non-Heterosexual	91	8.9%			

Note(s): **N** represents number of observations; **M** represents the mean score or value; **SD** represents the standard deviation; **Min.** represents the minimum value; and **Max.** represents the maximum value.

Regarding respondents' trust in which political institution to best handle immigration in America, most of the respondents' trust congress (56.5%) to do a better job with immigration, then followed by respondents who trust the presidency (24.7%) to do a better job with immigration, and finally respondents who do not trust both congress and the presidency (18.6%) to do a better job with immigration. The average score and standard deviation for this variable was (M = 1.93; SD = .65). Moreover, a significant number of respondents (57.3%) disagree that America as a nation is a good moral example as a leader of the free world to other nations when it comes to immigration compared to 42.7% that agree with this statement with an average score and standard deviation of (M = .57; SD = .49). Overall, the descriptive statistics above indicates the distribution of scores for each of the study variables.

Predictors of the fear of immigrants on public attitude towards policing immigrants

Model I estimate the effect of the fear of immigrants – building a wall against immigrants, on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. The model was significant at (F = 273.19; p<0.001) and explains about 31% of variance in the data. The significant variables for this model are building a wall against immigrants in the U.S. (t = 4.62; p<0.001) with an odd ratio of 3.75; no trust in political institutions – none (t = 2.15; p<0.05) with an odd ratio of 2.04; liberals (t = 3.62; p<0.001)



with an odd ratio of 2.81; democrats ($t = 2.99$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 2.86; south ($t = -2.47$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 0.47.

Model II estimates the effect of the fear of immigrants – laws preventing refugees and immigrants from entering the U.S., on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. The model was significant at ($F = 280.82$; $p < 0.001$) and explained about 33% of the variance of the data. The significant predictors for this model are laws preventing refugees and immigrants from entering the U.S. ($t = 6.23$; $p < 0.001$); no trust in political institutions – none ($t = 3.33$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio 2.87; liberal ($t = 3.22$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio 2.58; democrats ($t = 3.86$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.97; independent ($t = 2.71$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 2.40; and Hispanics ($t = 2.00$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 3.21.

Model III estimates the effect of the fear of immigrants – laws separating immigrant parents and their children at the border, on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. The model was significant at ($F = 267.20$; $p < 0.001$) and explains about 31% of the variance in the data. The significant predictors for this model are U.S. rejecting immigrants facing danger in the in their home country ($t = 4.51$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 4.07; no trust in political institutions ($t = 3.62$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.12; trust in congress ($t = 2.36$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 2.37; liberals ($t = 3.34$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 2.64; democrats ($t = 3.01$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 2.89; independents ($t = 2.20$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 2.02; Hispanics ($t = 2.02$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 3.05 and south ($t = -2.31$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio 0.49.

Table 2. Effect of fear of immigrants and other variables on public attitude towards police stops against illegal immigrants with a criminal background United States

	MODEL I		MODEL II		MODEL III		MODEL IV		MODEL V		MODEL VI – COMBINED	
Variables	SE(OR)	t/F	SE(OR)	t/F	SE(OR)	t/F	SE(OR)	t/F	SE(OR)	t/F	SE(OR)	t/F
Building a wall	1.07(3.75)	4.62***									.77(2.20)	2.26
Laws preventing refugees from entering the U.S.			1.17(4.71)	6.23***							.95(3.34)	4.23*
Laws separating parents and their children at the border					1.26(4.07)	4.51***					.91(2.45)	2.41***
U.S. rejecting immigrants facing danger in their home country							.16(.61)	-1.82**			.39(1.19)	0.55*
Making it difficult for immigrants to stay in the U.S.									.60(2.50)	3.79***	.38(1.35)	1.05
U.S. a moral example	.35(1.54)	1.87	.33(1.40)	1.41	.36(1.57)	1.96	.40(1.83)	2.74**	.35(1.56)	1.96*	.36(1.35)	1.15
Trust in political institutions ¹												
None	.68(2.04)	2.15*	.91(2.87)	3.33***	.98(3.12)	3.62***	1.12(3.65)	4.21***	.93(3.06)	3.67***	.94(2.48)	2.40*
Congress	.71(1.88)	1.68	.74(1.96)	1.77	.87(2.37)	2.36*	1.08(2.97)	2.99**	.84(2.36)	2.41	.68(1.52)	0.93
Political ideology ²												
Liberal	.80(2.81)	3.62***	.76(2.58)	3.22**	.77(2.64)	3.34***	.99(3.57)	4.59***	.89(3.19)	4.16***	.55(1.72)	1.69
Moderate	.40(1.52)	1.60	.41(1.50)	1.49	.39(1.50)	1.53	.44(1.75)	2.20*	.42(1.68)	2.04*	.30(1.00)	0.01
Age	.00(.99)	-1.02	.00(.99)	-1.04	.00(.98)	-1.61	.00(.99)	-1.13	.00(.99)	-0.89	.00(.99)	-0.93

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Rural-urban residency	.27(1.12)	0.48	.31(1.20)	0.71	.26(1.07)	0.31	.27(1.11)	0.46	.29(1.21)	0.80	.31(1.14)	0.48
Homeownership	.27(1.03)	0.13	.26(.94)	-0.19	.30(1.12)	0.43	.29(1.11)	0.40	.28(1.09)	0.34	.31(1.08)	0.29
Marital status ³												
Divorced	.36(.98)	-0.03	.28(.76)	-0.71	.34(.92)	-0.20	.25(.73)	-0.88	.27(.77)	-0.72	.34(.84)	-0.41
Widowed	.37(.82)	-0.43	.31(.69)	-0.79	.44(.96)	-0.07	.31(.70)	-0.80	.36(.82)	-0.44	.39(.78)	-0.49
Married	.26(.89)	-0.36	.27(.90)	-0.31	.28(.94)	-0.19	.23(.81)	-0.68	.23(.78)	-0.80	.33(1.01)	0.04
Educational status ⁴												
College	.28(1.12)	0.47	.33(1.24)	0.81	.35(1.34)	1.12	.29(1.15)	0.56	.28(1.11)	0.44	.38(1.34)	1.02
Graduate+	.35(1.01)	0.05	.44(1.23)	0.58	.46(1.31)	0.78	.37(1.08)	0.23	.36(1.07)	0.21	.47(1.23)	0.54
Employment	.21(.85)	-0.61	.24(.91)	-0.34	.22(.87)	-0.51	.21(.87)	-0.52	.23(.93)	-0.28	.22(.78)	-0.85
Income ⁵												
Up to \$24,999	.50(1.26)	0.59	.77(1.84)	1.45	.57(1.39)	0.81	.50(1.26)	0.60	.49(1.26)	0.61	.86(1.95)	1.50
\$25,000 - \$49,999	.46(1.32)	0.81	.57(1.60)	1.33	.41(1.19)	0.52	.45(1.35)	0.90	.45(1.35)	0.90	.53(1.37)	0.83
\$50,000 - \$100,000	.38(1.29)	0.87	.42(1.38)	1.07	.35(1.17)	0.52	.36(1.25)	0.78	.39(1.34)	1.00	.39(1.18)	0.52
Party identification ⁶												
Other	1.35(1.34)	0.30	3.42(3.27)	1.13	2.09(2.13)	0.77	1.81(1.68)	0.48	2.41(2.47)	0.93	1.19(1.01)	0.01
Democrat	1.00(2.86)	2.99**	1.42(3.97)	3.86***	1.02(2.89)	3.01**	1.32(3.86)	3.94***	1.30(3.89)	4.05***	.95(2.32)	2.07*
Independent	.56(1.81)	1.91	.77(2.40)	2.71**	.64(2.02)	2.20*	.73(2.40)	2.90**	.74(2.46)	2.99**	.60(1.63)	1.34
Race ⁷												
Asian	1.82(2.02)	0.78	1.61(1.72)	0.58	1.32(1.57)	0.54	1.51(1.78)	0.68	1.74(2.03)	0.83	1.98(1.92)	0.63
Black	.19(.63)	-1.47	.18(.59)	-1.69	.21(.69)	-1.21	.22(.73)	-1.03	.21(.72)	-1.08	.18(.57)	-1.71
Hispanic	1.24(2.32)	1.58	1.87(3.21)	2.00*	1.68(3.05)	2.02*	1.37(2.68)	1.92	1.35(2.59)	1.83	1.40(2.32)	1.39
Native America	1.70(2.49)	1.34	1.53(2.11)	1.04	1.38(1.82)	0.79	1.52(2.22)	1.17	1.54(2.21)	1.15	1.93(2.48)	1.16
Mixed Race	.39(.63)	-0.73	.55(.87)	-0.21	.52(.83)	-0.28	.49(.81)	-0.33	.41(.70)	-0.60	.58(.87)	-0.20
Gender	.18(.83)	-0.80	.20(.89)	-0.48	.17(.77)	-1.13	.17(.82)	-0.90	.17(.78)	-1.10	.21(.90)	-0.42
Religion ⁸												
No religion	.27(.91)	-0.31	.29(.95)	-0.15	.28(.93)	-0.21	.26(.89)	-0.38	.28(.96)	-0.12	.35(1.08)	0.24
Islam	.21(.17)	-0.22	.26(.80)	-0.10	.25(.88)	-0.19	.24(.80)	-0.30	.26(.93)	-0.11	.33(.20)	0.22
Buddhism	.22(.19)	-1.42	.34(.33)	-1.08	.29(.30)	-1.21	.48(.46)	-0.74	.52(.50)	-0.66	.13(.11)	-1.90
Judaism	1.15(1.64)	0.71	1.11(1.65)	0.75	1.02(1.47)	0.56	.62(.96)	-0.05	.92(1.42)	0.54	1.44(1.80)	0.74
Other religion	.29(.50)	-1.16	.34(.56)	-0.93	.29(.49)	-1.19	.34(.56)	-0.94	.30(.49)	-1.15	.26(.42)	-1.36
Registered voter	.46(1.43)	1.13	.44(1.34)	0.89	.51(1.61)	1.48	.46(1.46)	1.21	.48(1.53)	1.35	.56(1.59)	1.32
Region ⁹												
North Central	.22(.67)	-1.18	.34(1.02)	0.07	.25(.77)	-0.78	.22(.70)	-1.08	.247(.77)	-0.80	.29(.79)	-0.63
South	.14(.47)	-2.47*	.17(.55)	-1.91	.15(.49)	-2.31*	.13(.46)	-2.59**	.15(.53)	-2.15*	.15(.47)	-2.25*
West	.23(.71)	-1.02	.28(.81)	-0.60	.26(.78)	-0.69	.23(.70)	-1.08	.25(.78)	-0.73	.27(.73)	-0.81
Sexual orientation	.20(.40)	-1.78	.19(.36)	-1.91	.18(.34)	-1.95	.25(.49)	-1.35	.18(.35)	-1.98*	.20(.35)	-1.80
Constant	.19(.22)	-1.75	.08(.09)	-2.68	.12(.14)	-2.18	.17(.20)	-1.86	.11(.12)	-2.38	.05(.05)	-2.87
Log likelihood	-305.98		-285.64		-299.57		-313.25		-311.17		-255.24	
LR statistic (37 df)	273.19		280.82		267.20		260.96		262.36		283.77	
Probability (LR stat)	0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000	
R-squared	0.3086		0.3296		0.3084		0.2940		0.2966		0.3573	

Note(s): * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001. SE = Standard Error. OR = Odd Ratio.

1 = Trump's Presidency; 2 = Conservatives; 3 = Single; 4 = High School; 5 = \$100,000+; 6 = Republican; 7 = White; 8 = Christianity; 9 = north central.

Model I estimate the effect of building a wall against immigrants, on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. **Model II** estimate the effect of laws preventing refugees and immigrants from entering the U.S., on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. **Model III** estimate the effect of laws separating immigrant parents and their children at the border, on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. **Model IV** estimate the effect of the U.S. rejecting immigrants facing danger in the in their home country, on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. **Model V** estimate the effect of making it difficult for immigrants to stay in the U.S., on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. **Model VI** estimates the effect of all the five measures of the fear of immigrants' variables on public attitude towards police stops targeted at illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background.

Model IV estimate the effect of the fear of immigrants – U.S. rejecting immigrants facing danger in the in their home country, on public attitude towards police stops targeted against



illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. The model was significant at ($F = 260.96$; $p < 0.001$) and explains about 29% of the variance in the data. The significant predictors are U.S. rejecting immigrants facing danger in the in their home country ($t = -1.82$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 0.61; the U.S. a good moral example on immigration global ($t = 2.74$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 1.83; no trust in political institutions ($t = 4.21$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.65; trust in congress ($t = 2.99$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 2.97; liberals ($t = 4.59$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.57; moderates ($t = 2.20$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 1.75; democrats ($t = 3.94$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.86; independents ($t = 2.90$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 2.40; and south ($t = -2.59$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 0.46.

Model V estimates the effect of the fear of immigrants – making it difficult for immigrants to stay in the U.S., on public attitude towards police stops targeted against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. The model was significant at ($F = 262.36$; and explains about 30% of the variance in the data. The significant predictors for this model are making it difficult for immigrants to stay in the U.S. ($t = 3.79$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 2.50; the U.S. a good moral example on immigration global ($t = 1.96$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 1.56; no trust in the political institutions ($t = 3.67$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.06; liberals ($t = 4.16$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.19; moderates ($t = 2.04$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 1.68; democrats ($t = 4.05$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio of 3.89; independents ($t = 2.99$; $p < 0.01$) with an odd ratio of 2.46; south ($t = -2.15$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 0.53; and sexual orientation ($t = -1.98$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 0.35.

Model VI estimates the effect of all the five measures of the fear of immigrants' variables on public attitude towards police stops targeted at illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. The model was significant at ($F = 283.77$; $p < 0.001$) and explains about 36% of the variance in the data. The significant predictors are laws preventing refugees and immigrants from entering the U.S. ($t = 4.23$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 3.34; laws separating immigrant parents and their children at the border ($t = 2.41$; $p < 0.001$) with an odd ratio 2.45; U.S. rejecting immigrants facing danger in the in their home country ($t = 0.55$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio 1.19; no trust in political institutions ($t = 2.40$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 2.48; democrats ($t = 2.07$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 2.32; south ($t = -2.25$; $p < 0.05$) with an odd ratio of 0.47.

Discussion & Conclusion

Immigration is an important issue in the United States, and it is often surrounded by controversies from both pro and anti-immigration factions (Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021). A significant number of Americans hold strong anti-immigration sentiments rooted in fear of immigrants, racism, xenophobia, and other factors (see McCann & Boateng, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2015 for a review). These anti-immigration sentiments have led to the creation of several ordinances and policies at all levels of governance in the U.S. with the goal of reducing immigrant populations (Walker & Leiner, 2011; McCann & Boateng, 2020, pg. 159). In contrast to the formulation and implementation of numerous exclusionary policies, a few of the immigration policies have been inclusionary in nature. For example, the sanctuary policies implemented by San Francisco and other states (Bilke, 2009; Houston, 2019). Historical evidence also contends that the United States formulates and implements more exclusionary immigration policies compared to inclusionary policies because of the fear of immigrants (Hatzenbuehler, et al., 2017; Philbin et al., 2018). The primary purpose of the

present study is to examine the effect of the fear of immigrants on public attitude towards police stops targeted at illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. Specifically, we estimate the effect of five measures of fear of immigrants on public attitudes towards police stops against immigrants – illegal and with criminal records.

The literature is replete with evidence that suggests that the fear of immigrants influences anti-immigration sentiments (see Pryce, 2018; McCann & Boateng, 2020). Also, the existing literature suggests that the fear of immigrants, immigration and the factors that influence public attitudes towards immigrants is complex and requires continued examination (McCann & Boateng, 2020). Based on these suggestions the present study addresses a vital question in the literature and has produced some intriguing revelations worth discussing. First, the present results buttress existing empirical evidence that suggest that the fear of immigrants influence public attitude towards immigrants (see Capps & Fix, 2020; Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021). Specifically, we observed that the five measures for the fear of immigrants used in the present study, were all significant predictors of public attitude towards immigrants. We contend that public support for exclusionary immigration policies in the United State attest to the level of fear the public have about immigrants (Hatzenbuehler, et al., 2017; Philbin et al., 2018). Although most of the policies used to measure public fear for immigrants were exclusionary in nature, one policy – laws that prevent immigrants facing danger in the home country from entering the United States, had some inclusionary perspective to it and this explains why the policy was a weaker predictor compared to the exclusionary such as those related to border wall, banning of immigrants, separation of children from parents, not accepting refugees into U.S., policies that make conditions for illegal immigrants difficult. Overall, this shows that amidst the platitude of public support for exclusionary immigration policies in the U.S. there are some few exceptions that the public is willing to have a meaningful discourse about.

Additionally, we also observed that politics expressed through the public's political ideology and party affiliation influence public attitude towards police stops against immigrants – illegal and with criminal background. The present literature is full of empirical evidence that suggests that politics plays a critical role in influencing public attitude towards immigration (see Santa Ana, 2002; Pryce, 2018; McCann & Boateng, 2020; Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021). Specifically, some studies have found that liberals turn to be pro-immigration while conservatives turn to be anti-immigration. Likewise, another political variable we observed that influences public attitudes towards immigrants is the international reputation of the U.S. based on its immigration policies – the U.S. as a good moral example to other countries when it comes to immigration. A most recent study by Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins (2021), suggests that the attitude of Americans towards immigration is influenced by their perception of how the world views the immigration policies formulated and implemented. The interconnectedness of the world through technology allows for contact between diverse groups leading to the reduction of better understanding of cultures and people from different regions and countries. As postulated by demographic contact theorists, as different cultures blend together it leads to better understanding and acceptance of immigrants (Higgins et al., 2010; McLaren, 2017).

Furthermore, previous studies contend that demographic characteristics influence public attitude towards immigration at varying degrees based on the characteristics at play (see Pryce, 2018; McCann & Boateng, 2020; Dzordzormenyoh & Perkins, 2021). While we did not find



a significant influence for all the demographic characteristics we included in this study, we observed that race (Hispanic), region (South), and sexual orientation influence public attitude towards police stops against illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background in the United States. Although, the effect of region, specifically, the South and sexual orientation is well documented and explained in the literature (McCann & Boateng, 2020; Boateng et al., 2021) it was surprising to observe race (Hispanic) influence public attitude towards immigrants in the United States. Future studies can further investigate this result to improve our understanding of the explanatory factors behind this phenomenon.

The current study, like most empirical studies, has some limitations worth mentioning. First, the results presented above are based on analysis of survey data which sometimes have desirability bias – survey respondents adjusting their answers during interviews and surveys to appear credible which might not necessarily reflect their actual deposition. Desirability bias as a weakness of survey data can affect the current results and therefore, we caution readers against further interpretation of the results presented in this study. Second, instead of using public attitude towards immigration policies such as border wall, banning of immigrants, separation of children from parents, not accepting refugees into U.S., policies that make conditions for illegal immigrants’ difficult future studies can have an actual variable that directly measure the fear of immigrants to better aid our understanding of how the fear of immigrants influence public attitude towards illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background.

Despite the above study’s limitations, our findings have implications for both research and policy development. In terms of research, our findings extend the literature on the fear of immigrants, immigration, and police stops against immigrants – illegal and with criminal background, from the viewpoint of the public. This is a significant contribution to the literature since the majority of the attitudinal studies have focused exclusively on understanding anti-immigration sentiments and how citizens form their views about immigrants opposed to illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. Therefore, we fill a significant gap in the literature by focusing exclusively on illegal immigrants and immigrants with a criminal background. By examining public support for immigration policies, we fill in gaps in the existing literature. Practically, our findings are useful for developing immigration policies that are not based on sentiments but on empirical evidence.

Conclusively, measuring the predictors of public attitude towards police stops targeted at undocumented immigrants with a criminal background in the United States is necessary because immigration remains an important issue to Americans. Public opinion strongly influences immigration policymaking and public attitude towards immigrants in the U.S. Specifically, the findings have indicated the factors predict public attitude towards police stops targeted at illegal immigrants with a criminal background. From our analysis support for the police stops targeted at undocumented immigrants with a criminal background was predicted by the fear of immigrants exhibited by the public through support for exclusionary immigration policies, trust in political institution, political ideology, race, region, sexual orientation, and the U.S. a good moral on immigration global. The analysis of the data provides some interesting results regarding predictor variables of support for police stops against undocumented immigrants with a criminal background.

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