

Spring 2019

Give Us Your Tired, Your Poor, But Not Too Many: U.S Public Opinion and Illegal Immigration

Nicholas Henry Bader
Bard College, nb0831@bard.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2019

 Part of the [Public Affairs Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Bader, Nicholas Henry, "Give Us Your Tired, Your Poor, But Not Too Many: U.S Public Opinion and Illegal Immigration" (2019). *Senior Projects Spring 2019*. 231.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2019/231

This Open Access work is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been provided to you by Bard College's Stevenson Library with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this work in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

Give Us Your Tired, Your Poor, But Not Too Many: U.S Public Opinion and Illegal Immigration

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
Of Bard College

By

Nicholas Bader

Annandale-On-Hudson, New York
May 2019

Acknowledgements:

To Thomas Keenan, for his exceptional help and patience throughout this project, and his direct, thoughtful guidance throughout my time at Bard as my advisor.

To Yuval Elmelech, for his timely and substantial assistance on this project, especially on research methodology.

To Joel Perlmann, for his continuous support, vested interest and advice throughout this project.

To Annie Seaton, for her substantial support and interest in this project, as well as my studies, and her thoughtful, welcomed advice for the past three years.

To my friends, whose support, humor, and kindness for as long as I've known them have made my time at Bard truly special to me. A sincerely special thanks to Kate, and Holden.

To my parents and brother for their constant, and unconditional support, love, and advice.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Chapter One: Establishing the Public’s Opinion.....	13
Chapter Two: The Present Moment.....	27
Chapter Three: American Self Identity.....	51
Conclusion.....	68
Bibliography.....	78

Introduction

“Newark, N.J., Aug. 17- Herbert Karl Friedrich Bahr, 29 years old, formerly of Buffalo and an honor student in high school and college, charged with having conspired to commit espionage by giving the United States war information to the German Gestapo, went on trial here today before Federal Judge William F. Smith, and a Jury... “Conviction of this defendant may exact many years of his life -- or his life. It is a capital offense.”¹

Throughout my life I heard something repeated by many people who lived in my hometown when illegal immigration became a subject of conversation. The statement usually went something like this: I don't agree with people entering the United States illegally, my grandparents came here the right way, and they should too. Yet, I began here with a section of a New York Times Article published in 1942 concerning the criminal case of a Jewish immigrant to the United States, from Germany, who was accused of being a German spy. His name was Herbert Karl Friedrich Bahr, and he was sentenced to 30 years in prison for accusations of treason. It is unknown if these accusations were true or not, but what is known is that the case was sensationalized to depict refugees and migrants coming to the United States as potential spies, communists, or other sources of harm for the United States.² Not only did Bahr not come to the United States the right way, even if he was truly guilty, his trial catalyzed movements which caused terrible suffering. Claims that these refugees represented both a political, and national security threat to the United States fed a growing anti-war movement in the United States. These concerns are meant to sound familiar. Even a cursory examination at publications and history about this period in American politics will reveal that strikingly similar anti-immigrant rhetoric was employed at that moment in history, as is today. An isolated event

¹ “Bahr Goes on Trial as a Spy in Newark” *The New York Times*, (August 18th, 1942)
<https://www.nytimes.com/1942/08/18/archives/bahr-goes-on-trial-as-spy-in-newark-judge-explains-he-may-face.html>

² Daniel A. Gross, “The U.S Government Turned Away Thousands of Jewish Refugees, Fearing That They Were Nazi Spies” *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 18th, 2015.

was able to capture public imagination and drive a political movement which aimed to, and for a time succeeded in, preventing desperate populations of European migrants, many of whom were Jews, from fleeing the Nazi regime in Europe via entry to the United States. I use this example to begin a conversation about the ways in which a similar trend is, and has been unfolding in America concerning illegal immigration, which too is being driven by public opinion.

While growing up, and studying at times when immigration was a hotly debated issue, my mind always returned to the irony I felt was present in those words. Its infeasible to address every person's claims to rightful residency in the United States, as well as their claims that others reside here unjustly. However I sought some way to unpack some part of that statement I heard again, and again growing up. It is a deeply complicated statement. At once it assumes personal experience speaks to a broader issue, yet taps into a deep reservoir of personal history for that speaker. As I began to think about what I wanted this project to become I realized I wanted some way to address that statement thoughtfully, and directly. There is another broader question at work: How did a self-proclaimed nation of immigrants come to resent a specific kind of immigrant? Why illegal immigrants than any other kind?

These questions are too large for this project to answer fully. Though, I thought to try to address these questions in my own way. We all read, watch, or listen to political media. We all see facts, figures and statistics about illegal immigration at some intervals. What is paid less attention to is a closer look at what individual American citizens think about illegal immigration, and why. Trying to answer that question is the subject of the first two chapters of this project. The first chapter deals with the direct question of: What does the American public think about illegal immigration and why? Since much of the research used to support any claims on this

subject was fairly dated, I felt it necessary to dedicate part of the second chapter to understanding how the present moment compared. Trends of high hostility towards illegal immigrants which settle before being inflamed again characterize both past, and present. In both of these chapters I work to identify what it is about illegal immigration, and illegal immigrants themselves which generates such antagonism. Consider this example. Prior to then Presidential candidate Donald Trump's speech on June 16th, 2015 where he referred to Mexican immigrants as rapists who bring drugs, and crime into the United States³ no Republican candidate had made any major statement on illegal immigration.⁴ His statement caused significant uproar, but it also set a precedent where illegal immigration dominated both politics, and his campaign. This is an example of a recurring trend within public opinion data which I refer to in this paper as a spike. A spike in this case Trump's speech, causes polarized opinion on the subject, and with illegal immigration specifically, it is usually negative opinions about illegal immigrants. Explaining and unpacking how this trend, among others, works is the subject of the first two chapters.

I also pay particular attention to understanding the present moment because of how much illegal immigration has dominated American politics and social discourse in recent years. Our current President ran on a platform that was dominated by language about expelling, controlling, and vilifying illegal immigrants. For some, if not many of the Americans who voted him into office this language had to be compelling, impactful, and representative something that resonated with them. I do not think everyone, or even many of the people who voted for our current President are xenophobes, or hate immigrants. My reasoning for this is somewhat twofold, and

³ Lee, Michelle H.Y, "Donald Trump's false comments connecting Mexican immigrants and crime" *Washington Post*, July 8th 2015

⁴ René D. Flores, "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?: Evidence from the 2016 US Presidential Election" *Social Forces*, (2018) 1650

as I return to this topic throughout the project, it would be prudent to address it upfront. First I feel there should be a substantial burden of proof when making any claim about a given group. The most that is comfortably established, for me, by this paper is that prejudices of individuals, especially white Americans are substantial yet deeply complex in how they relate to perceptions about illegal immigrants. The second reason returns back to the origins of this project: my personal experience. I know many people personally who voted for the President in the recent election, people who I would not decidedly say are even prejudiced or hostile towards a particular group, let alone racists. This paper will return to this idea in greater length, but the ways in which prejudices and harmful ideologies about American identity, and white identity especially have inoculated the discourse around illegal immigration is owed more explanation than calling individuals prejudiced, or racist. These terms are powerful, even when rightly applied, and can sometimes stop conversation on a subject due to the absoluteness they sometimes possess. If anything, my hope for this project is to generate questions, and more thinking about the relationship between expressions of public opinion and illegal immigration, rather than say something too decisive and risk curtailing valuable conversation.

That said I wanted, in part, to understand what it was about illegal immigration that upset so many Americans that they could vote for someone who is both of those things. While it is certainly possible that people who attest to not care about immigration one way or the other voted for our current President, I do not think I am stretching the truth to say that many who did had strong opinions on the subject. What I am trying to unpack in this project is not much of anything related to the President, but what makes Americans hostile when it comes to illegal immigration. There is another topic I should address in this introduction, and that is an

explanation of a term used repeatedly in this paper: illegal immigrant. I understand that it is a deeply contentious term, even a dehumanizing one. I do not in any way refute this, but I chose to use this term because it is most direct at categorizing a group of people living within the United States who are at risk for deportation, harassment, social isolation, and other forms of abuse. Undocumented, for example emphasizes merely that a person lacks necessary documentation to reside in the United States. This paper explores to some extent the ways in which being totally undocumented truly makes a person illegal to exist within the United States. This is in both the literal sense of risk for legal punishment and deportation, but a conceptualization of social illegality, isolation from American society as a whole, which will be explored further. Through its severity, the term serves to highlight the divide between citizen and total non-citizen in the United States. The ramifications of this divide are perhaps most eminent, and most grim when a comparison is drawn between a citizen, and an illegal immigrant.

Two other terms are used frequently throughout this project, they are American and Hispanic. My use of American as a general term in this paper bears explaining because the term will become more complicated as the project develops. Initially it began as simply a term to refer to American citizens by, but as I worked the ways in which American culture, identity, and race worked into the conversation make the term American far more complex. When I refer to Americans then, I am referring to American citizens, but I am also referring to white Americans. Particularly the effect that for both historical and more contemporary reasons, whiteness has become an unspoken American characteristic. Though, only sometimes. Not everyone imagines Americans as white, yet at the same time many do. When I say American then, I mean at once all American citizens, as well as white Americans. My precise reasoning for this will be explored in

greater depth in the third chapter, and conclusion, but for now I will provide an example.

Researchers cited in this project exemplified that characteristics associated with strong feelings of patriotism, nationalism, and American identity were not only more prominent in white Americans, but their hostility towards illegal immigrants was more significant if this was the case. Yet, of course, not all white Americans are hostile towards illegal immigrants, and not all those who are hostile to illegal immigrants are white. I would never make such generalizations, but only wanted to explain now some of the complexity which will be discussed in detail.

Similar reasoning and inherent difficulty in using a definitive term when dealing with such complexity is at work with my use of the word Hispanic when referring to illegal immigrants.

Not all illegal immigrants are Hispanic. Yet the degree in which illegal immigrants are conceived of as predominantly Hispanic by American media, politics, and collective imagination bears emphasis. A notable example which is explored in detail in this paper comes from the second chapter. In two separate instances, Hispanic Americans regardless of their legal status or national origin experience either discrimination as a result of anti-immigrant policies, or are seen as both socio-cultural, and racial threats by white Americans. For reasons of both practicality in using a broader term to define a group, as well as trying to elude to the complexities at work in this problem, I have chosen to use these words over others. My use of these terms will be further explored in chapters two, and three in greater detail, but it was prudent to establish why, and for what reasons I am using certain words over others beforehand.

Though showing how this incredibly complex system of framing, imagery, and identity works is only part of the work I hoped to do. As I researched I was left with far more questions than I had answers, but one stood out among others. What does the fact that American citizens

can be so incensed about illegal immigration say about American citizens? Specifically, what can be learned about contemporary American society and social relations? What does what we think about illegal immigrants tell us about ourselves? This question is explored in chapter three. I identify particular variables about illegal immigration as an abstract subject in Americans' minds, and concerns about illegal immigrants as more personal subjects. In chapter three I explore how these specific variables and concerns with illegal immigration reflect back on American society. I am operating under the assumption that what a society condemns, or opposes speaks to what it values, or strives to preserve. In the case of illegal immigration, this opposition to illegal immigration reveals more honest American values, but many concerning aspects of the American state. I conclude the project by stepping away from outside research to give more of my own direct, honest thoughts about what I have learned, and what is left unanswered.

Chapter One: Establishing the Public's Opinion

American public opinion on immigration has been a subject of consistent debate, and analysis. Immigration has a longstanding history in American public opinion research, but illegal immigration is a comparably newer area of research. The role that illegal immigration has occupied as a political issue in recent years, despite substantially reduced rates of illegal immigration, suggests that there is something particularly contentious about illegal immigration. Between debate, and public discourse most people understand the lines drawn between those who support more relaxed immigration policies, or those who support greater control over the United States' border. What is often left out of the debate are the reasons behind a person's opinion about illegal immigration. Public opinion manifests in a number of ways. Polling data, election results, and reporting in the media can all be seen as modes of public opinion. For the purposes of this paper public opinion will be defined as a combination of a person's attitudes, beliefs, and prescriptions concerning illegal immigration.

The public opinion of citizens is what is being closely examined, as citizenship serves as a useful category while retaining statistical variability. Moreover the emphasis within the immigration debate on illegality serves to further highlight the difference between illegal immigrants and legal citizens. As part of the purpose of this paper is to explore what citizens' opinions and thoughts on illegal immigrants say about American citizens, and society as a whole, the illegal vs. citizen comparison serves as an especially important area of difference. It is vital to the purposes of this project that I understand the public opinion of citizens than any other definable group within American society.

Establishing the Public's Opinion: Consensuses and Contradictions

Initially, the research took me to polling data collected by the GSS, the General Social Survey. This survey is conducted nationally by the University of Chicago every few years and covers a breadth of topics. It is one of the most wide-reaching and thorough surveys of the general public. I use its data here initially to establish a general baseline for positive vs. negative public opinion on illegal immigration wholesale. A simplistic, top-down look at first before getting into the complexities at work. Some of its questions addressed immigration directly. I expected to find a fairly negative consensus about illegal immigration, as that is the picture usually painted by the news. Most respondents to the GSS polls said that they oppose illegal immigration. In response to the GSS question: America should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants, agree or disagree? From 1996 to 2014, the majority opinion has consistently been to take stronger measures against illegal immigrants. However, the answers given about immigrants as a whole, were far less simple.

In response to the GSS question: Immigrants cause higher crime rates, agree or disagree? Responses saw 2000 as a year with the majority agreeing, or agreeing strongly that immigration increased domestic crime rates. However, in 2004, and 2014, significantly fewer people agreed strongly, and a clear majority thought that it was not at all likely that immigration increased crime rates. In response to the GSS question: The Government Spends Too Much Assisting Immigrants, agree or disagree? In 2004, the majority of respondents believed that the government spend too much whereas around $\frac{1}{4}$ believed that the government did not. Two other questions revealed seemingly paradoxical responses on the topic of illegal immigrants in the United States. In 1994, unfortunately the only year this question was asked by the GSS, one third

of Americans believed that illegal immigrants in the United States should be able to apply for work permits. That same year, nearly half of the respondents approved of citizenship for children of illegal immigrants born in the U.S.

These mixed responses brought about two initial reactions. While Americans are decidedly against illegal immigration, there is a more divided debate going on about illegal immigrants in general in the United States. Perhaps the most interesting consensus I found was, from 1996-2014, a majority of Americans responded positively to this GSS question: Immigrants improve American society by bringing new ideas, and cultures, agree or disagree? Illegal immigrants as personal subjects evoked a more mixed, and in some cases, positive response. I was left with a question to guide further research: What is it about illegal immigration that Americans oppose, and why are Americans more divided on the subject of what to do with immigrants once they arrive?

I found that researchers looked at this question by testing different variables that might affect an individual's beliefs about illegal immigration. A person's varying, and sometimes conflicting answers to questions about illegal immigration are driven by these variables. These can include concerns about economics, politics, crime, safety, and prejudices. Generally, researchers divided different variables into two camps: the personal, or physical concerns, and the abstract, or cultural. The former encompasses issues such as labor competition, economic impacts of migration, safety, and crime. The latter pertains the questions of social, and cultural differences between the immigrant group, and Americans. I found most researchers argue that, amid other factors, the cultural concerns of an individual play a greater role in their opinions on illegal immigration.

One article written in 1993 examined polling data in Southern California, and made a concerted effort to answer the question the GSS data left open.⁵ In analyzing their data of responses to two questions, they found a seemingly paradoxical cluster of responses. The first asked respondents how seriously they perceived the illegal immigration problem in Southern California, while the second asked if they felt the influx of illegal immigrants would have a favorable effect on the region. Note the distinction between immigration, as an abstract problem, to immigrants, as individuals having a positive or negative effect on a given area. Approximately 10% of their respondents reported that they viewed illegal immigration as a serious problem, but that illegal immigrants would have a positive effect on the state.⁶ The degree of hostility, or amiableness towards illegal immigration varies with the way a question is being phrased, the context illegal immigration is being discussed, and is significantly affected by whether or not the question was asked about illegal immigration, or illegal immigrants. There was far less consensus about what Americans ought to do concerning illegal immigrants as individuals. Another article argued that illegal immigration⁷, or illegal immigrants outside of the United States⁸ are perceived with significantly greater, undivided hostility than illegal immigrants within the United States' borders. The latter group, while still generally opposed and disliked, have been faced with significant debate and contradiction over how the American public views them. However, this research did not further explore this dynamic, it only showed that the way

⁵ Espenshade, Tom. Calhoun, Charles, "An Analysis of Public Opinion toward Undocumented Immigration" *Population Research and Policy Review*, Vol. 12, (1993) 192

⁶ Espenshade, Calhoun, "Public Opinion" 199

⁷ Espenshade, Calhoun, "Public Opinion" 198

⁸ Christopher Muste, "The Polls-Trends: The Dynamics of Immigration Opinion in the United States, 1992-2012" *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 77, (2013) 407-408

the topic was framed affected respondents' answers significantly. What was it about the way illegal immigration was framed as an issue that created such varied responses?

This dynamic was explored by a group of researchers who examined the effect different labels had on public opinion on illegal immigration.⁹ They looked at two types of labels, or frames as they described them. For their research, they coined two terms: Equivalency frames, and issue frames. Equivalency frames describe how illegal immigrants' legal status is referred to: illegal, undocumented, or unauthorized. Issue frames comprise the language used to describe various immigration policies. At the time of writing this piece in 2013, the policies in question were general amnesty for illegal immigrants, the DREAM Act, and the issue of birthright citizenship. The researchers argue that equivalency frames had little impact on public opinion polling, but the language used to describe particular issues had a substantial impact. For example, when the issue of legalizing undocumented persons who met certain qualifications was phrased as 'A path to citizenship' the response was mixed, whereas phrasing it as 'Amnesty' produced a decidedly negative response.¹⁰

However, these researchers also make the important connection between types of legal protections and these issue frames. They situate the public debate around illegal immigrants in two camps, those of relative rights and autonomous rights. Relative rights correspond to physical, legal rights such as property ownership or the right to vote. Autonomous rights relate to self-definition, freedom of movement, and freedom of expression. The researchers argue for a link between these rights distinction and which areas of public opinion are easier to shift. The

⁹ Merolla, Jennifer. Ramakrishnan, Karthick S. Haynes, Chris, "Illegal," "Undocumented," or "Unauthorized": Equivalency Frames, Issue Frames, and Public Opinion on Immigration" *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 11, (2013) 791 & 799

¹⁰ Merolla, Ramakrishnan, Haynes, "Illegal", "Undocumented, or "Unauthorized" 799

issue frames fall into the category of relative rights, because they deal with particular debates about what rights, or privileges the state is willing to give illegal immigrants. The equivalency frames fall into the category of autonomous rights, as they try to redefine illegal immigrants as undocumented, or otherwise.¹¹ Illegal immigrants occupy a high level of salience as an abstract group in American news compared to more nebulous policies concerning illegal immigration.

They suggest that:

“individuals may have a concrete image of an illegal or undocumented immigrant (given not only national news coverage of policy, but also local news coverage and everyday social interactions), and invoking different terms may make little difference in terms of the considerations that shape their expressed opinions.”¹²

They go on to advise that further research on how cues, assumptions, and or perceptions of illegal immigrants interact with their analysis of equivalency and issue frames ought to be conducted. A number of research reports have been conducted trying to understand the powerful effect the public’s perception of an illegal immigrant from Mexico has on their opinions concerning illegal immigration.

An earlier report conducted in 1986 was aimed at understanding this very question. The author suggests that it was not so much the fact that illegal immigrants were predominantly Latino, but rather the illegal status of any immigrant that made them disliked by Americans.¹³ However, his argument reaches an interesting point of contention when he describes discrepancies among respondents opinions on different immigrant groups. Nearly 50% reported that Asian and Latino immigrants were too numerous, 26% said the same about Europeans, and

¹¹ Merolla, Ramakrishnan, Haynes, “Illegal”, “Undocumented, or “Unauthorized” 791

¹² Merolla, Ramakrishnan, Haynes, “Illegal” “Undocumented, or “Unauthorized”, 800

¹³ Harwood, Edwin, “American Public Opinion and U. S. Immigration Policy” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (1986) 205

31% said the same about Africans.¹⁴ This author did not believe that the racial, or ethnic character of an immigrant significantly affected public opinion, rather that illegality was the chief issue. However, the data cited showed that Americans' opinions about the ethnicity of immigrants affected whether or not they thought there were too many of them in the country. This could be addressed by arguing that the rate in which Mexicans were entering the United States was greater than other immigrant groups. However, other researchers made a compelling argument that the ethnicity of immigrants affects how they are viewed by American citizens.

A study conducted in 2014 examined the seriousness in which respondents viewed different types of offenses. They included an immigrant overstaying their visa, an illegal immigrant working 'under the table' and as a result not paying taxes, and an immigrant hanging the flag of their home country, Mexico or Canada, instead of the American flag. Note that these perceived offenses to American law, or American sensibilities fall into the earlier dichotomy of physical concerns, and cultural concerns. In each of these examples, respondents were asked to rate the seriousness in which they viewed each of these offenses for a white (Canadian or European), or Mexican individual. The illegal offenses of overstaying their visa, or working illegally were viewed more negatively if the person in question was Hispanic. However in the case of the cultural offenses the degree in which the offenses were viewed negatively was far greater if the perpetrator was Hispanic.¹⁵ This study was limited in its sample size, interviewing only 274 persons, they extrapolated their data with larger datasets. Prejudice or outright racism cannot be reasonably denied as being a substantial factor as to why the offenses of a white illegal immigrant are viewed as less heinous than those of a Hispanic one. The race or ethnicity of the

¹⁴ Harwood, Edwin, "American Public Opinion" 207

¹⁵ Hartman, Todd K, Newman, Benjamin J, Bell C. Scott, "Decoding Prejudice Towards Hispanics: Group Cues and Public Reactions to Threatening Immigrant Behavior" *Political Behavior*, (2014) 152-153

illegal immigrant in question significantly affected the level of perceived harm they were causing. Moreover offenses against American culture by non-white immigrants were perceived as more heinous than their illegal residency. What can be made of this connection between cultural threat, or foreignness, race, and illegality?

Researchers Ted Brader, Nicholas Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay sought to understand this very problem. Before their argument is examined though, it is important to note that while they examine immigration wholesale, and not specifically illegal immigration, there is reason to support a connection between ethnic anxieties and illegal immigration. In 2016, there were 12 million immigrants from Mexico living in the United States, and approximately 45% of them were illegal immigrants. Mexico is the largest source of immigrants to the United States, and approximately 75% of the total illegal immigrant population in the United States is from Mexico.

¹⁶ Furthermore, while immigration is not routinely a subject of massive coverage and debate in American politics consistently, it tends to spike and receive large amounts of attention at certain moments. Elections, and immigration legislation tend to raise the issue to number-one status in terms of coverage in American media.¹⁷ I found that this research not only aims to understand the complexities of the role ethnicity of immigrants plays in public opinion, but the dynamics that cause public opinion to spike, usually negatively. To answer this question, the researchers created two types of variables: situational triggers, and group cues. A situational trigger is generally an event that occurs that brings an issue to the forefront of public attention. An example of a situational trigger for an immigration debate would be news sources suddenly covering illegal

¹⁶ Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana. Krogstad, Krogstad, J.M, "What we know about illegal immigration from Mexico" <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/03/what-we-know-about-illegal-immigration-from-mexico/> (2018)

¹⁷ Pew Research Center, "Every Now and Again- A Study on News Coverage of Immigration" <http://www.journalism.org/2008/09/25/every-now-and-again-a-study-on-news-coverage-of-immigration/> (2008)

immigration with increasing frequency before a Presidential election. A group cue is defined as a general consensus about the group in question. An example of a group cue is a prejudice, or stereotype about a group of immigrants. An example of a group cue would be that Hispanic immigrants are lazy, or often criminals. I found that for the public opinion to become dramatically negative, a situational trigger must occur. Meaning that, a negative belief about a particular group must be paired with an event that raises attention about that group in order to cause such a spike.

Importantly, the researchers cite that:

“from 1995 to 2005, 84% of immigration stories in major papers mentioned specific groups. Twice as many stories referred to Hispanics as the next most mentioned group (East Asians), and more stories spotlighted Hispanic migrants than migrants from all other regions combined.”¹⁸

They begin their argument by hypothesizing that key elements of perceived difference between an immigrant group and the native majority result in stronger, more negative emotions towards that group. They found that only the combination of perceived negative stereotypes about a certain immigrant group, and increased the salience of that group in the public sphere resulted in the most negative responses towards them.¹⁹ In other words, group cues must already be present for the situational trigger to have such a negative effect on public opinion. This relationship of multiple variables is important.

“These results suggest that white Americans don't necessarily become anxious when reminded about immigration and its harmful potential, nor when reminded that some immigrants are nonwhite. They experience substantially greater anxiety when negative consequences of immigration are paired with a stigmatized outgroup.”²⁰

¹⁸ Brader, Ted. Valentino, Nicholas A. Suhay, Elizabeth, “What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat” *American Journal of Political Science*, (2008) 961.

¹⁹ Brader, Ted. Valentino, Nicholas A. Suhay, Elizabeth, “What Triggers Public Opinion” 974-975

²⁰ Brader, Ted. Valentino, Nicholas A. Suhay, Elizabeth, “What Triggers Public Opinion” 968

Ethnic and racial prejudices are a significant factor in an individual's hostility towards illegal immigration. However, the cumulative analysis of research thus far suggests that the anxiety produced by Mexican illegal immigrants is more complex than chalking it up to just prejudice. That is not to say that prejudice is not a vital component of a negative public opinion response, it in fact is, but that a person's prejudice is inflamed by a situational trigger. So far there is a clear understanding of what process causes strong responses of negative public opinion on illegal immigration. What is currently left open though is the question of which characteristics are most anxiety inducing? Returning to the frame of immigration as an abstract problem, and immigrants as personal subjects might yield some clarity. In particular, the division between abstract socio-cultural difference, and more grounded material concerns.

Variables Affecting Public Opinion on Illegal Immigration

Several variables stood out among researchers' discussions and analysis that highlighted particular factors about a respondent that would make them more, or less hostile towards illegal immigration wholesale. A fairly straightforward one was age, in that older respondents were typically more hostile towards illegal immigration than younger respondents. Education is a more difficult subject to grasp. Research cited that when compared with a person's socio-political views, and economic status education level was not statistically significant in determining their views on illegal immigration.²¹ However, economic concerns were also powerful as anxiety-inducing cues. As illegal immigrants are typically portrayed as low-skilled laborers, American citizens who occupy low-skilled labor positions are more likely to feel a perceived threat to their economic security by illegal immigration.²² However, what makes economic concerns so anxiety inducing as a group cue is more complex than the often reported fear of immigrants disrupting the American domestic job market.

Research conducted tracked respondents' understanding of economic concerns with immigrants by having them decide which, out of two immigrant candidates, were more preferable to let into the United States. I understood from their research that not only are immigrants of all skill levels preferred over non-skilled, or uneducated immigrants, those that would not be seeking employment in the United States are viewed as a greater economic detriment.²³ This results from the perception that an unemployed immigrant would, while not disrupting the job market, have a net negative impact on their communities' economic burden by making use of social services without being employed, or paying as much tax. Interestingly, it

²¹ Espenshade, Calhoun, "Public Opinion" 203

²² Hainmueller, Jens. Hopkins, Daniel J., "The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants", *American Journal of Political Science*, (2015) 531

²³ Hainmueller, Jens. Hopkins, Daniel J., "The Hidden American Immigration Consensus" 539

was the high-skilled respondents in their survey who reacted most negatively to an unemployed immigration applicant. This largely factors into a more personal cost-benefit analysis theory of immigration opinion. An individual might be more opposed to illegal immigrants being denied work, and having to rely on social services due to the subsequent increase in local tax burden.

However:

“On the other hand, pro-immigrant views emerge when individuals perceive that their personal well-being is directly enhanced. Respondents in southern California who believe that the presence of undocumented migrants results in lower consumer prices consistently have more favorable evaluations of illegal immigration.”²⁴

Here a personal cost-benefit calculus is theoretically being undertaken, in which if Americans believe that illegal immigrants provide economic benefits to them, directly or indirectly through what amounts to their economic exploitation, then they are more approving of illegal immigrants being present in the United States. Economic concerns as a major variable for causing a spike in anti-immigrant sentiment are difficult place. What is noteworthy about them is that the most negative responses are for more personal, or localized reasons: it’s about the impact the immigrant would have on the community.

An immigrant’s legal status however, was extremely significant. Returning to the point of studying citizens’ opinions about illegal immigrants, this also highlights the centrality of legal status in understanding public opinion on this topic. The fact that an immigrant is illegal is perhaps the most significant factor affecting American public opinion on whether or not they should be welcomed into American society. Research by Jens Hainmueller and Daniel J.

Hopkins suggests this is the case:

²⁴ Espenshade, Calhoun, “Public Opinion” 209

“Yet the most striking result is the 10.8 percentage point (SE = 1.6) penalty for coming previously without authorization. Whatever familiarity with the United States an unauthorized immigrant might gain is outweighed by the violation of norm and law.”²⁵

Perhaps then it is the negative association with illegality, the violation of norm and law, as they put it, that connects an individual immigrant with the negative group cues proposed by Brader, Valentino, and Suhay.

As I was looking over these various pieces of research and theory, I was left with another significant concern. The most recent piece was written in 2015, before a deeply divisive and contested election in American politics. Researchers already suggested that a Presidential election can be the sort of situational trigger that can result in negative public opinion concerning illegal immigration. The significant role illegal immigration played as talking point for the past election means this is an important line of inquiry. From running on promises to expel illegal immigrants from the United States, the construction of a physical wall to bar them from entering, to consistently repugnant rhetoric about illegal immigrants, the President has arguably acted as a situational trigger for any latent group cues in the American population. I needed to understand which group cues were being constructed, or reported on by the media. Were immigrants being described in a negative way? If so, what characteristics were being emphasized?

What I could not do is assume that this theoretical framework still applies. I needed to find similar work being done by researchers more recently, to see how this dynamic functions today. If the modern situation concerning immigration coverage can be said to represent this presented framework, does it match public opinion data? If not, then something may have changed in how American public opinion about illegal immigration is constituted. If the previous

²⁵ Hainmueller, Jens. Hopkins, Daniel J., “The Hidden American Immigration Consensus” 539

framework still applies, then the present moment can be understood as not transformative, but rather both a support for that theory, as well as significant situational trigger which resulted in a spike in anti-immigrant opinion. Examining the present moment is not just a question of whether or not this theory holds, but whether or not the same variables that were concerning to Americans in the 90's and early 2000's still apply. Understanding a spike in negative opinion on illegal immigration in the present moment will also be directed at understanding which variables of those generally established by earlier researchers were most impactful to Americans' recently. If so then that lends to a richer discussion about the role that opinion on illegal immigration could play in understanding American society. If Americans are still angered by illegal immigrants representing cultural, or ethnic threats then it warrants a discussion as to why that is. However before talking about that, I must understand where the situation stands today.

Chapter Two: The Present Moment

Previously I examined how public opinion on illegal immigration in the United States was constituted, and if there were any patterns to identify. A hypothesis suggested that an individual's biases, or assumptions about illegal immigration could be inflamed by a particular event. Much of the literature suggested that many of the variables that cause a person to oppose illegal immigration are not so related to the act of entering the United States without any documentation. Rather, the traits or characteristics stereotypically associated with a person who would enter the United States illegally are highlighted as undesirable. However illegality stood as a significant factor in producing negative opinions about an immigrant. What then, is the relationship between illegality, and broader social concerns?

Public opinion on illegal immigration was typically negative, and could be raised to even greater levels of hostility by emphasizing this point. The point being: Someone Americans don't want entering the United States, is actively doing so. If public opinion affirms, or refutes the ability of a certain person to enter the United States, then arguably public opinion can be seen as a form of self identification. By refuting potential immigrants based on certain characteristics (i.e. illegality, criminality, or perceived cultural threat), those characteristics can be inverted to identify the kinds of characteristics that Americans value.

The primary question on my mind when reviewing the established literature was whether or not their rules and variables still applied. The literature and data ranged from five, to ten years old, with a few studies being even older than that. If their findings held, it would allow a broader discussion about public opinion data as representative of a claim to American identity. To more properly address the question of American self identification, I needed to compare these earlier

findings with more recent work on the subject. Have the same patterns held up? It made sense to start with a moment where people talked about illegal immigration, to gauge what was being said, and what kinds of questions were being asked. Just as earlier literature identified certain concerns as central to the anxiety around illegal immigration, examining more recent work should shed light on what's worrying American citizens today. Illegal immigration was a centerpiece issue that Donald Trump ran on during his campaign, and has been a large point of policy by the President. This policy is extensive, and while not all of the President's wishes have been carried out there is substantial opposition to illegal immigration by the President's administration.

The first question that must be explored is whether or not the same variables that mattered in past decades are the ones that matter to Americans today. Public opinion can be passionately awakened, often negatively, in the wake of what researchers described as situational triggers. These could be news coverage of an event, an election which features immigration as a major issue of debate, or changes to America's immigration policy. Understanding what variables are important to Americans today as opposed to five, or ten years ago can help track possible changes in the way illegal immigration is viewed as an issue. Much of the efforts by the Trump administration have been described as a major shift in American immigration policy on illegal immigration. Part of the question I am trying to ask is to understand if there was a major shift that can be viewed through this particular lens. If there was a shift, does that translate into a change in what issues have become more, or less important to Americans in recent years? If so, that might allow me to begin answering the question of if public opinion can be seen as a form of self identification by American citizens.

Defining Past Immigration Debates

Much of the data and analysis explored by authors from previous decades highlighted a few primary variables that framed public opinion on illegal immigration. Some had economic concerns, specifically the impact that unemployed migrants would have on their local economies. Another variable was the presentation of the issue itself. Illegal immigration in the abstract was viewed much more negatively, but could also be framed in a variety of ways as an abstract issue that yielded more positive responses. Alternatively illegal immigrants as individuals were far more complex. On one hand, Hispanics were dominantly present in Americans' minds concerning illegal immigration, and as a racial minority were viewed negatively through racial prejudice. On the other hand, illegal immigrants were viewed with greater, and unique hostility purely on their illegal status. Though their assimilation to American ideals, and culture could make Americans more positively receptive to them. Perhaps most importantly though, the association between illegal immigration and criminality, both in the illegality of the act itself, but also through the idea that illegal immigrants are more likely to be criminals, generated significant negative beliefs on illegal immigration.

While I was able to understand which variables were most anxiety-inducing, I have not yet been able to understand the ramifications of such a spike in negative opinion. If public opinion on illegal immigration can be aroused out of its normal boundaries via a spike from a situational trigger, can that be used to define a political moment? For example, in 2006 PEW research center reported that 59% of Americans viewed illegal immigration as a very serious problem, and an additional 30% thought it was a serious problem in general.²⁶ However, this was

²⁶ Pew Research Center, "The State of American Public Opinion on Immigration in Spring 2006: A Review of Major Surveys" <https://www.pewhispanic.org/2006/05/17/the-state-of-american-public-opinion-on-immigration-in-spring-2006-a-review-of-major-surveys/> <https://www.pewhispanic.org/2006/05/17/the-state-of-american-public-opinion-on-immigration-in-spring-2006-a-review-of-major-surveys/> (May 17, 2006)

most likely the result of increased media attention on illegal immigration. Earlier in March 2006, immigration was at levels of national concern that are consistent with later surveys conducted by PEW. In March 2006, 42% of Americans ranked illegal immigration as a “top priority” for the country.²⁷ Similarly in 2010, 40% of Americans thought immigration was a top priority.²⁸ Other such surveys conducted in 2007, and 2009 show immigration hovering around this 40% mark. It only spiked in May, 2006, and quickly settled back down in a matter of months.

This is a useful example historically as 2006 was a particularly turbulent year in America, as well as for the immigration debate. The economic signs of the housing market collapse and the Great Recession had begun to show. Economic concerns, while complex, can drive anxiety around illegal immigrants. Immigration reform bills were proposed in 2006, and 2007 by Congress, and the 2006 midterm elections also took place, of which immigration was a strongly debated issue. There were a historic series of protests across the country²⁹, predominantly led by Latino Americans, against a proposed bill to significantly raise federal penalties for illegal immigration. These protests occurred on May 1st, 2006, which lends support to the idea of immigration hostility spiking in May of 2006. The protests were named as ‘A Day Without Immigrants’. Protestors marched peacefully, boycotted going to work, or closed their own businesses down for one day to showcase the impact that immigrants had on their communities, as well as the economy. It was during these years that the number of illegal

²⁷ Pew Research Center, “Section I – Immigration: How Big a Problem?”
<https://www.people-press.org/2006/03/30/section-i-immigration-how-big-a-problem/> (March 30, 2006)

²⁸ Pew Research Center, “Public’s Priorities for 2010: Economy, Jobs, Terrorism”<https://www.people-press.org/2010/01/25/publics-priorities-for-2010-economy-jobs-terrorism/>, January 25, 2010

²⁹ Maria Newman, “Immigrants Stage Protests Across the U.S.” *New York Times*, (May 1, 2006)

immigrants in the United States also reached its all-time recorded high in 2007, at around 12 million.

These are only a few variables, but they serve to illustrate the fact that the May 2006 was a high point for American anxiety around illegal immigration. If this moment represented such a spike, then what was the result, and how can that be used to define that moment? Do people call for action once their passions, or presumptions about illegal immigration are incensed? Does the information, or situational trigger itself matter? Does the source of the situational trigger matter? I ask these questions not only because they are important on their own, but because of how they might, or might not compare to the present moment. The aim here is to examine the responses of a similar moment in the past to our present moment, and see what differences emerge. If there are any, then what is unique about our present moment?

Researchers Ted Brader, Nicholas Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay proposed this situational trigger dynamic were writing in 2008, when illegal immigration was a dominant issue. Even though concern around immigration tends to settle around the 40% mark, compared to the significant concern it held in May 2006, that is still a significant portion of the population that is concerned with immigration. The ramifications of this intensified immigration debate were as mixed as the opinions of Americans during this time. Even increased opposition to illegal immigration in the abstract by American citizens does not necessarily translate to adoption of hardline restrictionist policies across the board. One group of scholars raised the question of the effects of this movement as more long-term, while the immediate effects were mixed. Location and political alignment were cited as especially important factors in whether or not respondents reported improved, or a deteriorated with immigrants as a result of the protests

in 2006. Specifically, location mattered due to the number, and ethnicity of, immigrants residing in that area. Party affiliation served to showcase a stark political divide over immigration. The researchers chose Orange County California, Bernalillo County New Mexico, and King County Washington as their polling grounds to examine Americans' reactions to the debates of 2006.

Standing out among the variables they examined was partisanship of respondents. Across the board in these three different areas with varying numbers of immigrants within them, Republican voters were significantly more likely to have negative views of the 2006 immigration rallies. Democrats were more likely to have positive views, but were far more mixed in Orange and Bernalillo counties, which had high numbers of Latino immigrants.³⁰ In addition to the partisan divide, the other significant variable noted by the researchers was race. In Orange County, 71% of White respondents reported negative perceptions of Mexican immigrants after the protests, compared to 37% of Latino voters. In King County opinion was more neutral across the board, but a racial divide still persisted with 25% of Whites reporting negative views, and 13% of Latinos.³¹ Concerns over race, as well as the presence of Latinos in these communities superseded political divisions, and evoked more uniformly negative responses among U.S. citizens about the protests.

However, it is important to remember that opposition, or even negative views of immigration do not necessarily translate into adoption of hardline, or restrictionist beliefs. PEW data from 2006 reported that despite viewing illegal immigration as a serious problem, the majority of Americans:

³⁰Mara Cohen-Marks, Stephen A. Nuño, Gabriel R. Sanchez, "Look Back in Anger? Voter Opinions of Mexican Immigrants in the Aftermath of the 2006 Immigration Demonstrations" *Urban Affairs Review*, (2009) 706-707

³¹ Marks, Nuño, Sanches, "Look Back in Anger?" (2009) 707-708

“favor measures that would allow illegal immigrants currently in the U.S. to remain in the country either as permanent residents and eventual citizens or as temporary workers who will have to go home eventually.”³²

While the American public’s opinion in illegal immigration was more mixed, it is important to note that this did not necessarily translate into policy. In fact, this moment generated competing restrictionist and pro-immigrant policies in different states throughout the United States. Researchers reported that from 2005-2006, thirty two states passed at least one restrictionist law, and eighteen passed at least one pro-immigrant law.³³ However the motivations for these policies do not align with variables that affect public opinion on illegal immigration. Differences in economics, crime rates, and even racial or ethnic disparity were not statistically significant in determining whether or not a state would produce restrictionist, or pro-immigrant ideology.³⁴ Rather the significant determinant came from the ideologies of their citizens. The point here is:

“Indeed, the crucial factor is not the party affiliation of the governor, but attitudes among the voting public... Thus legislatures are responding in distinct ways to their state environments, drawing on ideology alone in implementing restrictive legislation.”³⁵

Public opinion then can be a driving force behind policy and political change which can serve to define a political moment. Consider the impact that a series of spikes over recent history in the United States over concerns such as national security in the early 2000’s, increasing illegal immigration in the mid 2000’s, and now in the present with illegal immigration again peaking. Theoretically this could be one drive behind continued, or increasingly restrictionist immigration policies by the United States. An open question is how might public opinion be adjusted in the

³² Pew Research Center, “The State of American Public Opinion on Immigration in Spring 2006” (May 17, 2006)

³³ Jorge M. Chavez, Doris Marie Provine, “Race and the Response of State Legislatures to Unauthorized Migrants” *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, (May 2009) 85

³⁴ Chavez, Provine, “Race and the Response” 88-89

³⁵ Chavez, Provine, “Race and the Response” 90

opposite direction? If spikes in anti-immigrant opinion are driven by prejudices and assumptions about illegal immigrants, many of which are unfactual, would correcting this information affect what a person believes about the issue?

A troubling line of research suggests that accurate information on immigration has inconsequential, and often contradictory impact on public ideology. The study in question was published in 2019, and researchers explored whether or not presenting respondents with correct, or correcting false information about the perceived size of immigrant populations in the United States would affect their disposition towards restrictionist policies. Startlingly, they found that correcting previously false information had little impact in affecting support for restrictionist policies, despite the fact that in their study this correction often reduced the size of the immigrant group in question, when compared to their perceived size.³⁶

At this point a number of considerations emerge. The role that public opinion had in shaping the immigration debates of the mid 2000's was clearly significant. The division, while affected by demographics such as economics, immigrant population, and race, was more profoundly impacted by ideology. The ideological division perhaps precedes the possibility that certain Americans might support, or oppose illegal immigration for the same reason: their opinion on illegal immigration is a matter of self identification. Those that view themselves as more accepting, or those who favor human rights and dignities might be more likely to have more positive opinions about illegal immigration, or how to handle it. Alternatively, those that view themselves as preserving a country's security, cultural, or economic integrity might oppose illegal immigration for what they view as ostensibly positive reasons. While this is just

³⁶ Daniel J. Hopkins, Jack Citrin, "The Muted Consequences of Correct Information About Immigration", *Journal of Politics University of Chicago Press*, (2019) 317

speculation, the key point is that the issues that are important to Americans shape their reactions to illegal immigration. Research thus far as shown that slightly more Americans fall into the latter camp. Moreover accurate information about illegal immigration is ineffectual at changing their views. Since they represent a majority, or a significant portion of American society, they deserve closer inspection. All that said, there is more to be unpacked before asking further questions about this relationship between illegal immigration, public opinion, and self identification.

Framing Contemporary Concerns About Illegal Immigration

Illegal immigrants in the past, and more recent years have been marked by their illegal status, as well as the socio-cultural threats they represent for American society. The ways in which illegal immigrants have represented socio-cultural threats have thus far been explored within their contexts. Illegality however, has not. Before moving onto the immediate present, illegality must be deconstructed and examined. For illegal immigration to be a salient issue from which Americans base some measure of self identification, illegal immigration, or specifically, illegality, must constitute more than just a legal status. Illegal immigrants must be in some way an identifiable out-group by which American society, the in-group, compares itself to. How did they come to be a point of comparison, distinct and separate from American society as a whole? To this question, two key aspects emerge that serve to define illegality in the American landscape as both an abstract social, and a more grounded criminal issue.

Researchers René D. Flores, and Ariela Schachter examined this social construction of illegality, or as they refer to it in their article, ‘Social Illegality’.³⁷ It is not illegality in the sense of whether or not a person has documentation, but rather if an individual is viewed, or suspected to be an illegal immigrant based on certain characteristics. They examine variables that have already been established to heightened anxiety around illegal immigration: ethnicity, or race, economic status, and criminality. Race stood out only in the case of Mexican immigrants being substantially more suspected of being illegal.³⁸ Economically, being unemployed was the characteristic that aroused suspicions of illegality among respondents, whereas any form of employment had little impact. Criminal offenses only aroused suspicions in the cases of violent

³⁷ René D. Flores, Ariela Schachter, “Who Are the “Illegals?” The Social Construction of Illegality in the United States”, *American Sociological Review*, (2018) 839

³⁸ René D. Flores, Ariela Schachter, “Who Are the “Illegals?” 848

crime, or what was termed as “stereotypical immigrant offenses” such as human trafficking, or identity theft.³⁹ Their work offers an important consideration. Illegal immigrants were associated not just with criminality via their act of entering, or remaining in the United States illegally, but with other criminal offenses.

Considering this relationship, it is important to return to the point that public opinion can manifest in forms beyond polling data. The example of 2006 highlighted that public opinion around illegal immigration also took the form of an electoral debate, and public protest. Other authors have suggested that changes in policy constitute an expression of public opinion on illegal immigration. Public opinion on illegal immigration, for example, people writing, or calling their representatives with demands to increase border security could drive government policy to address these concerns. This is a fairly standard view of how public opinion can affect government policy, and why policy might be a useful way to measure public opinion. However, another view suggests that this effect can work in the opposite direction. That is, policy can impact public opinion.

Researchers Jize Jang and Edna Erez sought to explore the emerging pattern of increasing criminal penalties for violations of immigration policy despite repeated evidence that immigrants are not more likely to commit criminal violations. They frame their discussion around a trend in U.S. policy that they describe as ‘Crimmigration’. They define this as increasing Federal, and State prosecution of immigration offenses through unprecedented cooperation between different arms of law enforcement.⁴⁰ Speaking to earlier points about the impact that issue framing can have on the public’s view of illegal immigration, they argue that cultural, ethnic, economic, and

³⁹ René D. Flores, Ariela Schachter, “Who Are the “Illegals?” 850

⁴⁰ Jize Jang, Edna Erez, “Immigrants as Symbolic Assailants: Crimmigration and Its Discontents”, *International Criminal Justice Review*, (2018) 6

national security concerns were all leveraged by supporters of more restrictive policy to frame illegal immigration as a threat to American society.⁴¹ They draw on the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, specifically his concepts of habitus and capital. They define habitus as “the internalized “mental and cognitive structures” through which actors perceive, understand, appreciate, and evaluate the social world and conduct their affairs”. They define capital as “economic, social and symbolic” resources that give weight to the positions of policymakers and other actors. This framework is useful as public opinion can be seen as a form of habitus, whereas they are looking at the development of crimmigration through various forms of capital employed to support it.

When talking about the role of policy, and its relevance to this paper, there is another important consideration to be had before delving any further. Immigration policy, especially recently, often involves increased policing of immigrant communities, increased rates of deportations, as well as restrictions to citizenship. These are only a few examples, but they highlight an important point. Increasingly restrictive immigration policies are designed not only to keep future illegal immigrants out, but they also affect those already in the United States. Most estimates place this population at around 11 million. These communities throughout the United States are undoubtedly affected by these policies. This is a concept introduced by Jang and Erez which they call ‘Social Illegality’. This can be understood as kind of status that illegal immigrants are affected with as a direct result of increasingly restrictive immigration policies. Jang and The first major shift that resulted from this campaign for restrictive immigration policies was the cooperation between the federal agencies tasked with immigration policy and

⁴¹ Jize Jang, Edna Erez, “Immigrants as Symbolic Assailants” 9

local criminal justice systems. Homeland Security, ICE, and Border Patrol could now cooperate with local police departments. They argue that this led to a breakdown between communities and their local police:

“Enhanced policing activities in immigrant communities have adversely affected partnerships between the police and immigrants. It also increased the risk of racial profiling and heightened immigrant fear of the police, contributing to immigrants’ perceptions of the police as an outside oppressive force and reducing residents’ trust in and willingness to cooperate with police officers.”⁴²

This sense of social, and physical alienation was compounded by poignant statements they cited that illegal immigrants often faced harsher sentencing for any convictions, due to their criminal status being viewed as being “ungrateful to the new country”. How can Americans be aware of increasing measures to police, and enforce restrictionist immigration policy, yet adopt a viewpoint that it is their goodwill being taken advantage of? The dissonance at play in that mindset aside, it does lend support to the idea that public opinion is a form of self identification. Americans could favor harsher restrictions, increased criminal punishment, and other measures to combat illegal immigration if they believed illegal immigrants represented something alien to their own identities. Earlier discussion in the first chapter about American opinion highlighted preferential status to immigrants who were legal, educated, white, and culturally in-sync with American society. When the immigrants immigrating into the United States have been presented as not representing these characteristics, anxieties around illegal immigration flared. Of these anxiety-inducing variables, illegality was perhaps the dominant negative characteristic.

The earlier moment described in the mid 2000’s resulted in protests in favor of supporting immigrants, but also a trend of restrictionist policies on the local, and federal level. While

⁴² Jize Jang, Edna Erez, “Immigrants as Symbolic Assailants” 12

American public opinion overall was more divided on the subject of illegal immigration, was this a case of policymakers listening to the loudest voices? Or, as Jang and Erez might suggest, was the government acting independently of public opinion in favor of national security, and economic concerns? Did the resulting policy changes then result in a climate where illegal immigrants were marked as an alienated out-group, which led to the shift in opinion? It is difficult to say. One possible answer comes from the fact that much of the initial restrictionist policy pre-dated the financial crisis and waves of immigration that sparked the debate in the mid 2000's. As Jang and Erez note, much of the crimmigration apparatus was in place before that point.

“Following the events of 9/11, and the ensuing concerns over domestic security, a specialized agency—the division of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—was founded and became responsible for enforcing immigration policies.”⁴³

Policy can be understood as a powerful tool in shaping both the lines of a debate, as well as influencing negative public perceptions of a group. While policy would not occur without domestic support, it is a worthwhile consideration that the relationship between public opinion and policy changes can work both ways. The contemporary research around how illegality is constituted contemporarily suggests a relationship between illegality of immigrants, and perceived criminality. This results in social ostracization and separation. The increasingly restrictive immigration policies in America not only served to affect public opinion on the issue itself, but created the category of illegality from which illegal immigrants are directly compared to Americans. The legal and social illegality that undocumented immigrants live in forms a point

⁴³ Jize Jang, Edna Erez, “Immigrants as Symbolic Assailants” 10

of reference by which American self-identity could be constituted. Considering this question of self-identification, how does the past compare to the present? Thus far this paper has examined characteristics that raised anxieties around illegal immigration, as well as how these anxieties can flare up in particular conditions. Illegality was constituted as a particular category which furthered a sense of division, and difference between illegal immigrants and citizens. From this point of reference, how might Americans identify themselves in comparison to illegal immigrants? To get at that question, it is most prudent to look at the present moment. The 2016 Presidential Election saw illegal immigration rise to the top of American public consciousness in a manner similar to the spike seen in 2006. Though at the time preceding the election, illegal immigration was on a notable decline, and had not yet been a major campaigning point for any Presidential candidate. Polling, and policy have been used to gauge public opinion thus far, but an election is surely another way to understand what the public is thinking. The task at hand is to understand which concerns about illegal immigrants were raised during that time.

What is the Present Moment?

At the time only running for office, Donald Trump made extremely vitriolic remarks about illegal immigrants in 2016. At the time, he was the first Republican candidate to adopt such a hardline stance on illegal immigration, or properly address the issue at all.⁴⁴ For this reason, it was a significant moment in American politics for a number of reasons beyond its despicable nature. For the purposes of this paper it will be helpful to examine as a possible situational trigger for anxiety around illegal immigration. Researcher René D. Flores sought to explore this possibility. Her research inquiry aligns with much of what this paper has already examined, particularly the issue of framing. A politician's speech is surely a potential way than an issue can be framed, especially if the message is particularly widespread. She examined the effect that a speech made by then candidate Donald Trump made about illegal immigrants, which claimed many of them were criminals, and rapists. Take the horrendous nature of this statement aside for a moment, its relationship to this paper is still significant. The accusations of criminal and otherwise horrible behavior of illegal immigrants aligns with the fact that many Americans are concerned with illegal immigrants in relationship to crime rates, and social disorder.

Her research examined a Gallup poll which was conveniently timed for the question she was asking, as it was collecting responses during 10 day period, beginning one day before the speech in question was made. Her research highlighted a number of key effects. Firstly, that the negative speech that framed an issue, or specifically in this case a group, in a negative way had an immediate and significantly negative effect on public opinion concerning immigration. The

⁴⁴ René D. Flores, "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?" 1650

number of respondents who believed that immigration should be decreased after the speech was made rose from 25 to 33%. The number that believed it should be increased, began at 36%, but fell to 23%.⁴⁵ The negative speech had a greater impact on those with opinions on immigration more closely aligned to it, shifting many respondents from favoring a moderate decrease in immigration to favoring a substantial decrease in immigration.

Her line of inquiry then shifted once the significant effects of negative speech on public opinion were displayed. From her own experiment designed to explore different variables, she came to several conclusions. The speaker's identity as a local, or national politician did not have varying degrees of impact, both could be equally effective in causing a shift in opinion.⁴⁶ Aligning with other research, this effect did not translate to specific policies, but rather the abstract opinion on illegal immigration as an issue. Moreover, these effects were fairly short-lived, lasting only around ten days before public opinion responses returned to the patterns before the negative speech was heard. However, the content of the speech only had a significant impact on public opinion if the speech was negative.⁴⁷ That is, positive speech had no discernable impact on public opinion. Negative speech had a substantial impact, but its effect was short-lived. This would imply then that the situational trigger effect explored by both Flores, Brader, Valentino, and Suhay operates only when the information being presented is negative. Perhaps anxiety, or fear inducing information about immigration is simply more powerful than positive information.

It is worth noting that while the discrepancy between local vs. national level of speech did not have an impact, the key was that the person reading it was being exposed to it, and their

⁴⁵ René D. Flores, "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?" 1659

⁴⁶ René D. Flores, "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?" 1672

⁴⁷ René D. Flores, "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?" 1672

opinion affected by it. The speaker being on a national platform would then matter because that politician is able to expose more people at once to a negative message. Though a key element of the situational trigger dynamic proposed earlier was that the trigger has to align in some way with an individual's existing ideologies. For example, a person must be concerned about illegal immigrants' impact on crime rates for accusations of criminal behavior to have this sort of effect. Earlier in this chapter it was shown that correct information about, for example, criminal behavior of immigrants has little effect on ideology. It is worth noting then that someone could for example, not only continue to believe that illegal immigrants increase crime, but become more hostile to illegal immigrants when presented false information that supports this ideology. While I would not go as far to assert that large swaths of the American population share the President's views on illegal immigration, it is worth noting the effects of this speech on shaping the present moment as a new moment within the existing trend of negative opinion spikes.

It is an important distinction to make. Much of the theory about situational triggers implies that relevant concerns are present in the minds of the group(s) reacting negatively. The cues can also be delivered to the populace from external sources. They need not necessarily harbor all of the presumptions or biases, others can be presented to them:

“For example, migrants from non-English-speaking countries might suggest cultural tensions, whereas migrants from poor countries might suggest economic competition and a strain on public coffers. A citizen's policy preference may depend on such factual perceptions, on what she believes to be true about the policy and the problem it is meant to address. Thus, if group cues change beliefs about the severity of the immigration “problem,” opinion change may follow.”⁴⁸

I make this argument partly because it is impossible to discern where the hearts of those who voted for Trump during this political moment truly lie. Clearly his base has support based

⁴⁸ Brader, Ted. Valentino, Nicholas A. Suhay, Elizabeth, “What Triggers Public Opinion” 962

on racial or ethnic prejudices, as will be discussed later, but it would be highly irresponsible and untrue to claim that all share those beliefs. However, it is possible that fears about a minority, such as illegal immigrants, can easily be aroused where such animosity did not exist before. Two groups of researchers sought to tackle this problem. The first examined the role that the presence of Hispanic populations played in generating support for Trump's campaign.

To this end, the researchers acknowledge two possibilities. The first aligned with previous research in suggesting that American citizens are sensitive to ethnic and cultural changes, such as the growing populations of minority groups in particular areas.⁴⁹ The second possibility adds the additional variable that while sensitive and aware to these environmental changes, these issues remain nonpolitical unless "prompted by external agents, such as the media or political elites, to be connected with specific policy issues."⁵⁰ This does not, to me mean that racial prejudices or animosity towards illegal immigrants is nonpolitical, but rather that they can be harnessed for political purposes via rhetoric. It is an important distinction to make, these concerns are always present, but they can be enhanced, and harnessed by, and for political means.

Recall earlier arguments about how Latino Americans rose to particular salience in Americans' minds as the defacto group that represented illegal immigration. This argument becomes more potent. It becomes especially complicated when examining their results in areas with the presence of Latino Americans, many of whom were citizens, as well as longtime residents. In accordance with the theory that cues can be delivered to a population, support for Trump's campaign in areas of the country that had experienced high levels of growth in their

⁴⁹Benjamin J. Newman, Sono Shah, Loren Collingwood, "Race, Place, and Building A Base, Latino Population Growth and the Nascent Trump Campaign For President" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (2018) 123

⁵⁰ Newman, Shah, Collingwood, "Race, Place, and Building a Base" 123

Latino populations only increased after the President had made inflammatory remarks about illegal immigrants.⁵¹ While it is impossible to say definitively how many, or how much of his support was based on racial prejudice, they do argue that their data is “suggesting that the political ascent of Trump represents an adversarial reaction among racially threatened Americans to the expansion of Latino populations in their own communities.”⁵² The fact that the support for his candidacy rose based on negative, and ethnically targeted claims suggests a worrying connection between race and the public’s view on illegal immigration.

Though, electoral speech is just one example of a situational trigger. Another group of researchers examined policies themselves as statements on immigration. To be more precise, they examined the effect that anti-immigration policies had on discrimination against Latinos in the United States. It should be noted that their paper was published in 2016, before many of the policies, executive orders, and official anti-immigrant stances of the Trump administration had taken effect.. Their research is examining the role of anti-immigrant policies, and its findings could reasonably be applied to be having similar, if not the same, effects today. Their findings are especially important when considering the relationship between policy, and public opinion proposed earlier. The aim of these researchers was to examine perceived discrimination being leveled at Latino Americans, by Latino Americans, in areas where anti-immigrant policies were being put in place.

A number of variables emerged quickly that are of pertinence to the questions in this paper. The first of which was that the ethnic identity, or national origin of the Latinos being interviewed mattered. Mexicans, Cubans and those from South America were more likely to

⁵¹ Newman, Shah, Collingwood, “Race, Place, and Building a Base” 126

⁵² Newman, Shah, Collingwood, “Race Place and Building a Base” 130

report increases in discrimination than Puerto Ricans. Across the board though, reports of discrimination were nearly double than those reported initially in 2003⁵³ Moreover, the English language competency, and legal status of respondents had no statistical impact on their perceived levels of discrimination. As often cited hallmarks of acculturation and assimilation, this might lend credence to the idea that the discrimination being leveraged at Latinos is either unable to discern among illegal immigrants, and citizens or other lawful residents, or it is not really about their legal status to begin with.⁵⁴ While this is my own conjecture, another important point is that areas with more anti-immigrant policies had increases in perceived discrimination across the board.

Something of note is that economic concerns in relation to immigration appear to have taken a backseat. Where they were cited early and often by past researchers, these more contemporary authors make little mention of economic concerns being a driving force, or even a variable involved in current anxieties about illegal immigration. That is not to say definitively that they do not play a role, but that they aren't the subject of attention or focus. Instead much of the arguments have been focused on in-groups and out-groups, cultural difference, racial bias or prejudice, and the alienation of illegal immigrants. This is not to say that these are the only variables at work, but they are receiving a large share of attention and interest. While the trend of negative public opinion spikes holds through the different years these works come from, it is clear that racial and cultural concerns are much more important now than they were in past years. At the least, they are receiving more attention, the question is why.

⁵³Joanna Almeida, Katie B. Biello, Francisco Pedraza, Suzanne Wintnera, Edna Viruell-Fuentes, "The association between anti-immigrant policies and perceived discrimination among Latinos in the US: A multilevel analysis" *SSM Population Health*, (2016) 900

⁵⁴ Almeida, Biello, Pedraza, Wintnera, Viruell-Fuentes, "Anti-immigrant policies and perceived discrimination" 902

Despite the absence of economic concerns, these two political moments share much in common. Much of the rhetoric being examined in both contemporary, and earlier researchers pertains to the perception of illegal immigrants as dangerous, either criminally or culturally, as well as their cultural difference and alienation from American society. Racial prejudice was explored extensively by authors writing in both contexts. Concerns over a national security threat as a result of an insecure border are also still present in the minds of these authors. Something that is unique to this moment is of course the signal from the White House itself. Something that the immigration debate in the mid 2000's represented was the rise of political power by Latino Americans as voters, and as such it is argued by many that politicians were much more cautious. There were still inflammatory, and derogatory statements made about illegal immigrants, but never by a Presidential candidate, let alone a sitting President. All that said, the present moment bears much similarity to the earlier moments where the group-cue hypothesis was being proposed. The only outlier being that racial and cultural concerns are more significant now, than they were in past years.

A running concern throughout this paper has been the racial and cultural element at work within public opinion. A number of authors have argued for the role that racial anxiety, cultural difference, and general negative perceptions of social change play in generating negative opinion around illegal immigration. Arguments so far have explored the possibility that illegal immigration is highly volatile as an issue when met with group cues. These cues often come in the form of anxieties about difference, change, race, and culture. At the beginning of this chapter I suggested the possibility that public opinion around illegal immigration constitutes a form of self-identification by American citizens. The larger question left unsatisfied, and not explored

well enough as of yet is the relationship between these anxieties and American identity. It is clear that these anxieties arouse fears that illegal immigrants will cause harm, whether cultural, political, or criminal. If public opinion on illegal immigration can be seen as a form of self identification, what does public opinion about illegal immigration say about American identity, and self perception? Does it take on a racial, or ethnic character? Are there valid cultural concerns at work? It is my aim to try and address these questions.

Chapter Three: American Self Identity

Previously I raised the question as to how public opinion on illegal immigration could constitute a reflection of American identity. Specifically, the character of that identity is in question here. The question left open by the work thus far is: what does that say about us? I use the word us to describe American citizens. They are the primary body from which any public opinion data is drawn from. They also represent the most basic, but fundamental division between most Americans, and illegal immigrants. The fact that American citizens are legal residents, and illegal immigrants are not might seem to be an extremely simple thing to point out. Since much of the research has already established how important the legal status of an immigrant is when that immigrant's reception by Americans is in question, it is both practical, and vital to draw that distinction here. It is important to delve into what the reactions of American citizens are, and what those reactions say about American identity.

This is not, I think, a great leap in thinking. It was a question that initially came up during research, but it was also something I could not find much of an established answer to. Some of the components of an answer might seem clear. American association with illegality and criminality, specifically that illegal immigrants will continue to commit crimes while in this country might highlight a tenant of American identity. Part of American identity is that we generally value laws. Though we also debate, repeal, revise, and protest laws for whatever end we aim to pursue. Morality, ethics and other concerns weigh into a person's opinion on laws. Compare this rough framework to the following example. An article cited in Chapter one highlighted that respondents were less likely to be offended by the illegal status of an immigrant if that immigrant was white, or European. Respondents who were also white were most likely to

exhibit this behavior.⁵⁵ Other research emphasized that race is a powerful subject when considering public opinion on illegal immigration. Priming of American citizens through media coverage, demographic realities, as well as harbored prejudices of some American citizens have all played a role in contributing to Hispanics being salient as the defacto illegal immigrant. If, for example, Americans are anxious about illegal immigration because of its association with crime, and Hispanics are portrayed as the primary illegal immigrant group, then race might be a potent aspect of American identity.

Historically speaking this would be far from first time that racial difference was utilized to negatively shape American opinion on a given immigrant group. That is not to say that racial difference is the only characteristic at work, or am I trying to say that people who oppose immigration are racists. It is often said that actions speak louder than words, and American opinion on illegal immigration could be considered an action in this case. In opposition to the words being what most Americans profess to be: a nation of immigrants, welcoming and open. That is, at least, the polite statement most people probably give. How might what we learn from public opinion and American identity compare to what many Americans profess to be? It is now established that chief concerns of American citizens concerning illegal immigration have been subjects like crime, cultural or social change, race, and economics. The aim now is to invert the line of questioning. What does the fact that Americans are concerned about these issues, not others, when considering illegal immigrants, say about Americans? What can be learned about American identity through our reception of, and opinions about, illegal immigrants?

⁵⁵ Hartman, Todd K, Newman, Benjamin J, Bell C. Scott, "Decoding Prejudice Towards Hispanics" 152-153

The broad categories outlined thus far that stand out as concerns that Americans have when considering illegal immigration relate to those immigrants' impact on, or relation to culture, and race. Cultural and social concerns are the broadest categories as they cover a number of issues that will need to be outlined and examined. I've separated them from race as these can encompass issues such as crime, cultural attitudes, and assimilation. Sociocultural concerns intersects with the topic of assimilation. In terms of this project's question with American self identity, the question can be phrased this way: From American attitudes about illegal immigration, what can be said about the kind of culture Americans want to sustain? Issues such as crime, national security, and perceived cultural differences are central here. These topics were presented in ways that manifest in a characteristic used by many of the scholars presented thus far, which is the perceived threat of an immigrant. A perceived threat, that an immigrant group represents, is not necessarily one of direct violence or disorder, but that their characteristics represent a threat to the existing sociocultural order of American society. Hispanic illegal immigrants are perceived as threatening for a number of reasons that this paper has already established through closely examining existing work on the subject. Contributing to their perceived threat are issues such as their relation to criminality through the initial offense of illegally entering the United States, as well as a belief that such criminal behavior will continue while they reside in the United States.

Whereas with race enters topics such as American prejudices, as well as the possibility that race might be a category which contributes towards the perceived threat of an immigrant group. While it is impossible to fully determine in a presentable way where prejudices enter and leave the conversation, the fact that the race of an immigrant has mattered considerably to

respondents in studies conducted by Cohen-Marks, Nuño, Sanchez, Chavez, Provine, Newman, Shah, and Collingwood. Their work collectively has presented that certain characteristics are attached to immigrant groups based on race, such as unemployment, criminality, political affiliations, and language barriers. These concerns are often identical to the social and cultural concerns that will be discussed in this chapter, but race merits its own close examination because their research has illustrated that those concerns are often perceived as more threatening when the immigrant is Hispanic. This raises the question of if racial difference might represent its own threat in the minds of some Americans, or if the way Hispanics are presented as a racialized group links them to these concerns, or if there is something else at work entirely. These are the categories I've drawn up to sort different topics into identifiable camps for the sake of clarity and argument, but they are not fixed or impermeable.

Sociocultural Concerns and American Ideology

It is important to note that when discussing American social and cultural preferences, there is a bit of generalizing that needs to be done. When argued, for example, that illegality is offensive to Americans, it does not mean all Americans think this way. The social and cultural concerns being examined here have been chosen based on the fact that they elicited a significant affect among either a majority, or a statistically significant portion of those surveyed by researchers. Not all Americans need to think of illegal immigration in the same way to make the claim that most Americans oppose illegal immigration. The question here is not solely focused on understanding who thinks what, but rather what can be learned about Americans through their expressed opinions on this subject. When exploring the subject of American identity in relation to illegal immigration, it is important to first establish what that identity is.

Social identity theory is a term used to describe an individual's belief that they are a member of a particular social group. This social group must be defined, and distinguished from other social groups, either around theirs, or in their imagined worldview. It operates under a framework of comparison and reflection.⁵⁶ The question used to define a group then, could be: What defines a group and makes it different from others? This two part question defines terms that will be important. Which characteristics comprise an identity, or support it, and which

⁵⁶ Maurice Magnum, Ray Block Jr., "Social Identity Theory and Public Opinion Toward Immigration" *Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 41, (2018) 3

characteristics are seen as foreign, or alien to that identity, and are used to compare, or differentiate it from others? Identity can be understood as the characteristics that support a social group, whereas the perceived threat of a different group can be understood as a point of negative comparison. The key here is that those negative characteristics, or belief in them, serves to support, and is vital to, the cohesion of an identity.

Researchers Maurice Magnum and Ray Block Jr. constructed their own framework for measuring American identity, and related their American identity index to a respondent's opinions on illegal immigration. Variables contributing towards American identity included: whether or not a person, or their family was born in the United States, their race, their religion, military service, expressions of patriotism, positive, or negative beliefs about America, voting, speaking English, as well as their opinions on immigrants' roles in American society. These included whether or not immigrants contributed positively to American culture, or if they contributed economically.⁵⁷ Their findings uniformly showed a relationship between a high index of American identity, especially when coupled with a belief that immigrants represented a cultural threat, and opposition to both legal, and illegal immigration. Though illegal immigration was more uniformly opposed, this raises a question about the significance of illegality.⁵⁸ They offer their own account of the thought process an individual might go through when considering immigration:

“That is, prior to specific beliefs or evaluations of immigrants or the economic and cultural impacts of immigration, people first consider whether the immigrant appears to be “good Americans.” The basis that people use to make the assessment of whether they themselves embody an American identity followed by an appraisal of whether the immigrants do as well.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Maurice Magnum, Ray Block Jr., “Social Identity Theory” 8-9

⁵⁸ Maurice Magnum, Ray Block Jr., “Social Identity Theory” 13-14

⁵⁹ Maurice Magnum, Ray Block Jr., “Social Identity Theory” 13

This is an important assumption to make, as it emphasizes that a kind of sorting procedure occurs prior to more nuanced thought about immigration. Here they argue that people sort, or categorize people, immigrants too, by relation to their own identity. They might ask, internally: Does this person represent a potential member, or an outsider of my group? The conclusion they reach that more American identity conscious Americans are generally not receptive towards immigrants is significant when considering this question, as it raises the possibility that a kind of nativism, or in-group preference is integral to constituting a social identity. However they also showcase that certain beliefs can make immigrants more unfavorable towards Americans. It might be useful to consider that basic in-group preference as a given in any conception of a social identity. It could be a median, or a slightly negative view of those perceived as other, but somewhat close to neutral. A more vehement opposition to outsiders then could be affected by other characteristics such as patriotism, nationalism, or a perceived threat by foreigners.

Though to return to the question of this paper, what does this say, or can be learned about Americans if this mentality is correct? Another group of researchers argued that it fosters a greater justification of punitive punishment towards illegal immigrants. Michael Costelloe, Madeline Stenger, and Christine Arazan are writing in a modern context where illegality is linked to criminality. The characteristic that illegal immigrants are committing, and will continue to commit criminal offenses arguably connects them to a particular form of exclusion, and separation from the in-group, being American society. This form of exclusion is legal, punitive punishment via jail time, or deportation. They argue that:

“One major concern is the threat that Latino immigrants pose to the hegemonic status of the English language in the United States. Research has found that a majority of Americans list English proficiency as a fundamental component of American identity (Wong, 2010). The stereotype of the unassimilated immigrant promotes fear of the

undocumented “other.” This perception of threat may lead individuals to justify harsher treatment of those who are perceived as compromising the cultural stability of society.”⁶⁰

It should be noted first that among language proficiency they also cite national origin and legal status as important variables that affect how the “undocumented other” is viewed. An interesting point of contention arose from their research that ought to be explored. Namely they found that on its own, residency status had little impact on whether or not a person was perceived to be a criminal threat, and merited punishment. Rather, their country of origin had a more significant impact.⁶¹ This finding is possibly in conversation with earlier research by Hartman, Newman, and Scott, who gathered that the criminal offense of being undocumented in the United States was viewed as less negative when the offender was white, as opposed to Hispanic.⁶² This also can be inverted where white Americans, generally, feel a greater sense of socio-cultural, as well as racial threat from illegal immigrants. Does this mean that nationalities, or race is viewed differently by Americans in regards to the perceived threat of immigrants? Are immigrants from certain countries viewed as less American, or less likely to assimilate than others? These researchers suggest that the answer is yes. Especially so in the case of illegal immigrants from Mexico. Their representation through media as de facto illegal immigrants has not only connected them to the act of illegal immigration, but all of its negative attributes in the minds of some Americans.

A separate group of researchers sought to address this question, but questioning both the role that forms of media played in informing an individual’s opinion on illegal immigration, as

⁶⁰ Michael Costelloe, Madeline Stenger, Christine Arazan, “Punitiveness and Perceptions of Criminality: An Examination of Attitudes Towards Immigrant Offenders” *Race and Justice*, Vol. 1, No. 21, (2018) 5

⁶¹Michael Costelloe, Madeline Stenger, Christine Arazan, “Punitiveness and Perceptions of Criminality” 14

⁶² Hartman, Newman, Bell, “Decoding Prejudice Towards Hispanics” 152-153

well as the particular narrative being pushed by a given media outlet. One of their findings allows for an direct line of questioning concerning representation, and ideological difference:

“It is especially interesting to focus on the relative position of CNN, which is close to CBS and NBC from the point of view of the overall ideological position (as revealed by its viewers), but has a negative effect on immigration attitudes, the size of which is comparable to that of Fox News.”⁶³

This might suggest that regardless of the ideological position a network might take, its representation of illegal immigrants is more significant. If they are framed in a context which emphasizes their negative attributes, such as illegality, criminality, lack of education, economic threat, or others, than a positive spin on the subject might be fairly unimpactful on a viewer’s opinion on the subject. This speaks to earlier research conducted by René D. Flores, who emphasized that positive speech, or framing of a subject has little measurable impact.⁶⁴ Negative speech on the other hand has a discernibly negative impact on a person’s opinion on the subject. While media outlets might put a positive light on discussion illegal immigration, if they are referenced within contexts, and through characteristics that have been shown to be threatening to Americans, then a negative attitude will persist. This suggests a possible link between ideologies that matter to Americans, and the means by which immigrants are represented. Americans, regardless of ideological differences on the subject, might be prone to harbor negative opinions of illegal immigrants based on risen concerns stemming from the representation of illegal immigrants.

Researchers Shantal R. Marshal and Jenessa R. Shapiro published an article which serves to identify the important role that language plays in understanding perceptions of illegal immigration. Their experiment involved using different metaphors to refer to actions undertaken

⁶³ Giovanni Facchini, Anna Maria Madya, Riccardo Puglisi, “Illegal Immigration and Media Exposure: Evidence on Individual Attitudes” *Journal of Development and Migration*, (2017) 16

⁶⁴ René D. Flores, “Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?” 1672

by immigrants, and respondents' support for anti-immigrant policies. Their study is also especially useful because they measure and factor in respondents' degree of American identity in a similar way to Maurice Magnum and Ray Block Jr. This piece, while far from overwhelmingly conclusive serves to connect the two ideas presented thus far about American ideology. American ideological concerns highlight a preference towards similarity, and cultural homogeneity, and that illegal immigrants are represented, as well as viewed, as outside and dissimilar to that American group identity.

In an analysis of the effect language plays on an individual's perception of illegal immigrants, they offer metaphors which they liken to "animal, flood, or invasion". Examples of these are referring to immigration as a "flood" or "swarm", immigrants "scurrying" across the border, their children as "offspring", and referring to deportation as "rounding them up".⁶⁵ Their findings were twofold:

"These results provide evidence that the common metaphors used to describe unwanted immigrants can yield disgust reactions, with more disgust sensitivity being felt the more participants identified as American ... Interestingly, this effect emerged above and beyond the effects of political ideology."⁶⁶

Independent of political ideology, likening immigrants to a natural or animal-like threat to American society resulted in greater opposition to their presence in America, but only for those respondents that had a high self-affiliation as being American. What was even more interesting, is that results that did not use these "vermin" metaphors, as the authors call them, the results were uniform for those that had a high, or low index of American self-identity. When the "vermin" metaphors were introduced, support for anti-immigrant policies dropped for those with

⁶⁵Shantal R. Marshall, Jenessa R. Shapiro, "When "Scurry" vs. "Hurry" Makes the Difference: Vermin Metaphors, Disgust, and Anti-Immigrant Attitudes" *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 74, No. 4, (2018) 779

⁶⁶ Shantal R. Marshal, Jenessa R. Shapiro, "Scurry vs. Hurry" 783

a low American identity, but increased for those with a high American identity.⁶⁷ Such negative language was only impactful, or seen as threatening if a person strongly identified with America, the object being threatened. Their study is perhaps most important in that it emphasizes the significant role that language plays in perceptions of illegal immigrants. If illegal immigrants are consistently framed in, or in relation to, negative qualities or negative consequences for the United States, then their association with these problems will remain fixed. Their study also addressed the subject of race, and its role in American self identity.

Those white Americans who had strong indexes of American self identity were most hostile to illegal immigrants after being presented with their actions framed by these negative metaphors. The authors argue that:

“Research has shown that White Americans feel especially American, and are often considered more American by racial minorities in the United States. Moreover, White Americans tend not to support a celebration of multiculturalism, indicating that they would rather the country remain largely, and culturally, White. Not surprisingly then, Whites often feel psychological threat to news that Whites will soon make up less than 50% of the country's population, evidence that they feel ownership over the country, and ownership that is slipping away.”⁶⁸

This argument directs to an important question, which is to examine how central race is in conceptions of American identity. Is it common for Americans to perceive as Americans as white? Are white Americans perceived as more American based on this characteristic? What role does racial difference play in raising concerns among particularly self-identified American people? In what ways have the present concerns about illegal immigrants been racialized? The research presented thus far, as well as the already established fact that Hispanic Americans are

⁶⁷ Shantal R. Marshal, Jenessa R. Shapiro, “Scurry vs. Hurry” 785

⁶⁸ Shantal R. Marshal, Jenessa R. Shapiro, “Scurry vs. Hurry” 777

salient as illegal immigrants, and that illegal immigration as a crime is viewed differently on a race-dependent basis suggests that there is ample space to explore.

Race and Perceived Threat

In what ways have the presented perceived threats to American identity been racialized? If illegal immigration manifests as a threat in the minds of citizens who strongly identify as American, what role does race play in that dynamic? A leading scholar in this field of work published a piece which sought to explore how anti-immigration policy, and law enforcement has been racialized in contemporary years. Amada Armenta draws on both prior studies, a background in Critical Race Theory, interviews and research conducted on local immigration enforcement in the city of Nashville. Many of these personal accounts are from local officers in Nashville, conducting routine traffic stops. Though the author quickly asserts that even this language is misleading. The routine, the colorblind language of law enforcement masks a system designed to police particular individuals. The disparity between those affected by this system, and those engaged in it, is made clear in one of her interviews:

“Officer’s Moreno account makes clear that while Latino residents interpret police behavior as racial profiling, police interpret their practices through colorblind lenses. A

Latino officer himself, Officer Moreno insists he is not “looking” to punish Latinos but that he stops them because they happen to commit violations.”⁶⁹

The ramifications of such a system are twofold. It offers legitimacy to those who support it by masquerading as a race-neutral system, but Armenta presents a compelling argument as to why the opposite is a reality. The routine policing, stopping, and questioning of citizens only has a discernable impact on those who stand to face penalties from it. This anecdote from Officer Moreno does a lot of work beyond this. It emphasizes that a practice which is definitively racialized in that it penalizes a specific category of people which are identified first by racial characteristics: their skin color or the language they speak. Race then is not a natural, or given category but one that is defined by perception.

“Although their tactics may put officers into contact with all residents, these practices subject only some residents to increased levels of scrutiny. Through their implementation of the MNPDP’s policing priorities, officers subject Latino residents to lengthier inspections, sanctions, and sometimes arrest. These interactions signal Latinos’ place in the racial hierarchy, marking Latinos as less than full citizens in the polity.”⁷⁰

This is not to say that people should not abide by the law and be aware of the need to maintain required documentation. But when a particular population of people are especially vulnerable by means of being undocumented, it raises ethical questions about the practice. The sheer number of undocumented persons still present in the United States, despite illegal immigration rates being at an all-time low, suggests that people face significant barriers in acquiring citizenship or other valid documentation. For a routine stop, with no criminal offense being committed, the only violation being policed by local law enforcement is the absence of documentation.

⁶⁹ Amada Armenta, “Racializing Crimmigration: Structural Racism, Colorblindness, and the Institutional Production of Immigrant Criminality” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, Vol. 3, No.1, (2016) 89

⁷⁰ Amada Armenta, “Racializing Crimmigration” 92

Go back to, for a moment, the emphasis placed on these practices by Jize Jang and Edna Erez, that this kind of criminality associated with illegality is both literal, and symbolic. Enforcement of illegal immigration policy is not only a physical sentence, but it draws attention of American citizens. It is the physical, tangible, and measurable link between a policed Hispanic population, their illegal status, and criminality. The core argument being that Hispanic Americans, being the primary targets of immigration policy are identified as the defacto illegal immigrants, which on the inverse, racializes illegal immigration through its association with Hispanic Americans. The phrase “illegal immigrant” does a lot of work without someone necessarily realizing it. It evokes both a criminal offense, social stigma, as well as conjures an image of a racialized outgroup of Latino immigrants. The relationship between illegal immigration and criminality is both part of and the cause of these images in the minds of many.

This is in a direct relationship with work already examined by Newman, Shah, and Collingwood, which examined the presence of Latino Americans and support for President Trump’s campaign. Trump’s campaign is significant to this conversation, in part through presented work by René D. Flores which emphasized the link between negative speech, concerns about illegal immigration, and support for restrictionist policy. An open question then is what effects do these policies and practices have, the racialization of illegal immigration, on American identity and relationships between the in group, Americans, and the out group, illegal immigrants? The question that might answer these concerns might be: How do White Americans self-identify?

One group of researchers aimed to address this question, examining their own study with research conducted by other scholars. Judith Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, Robert L. Krizek,

and Lisa Bradford, aim to examine the ways in which White Americans self identify by paying particular attention to the labels they choose. Their argument lays out important claims which are significant to the questions being posed by this paper. Firstly, they examine how identity-making is different for what they describe as the “center” in American society, or the group which occupies more power than marginalized groups:

“Conversely, if power relations are central to identity and labelling, then the development and dialogues around labels for white Americans should look markedly different than parallel debates in marginalized groups. After all, those wielding power have no need to define themselves as they already occupy a naturalized position; they just are, they have a choice of attending to or ignoring their whiteness.”⁷¹

The operative word here is choice, by which white Americans not only have greater liberty to choose how, or if they reflect or express their identities, but they are free to make their own identities as a societal norm. That is, whiteness in America can be understood as a baseline by which other identities are compared to, or shaped around. They also argue that from a historical examination of identity making, those identities that were nonwhite, blacks, and Asians particularly, were created and labeled before whiteness was.⁷² Whiteness then, was formed around, and in direct contrast to identities it deemed as foreign, and nonwhite. In their study they polled white college students from various regions across the United States, and asked them to choose a term to describe themselves that was most appealing to them. Among these were: White, European-American, Anglo, and WASP. The researchers noted that ‘White’ was the most popular choice, with the categories of Anglo or WASP being chosen rarely due to their

⁷¹Judith Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, Robert L. Krizek, Lisa Bradford, “Exploring Whiteness: A Study of Self Labels for White Americans” *Communication Quarterly*, (1996) 128

⁷² Martin, Nakayama, Krizek, Bradford, “Exploring Whiteness” 129

potentially negative connotation.⁷³ They importantly return to the question of choice and its relationship to identity by positing that:

“That is, the dominant group, white Americans, have had the choice to be ethnic or non-ethnic. Self-labelling for them may be an intrusion on choice and, as such, engender negative associations; whereas, self-labelling for other groups, e.g., African-Americans is an expression of choice and therefore connotes empowerment.”⁷⁴

The researchers see the presence of other identities in culture, society, and in general social interactions with whites as compelling them to think about race more often, that the invisibility their identity used to possess is being eroded by virtue of being addressed. This study is useful in understanding White American identity in how it relates to other identities through comparison and contrast, but it doesn't offer much in addressing the other part of this paper's question: How do Americans self identify in relation to their views on illegal immigration? This study also only examined White Americans, and it is worth wondering if a person's race, or ethnicity has any bearing on their opinions about illegal immigrants. How might questions of nationalism, or patriotism, group identity, and a person's race illustrate more clearly the role that illegal immigration plays on constructing American self-identity?

Another separate study sought to address these questions. By examining both White and Latino American citizens residing in Los Angeles California. In addition to the respondents from this general survey in Los Angeles, they also measured the respondents degree of patriotism by gauging their responses to questions such as: (a) “I have great love for the United States,” (b) “I am proud to be an American,” and (c) “I find the sight of the American flag very moving.”⁷⁵ In addition to a respondent's measure of patriotism, they also utilized a series of survey questions

⁷³ Martin, Nakayama, Krizek, Bradford, “Exploring Whiteness” 139

⁷⁴ Martin, Nakayama, Krizek, Bradford, “Exploring Whiteness” 140

⁷⁵ Yesilernis Peña & Jim Sidanius, “U.S. Patriotism and Ideologies of Group Dominance: A Tale of Asymmetry” *The Journal of Social Psychology*, (2002), 785

from the SDS, Social Dominance Survey, to get a measure of a respondent's authoritarian or nationalistic beliefs. They called these a measure of social dominance. These questions included: (a) "It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom," (b) "Inferior groups should stay in their place," (c) "Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place," (d) "We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups"⁷⁶

In their findings they displayed a clear dichotomy between race, patriotism, and social dominance. Among whites, an increased measure of social dominance also correlated to an increased degree of patriotism, but the opposite was true for Latino Americans. Latino Americans could feel socially dominant, but this decreased their measure of patriotism.⁷⁷ It is clear that patriotism, national security, and even social dominance can be important measures of self identity for Americans, though it is a matter of degree. Those Americans, and particularly White Americans who could also feel prejudices, or cultural threat from illegal immigrants are more prone to exhibit negative opinions about illegal immigrants as a result. While expressions of public opinion about illegal immigration are not by any means a universal, or total measure from which to understand American self identity, it does serve to draw out darker aspects of American identity. Thus far this work has shown that we can only learn about American identity by means of what people are willing to say about illegal immigration. More often these opinions are negative, and hostile towards illegal immigrants. It is likely that this in part colors the reflection of American society in a more negative light, as the voices being heard are those hostile towards illegal immigrants, but the intersections between nationalism and negative views of illegal immigrants, for example, are considerable.

⁷⁶ Yesilernis Peña & Jim Sidanius, "U.S Patriotism and Ideologies of Group Dominance" 785

⁷⁷ Yesilernis Peña & Jim Sidanius, "U.S Patriotism and Ideologies of Group Dominance" 786

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to explore in what ways American expressions of public opinion shed light on both some complexities of illegal immigration, as well as American self identity. American public opinion by no means accounts for a total picture of either subject, but the focus has been on particular fields of thought that public opinion can open up. This conclusionary chapter aims to both address a number of open, or yet unanswered questions that have come up in various places throughout this project, as well as closely examine important claims already made in hopes of greater clarity. In part this is something I wish to do since for parts of this project I have relied heavily on work done by other researchers. Their work is immensely important, but as a result of how I worked with their evidence my own thoughts, and arguments have emerged cautiously. The goal here is not to be overtly polemical or to drift beyond the bounds that this paper has thus far established, but to exercise a more deliberate brand of thinking.

This chapter will return to many of the arguments posed by both myself, and cited authors, though not in the same paced, and exploratory method. Rather I will return to questions that were left open, or unanswered by the texts in hopes of applying my own understanding of those texts to try and answer them. I will also try to address questions that might have come up while reading this project, that were not necessarily addressed at all. For the introduction to this project I expressed some of my own reasons for starting this project, but here I want to begin by addressing other reasons as to why considering public opinion as a tool to understand a problem is a useful practice.

Open Questions

One of the questions that repeatedly came up during this project was: Why use public opinion as a means to understand illegal immigration? Part of that answer was the aim of this project. To use public opinion to gain a different understanding of how illegal immigration is viewed by American citizens, and how their views reflect back on themselves, a tentative us, as a nation. Being a student, and able to vote in the first Presidential election, to my memory, where illegal immigration captured the energy and imagination of so many as a deeply contested policy issue was also a factor in my personal interest in investigating this subject. The way in which illegal immigration was presented in a relatively binary way was concerning. While I do not believe in many of the arguments presented by opponents of reform, improvements, or a measure of amnesty to illegal immigrants residing in the United States, it always seemed foolish not to take those arguments seriously. Polling data, election results, and expressed opinions on policy became tangible measures to gauge what people who opposed, or supported different positions on illegal immigration were actually talking about. Regardless of my personal feelings about arguments I may vehemently disagree with, the responsible, and in a sense, strategic way to try and address those arguments is to take them seriously. To not write off positions held by people who could be categorized as misinformed, those who feel culturally, or racially threatened, but rather to understand their concerns for the serious claims they are.

Though that is not to say that I hold both sides of the argument commensurable. Take, for example the evidence brought forward by authors which expressed that illegality as a criminal status was viewed as less concerning if the immigrant was white, rather than Hispanic.⁷⁸ It would

⁷⁸ Hartman, Todd K, Newman Benjamin J, Bell C. Scott, "Decoding Prejudice Towards Hispanics" 152-153

be simplistic to argue that those respondents were racially prejudiced, even if such a claim was completely true. It is impossible to discern whether or not that claim was true, but what can be explored are the complexities at work in that recorded data. The language often used by those who identify as either Liberals or Conservatives refers back to illegal immigrants as a threatening body, either ways in which they are threatening, or ways in which they are not, in fact, threatening. Researcher René D. Flores illustrated that positive speech often has no discernable impact when trying to affect public opinion about a marginalized group. A possible answer to this dilemma is that illegal immigrants are discussed, either in positive or negative terms, in relation to their threat to the United States. While that is only my opinion, it represents a kind of praxis that is lacking in contemporary discourse. Political, and social divisions have divided people into separate camps which are often hostile towards one another. It has become easy, and possibly the norm, to disregard, discredit, and disassociate from those that are not a part of our camp. While I think it would be equally irresponsible to imagine a resolution to this problem as Habermas' public sphere, but rather that in order to combat ideologies which are hostile towards humanity those ideologies must be taken seriously. After all, the success of those ideologies poses serious enough ramifications.

Another potential means to address this problem comes from interpreting the work of both Mara Cohen-Marks, Stephen A. Nuño, Gabriel R. Sanchez, as well as René D. Flores, by which these authors address that the problem of how illegal immigrants are framed is both a local, and a national one. ⁷⁹ Respondents in their research were similarly affected by national headline news, as well as local news in affecting a negative view of illegal immigrants. ⁸⁰ This

⁷⁹ Mara Cohen-Marks, Stephen A. Nuño, Gabriel R. Sanchez, "Look Back in Anger?" 707-708

⁸⁰ René D. Flores, "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?" 1672

lends support to the idea that a source of the problem is the language being used to frame illegal immigrants, and not necessarily the source of the rhetoric. Obviously a national broadcast would reach more people than a local one, and have a greater measurable affect as a result, but the response people had to negative information about illegal immigrants was similar regardless of its scale or scope. One conclusion that can be reached from a critical analysis of citizens' views of illegal immigration is that the vocabulary of the conversation itself desperately needs to change.

Though change in what way, precisely? There may be no perfect way to frame future discussions about illegal immigration so as not to, even inadvertently, frame illegal immigrants in a context of threat. Foreignness, otherness, cultural, social, and racial difference are probably inseparable from this issue. Though surely the goal must become to find a way to talk about these differences, about difference itself, in a way that does not engender a hostile reaction. This new conversation is not one conversation that will illuminate people's minds to openness and welcoming. It is many, and a great continuous effort that as many people as possible will have to engage in to confront those same ideas that made respondents in so many surveys cited here so very uncomfortable. The fact that researchers, as well as myself, in different ways sought to address aspects of this problem means it is not impossible. Though these are scholars who are deeply invested in this problem, it is another thing altogether to promote a different framework of thinking among people who have, or see, no apparent need to think about problems differently.

Though as my allusion to shaky faith in Habermas' public sphere suggested, this problem is far more nuanced than changing the way we, as a country, talk about illegal immigration.

Researchers Jize Jang, Edna Erez, Amada Armenta, René D. Flores, and Ariela Schachter all touched on the systemic nature of this problem. This suggests a political solution must be found as well. The ways in which illegal immigration has become an intensely criminalized offense in both legal and social realities emphasizes a physical barrier by which illegal immigrants are separated from society. Significant policy reform to both the modes of legal immigration, and how illegal immigration is handled in the United States are required in order to address these systemic problems. Though, policy reform was not the subject of this paper, there were authors that directly addressed it. Policy itself, or more accurately, support or opposition to a given policy is a mode of public opinion. In the first chapter of this project researchers Jennifer Merolla, Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Chris Haynes explored the way that framing a piece of policy could substantially affect its reception by the public.

To briefly restate their findings, they argued that positively framing policy on addressing illegal immigration in particular ways generated more public support for an issue where before this reframing there was less.⁸¹ Arguably this is a potential source to build from in understanding how the United States can shift its discussion on illegal immigration. Phrasing, for example, pardons for illegal immigrants as a “pathway to citizenship” rather than “amnesty” generated more support for the policy. In the name of pragmatism this type of strategy could be fertile ground from which to explore ways to garner public support for substantial immigration reform. However something that these researchers did not touch upon, which I feel is a worthwhile inquiry, is the potential cost from reframing issues in this way. By, for example, reframing legal pardons to illegal immigrants as a pathway to citizenship the conversation is still stuck orbiting a

⁸¹ Merolla, Jennifer. Ramakrishnan, Karthick S. Haynes, Chris, “Illegal, Undocumented, or Unauthorized” 799

nexus of ideas where legal citizenship holds primacy. It is still the single most desired status for a person to occupy. I am not saying this is decidedly negative, in fact it holds many positive qualities. Legal citizenship brings with it a number of rights, protections, privileges and comforts that ought to be seen as valuable, and desirable, as well as available to as many people as possible. Realistically, and pragmatically speaking, pardons and greater access to citizenship would be wonderful changes which would improve the lives of all. However the point I am trying to get at is that it still leaves the category of illegal, or undocumented as a second-class status. If the United States were to, in the process of this hypothetical reform, ensure protections, and rights to illegal immigrants, than this problem of a second-class status would only be half addressed. While a remarkable, and immensely positive reform the problem would be incompletely addressed. The more murky concept of social illegality enters the conversation.

René D. Flores, and Ariela Schachter addressed this problem directly by trying to understand how illegal immigrants are viewed socially, and socially constructed as a distinct group as a result. This is pertinent to the conversation about public opinion because despite evidence from surveys, and legal data, many negative views, stereotypes and unfactual concerns about illegal immigrants persist. Now, not all of these stereotypes are entirely unfactual, but the follow up sentiment usually is. Ask this question: Do illegal immigrants represent a social, or political threat to the United States because some of them are uneducated, do not speak English, or are unemployed? If the answer to that question is yes, ask a follow up question: Do American citizens represent a social, or political threat to the United States because some of them are uneducated, do not speak English, or are unemployed? This is purely a theoretical exercise, a thought experiment, but it is meant to unveil the overriding problem of social illegality. These

problems, these same cultural, economic, or political concerns that caused so much distress for respondents across a multitude of surveys are viewed differently depending on the legal status of the person in question. Methods and means must emerge to tackle the social stigma of undocumented status. What would this look like? It is difficult to say outright, but there are a number of variables which are of great concern.

The first of which relates back to what is a tried, and possibly tired answer: Diversity and intergroup discourse. Benjamin J. Newman, Sono Shah, and Loren Collingwood startlingly brought forward evidence that showed voters were highly receptive to anti-immigrant rhetoric espoused by the President, then during his campaign, in areas where Latinos were more densely populated.⁸² However this does not implicitly mean that sharing spaces and conversations is not sufficient to address this problem. Social segregation, racial exclusion, and separation, even in areas where the populations of Whites and Latinos was quite mixed could feasibly stifle any productive conversations and sense of intergroup unity. It may not be then, that promoting difference and having difficult conversations between groups is not the answer, but that those conversations are not happening enough, if at all. To try and think differently about this problem it might be useful to return to the evidence brought by Hartman, Newman, and Scott. Illegality as an offense is viewed differently dependent on the race of the person in question. A connection that was not established, which ought to have been, is the relationship between racial difference and social illegality.

I am not saying that such work does not exist, or is not in the process of being done. I aimed to research as extensively as I could, but in all possibility I could have missed it. Though

⁸² Benjamin J. Newman, Sono Shah, Loren Collingwood, "Race, Place, and Building A Base" 126

this does not detract from the pertinence of that question. Since illegal immigrants have become viewed as a distinctly racialized category of people, then racial difference and discrimination must enter the conversation. Whether opposition to illegal immigration has in some circles become a fig-leaf for racist or xenophobic sentiment is an open question. That is not at all to say that those who oppose illegal immigration are racists, or xenophobes, and I hope my earlier claims about the importance of treating such claims seriously is remembered here. However it is equally necessary to address the ways in which racial prejudice, fear, and power dynamics are at work in how illegal immigrants are viewed in contemporary America.

Hold the work done by Judith Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, Robert L. Krtzek, Lisa Bradford in “Exploring Whiteness” and Yesilernis Peña & Jim Sidanius in “U.S. Patriotism and Ideologies of Group Dominance” in conversation together once more. Respondents which exhibited high levels of patriotism, nationalism, and were white exhibited significant perceptions of threat represented by illegal immigrants. Conversely, Latino Americans who felt greater measures of group dominance, represented by Peña and Sidanius as authoritarian, or nationalistic beliefs, felt significantly less patriotic towards the United States.⁸³ In “Exploring Whiteness” Martin, Nakayama, Krtzek, and Bradford identified a strong measure of choice when it came to expressing, or not expressing, White identity among White Americans. It could be that the fact that White Americans have this “freedom of choice”⁸⁴ not only points to White identity as an unspoken norm within American society, but also that White Americans are not racialized as a group in the same way that Latino Americans, or illegal immigrants are. This speaks to a deeply complicated imbalance, and system, of power which largely operates in discreet ways. I do not

⁸³ Yesilernis Peña & Jim Sidanius, “U.S. Patriotism and Ideologies of Group Dominance” 786

⁸⁴ Judith Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, Robert L. Krtzek, Lisa Bradford, “Exploring Whiteness” 140

quandaries about illegal immigration, social concerns, and race came up in the research from a multitude of decades in the United States speaks to the fact that new ways of thinking about this problem are as necessary now, as they were then. Perhaps because new ways of thinking about illegal immigration have struggled to gain ground in those earlier years is one reason we are still talking about those problems today. New, critical, and intensive thought about the problem is urgent.

Bibliography

- Almeida, J., Biello, K. B., Pedraza, F., Winter, S., & Viruell-Fuentes, E. (2016). The association between anti-immigrant policies and perceived discrimination among Latinos in the US: A multilevel analysis. *SSM - Population Health*, 2, 898-903.
- Armenta, A. (2016). Racializing Crimmigration: Structural Racism, Colorblindness, and the Institutional Production of Immigrant Criminality. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 3(1), 82-95.
- Bahr Goes on Trial as Spy in Newark. (1942, August 18). *New York Times*, pp. 1-2.
- Brader, T., Valentino, N. A., & Suhay, E. (2008). What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(4), 959-978.
- Breton, C. (2019). Do Incorporation Policies Matter? Immigrants' Identity and Relationships With the Receiving Society. *Comparative Political Studies*, 1-32.
- Chavez, J. M., & Provine, D. M. (2009). Race and the Response of State Legislatures to Unauthorized Immigrants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 623, 78-92.
- Costelloe, M., Stenger, M., & Arazan, C. (2018). Punitiveness and Perceptions of Criminality: An Examination of Attitudes Toward Immigrant Offenders. *Race and Justice*, 1-21.
- Espenshade, T., & Calhoun, C. (1993). An Analysis of Public Opinion toward Undocumented Immigration. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 12(3), 189-224.

- Facchini, G., Mayda, A. M., & Puglisi, R. (2017). Illegal Immigration and Media Exposure: Evidence on Individual Attitudes. *IZA Journal of Development and Migration*, 7(14), 1-36.
- Flores, R. D. (2018). Can Elites Shape Attitudes Towards Immigrants?: Evidence from the 2016 US Presidential Election. *Social Forces*, 96(4), 1649-1690.
- Flores, R. D., & Schacter, A. (2018). Who Are the "Illegals"? The Social Construction of Illegality in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, 83(5), 839-868.
- Gonzalez-Barrera, A., & Krogstad, J. M. (2019, December 3). *What we know about illegal immigration from Mexico* [Fact sheet]. Retrieved February 28, 2019, from Pew Research Center website:
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/03/what-we-know-about-illegal-immigration-from-mexico/>
- Gross, D. A. (2015, November 18). The U.S Government Turned Away Thousands of Jewish Refugees, Fearing That They Were Nazi Spies. *Smithsonian Magazine*.
- Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2015). The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 529-548.
- Hartman, T. K., Newman, B. J., & Bell, C. S. (2014). Decoding Prejudice Toward Hispanics: Group Cues and Public Reactions to Threatening Immigrant Behavior. *Political Behavior*, 36(1), 143-163.
- Harwood, E. (1986). American Public Opinion and U. S. Immigration Policy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 487, 201-212.

- Harwood, E. (1986). American Public Opinion and U. S. Immigration Policy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 487, 201-212.
- Hopkins, D. J., Sides, J., & Citrin, J. (2018). The Muted Consequences of Correct Information about Immigration. *The Journal of Politics*, 81(1), 315-320.
- Immigration, How Big a Problem? (2006, March 30). Retrieved April 26, 2019, from Pew Research Center website:
<https://www.pewhispanic.org/2006/03/30/ii-immigration-how-big-a-problem/>
- Jang, J., & Erez, E. (2018). Immigrants as Symbolic Assailants: Crimmigration and Its Discontents. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 28(1), 5-24.
- Jones-Correa, M., Marrow, H. B., Okamoto, D. G., & Tropp, L. R. (2018). Immigrant Perceptions of U.S.- Born Receptivity and the Shaping of American Identity. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 4(5), 47-80.
- Lee, M. Y. H. (2015, July 8). Donald Trump's false comments connecting Mexican immigrants and crime. *Washington Post*.
- Magnum, M., & Block, R., Jr. (2018). Social Identity Theory and Public Opinion towards Immigration. *Social Sciences*, 7(41), 1-16.
- Marks, M. C., Nuño, S. A., & Sanchez, G. R. (2009). Look Back in Anger? Voter Opinions of Mexican Immigrants in the Aftermath of the 2006 Immigration Demonstrations. *Urban Affairs Review*, 44(5), 695-717.
- Marshall, S. R., & Shapiro, J. R. (2018). When "Scurry" vs. "Hurry" Makes the Difference: Vermin Metaphors, Disgust, and Anti-Immigrant Attitudes. *Journal of Social Issues*, 74(4), 774-789.

- Martin, J., Krizek, R. L., Nakayama, T. K., & Bradford, L. (1996). Exploring Whiteness: A study of self labels for white Americans. *Communication Quarterly*, 44(2), 125-144.
- Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "Undocumented," or "Unauthorized": Equivalency Frames, Issue Frames, and Public Opinion on Immigration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(3), 789-807.
- Muste, C. (2013). The Polls-Trends: The Dynamics of Immigration Opinion in the United States, 1992-2012. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77(1), 398-416.
- Nelson, R. L., & Davis-Wiley, P. (2018). Illegal or Undocumented: An Analysis of Immigrant Terminology in Contemporary American Media. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 6(6), 8-15.
- Newman, B. J. (2018). Race, Place, and Building A Base: Latino Population Growth and the Nascent Trump Campaign for President. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 82(1), 122-134.
- Newman, M. (2006, May 3). Immigrants Stage Protests Across U.S. *New York Times*.
- Peña, Y., & Sidanius, J. (2002). U.S. Patriotism and Ideologies of Group Dominance: A Tale of Asymmetry. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 142(6), 782-790.
- Pew Research Center. (2008, September 25). Every Now and Again—A Study on News Coverage of Immigration. Retrieved February 28, 2019, from Pew Research Center website: <http://www.journalism.org/2008/09/25/every-now-and-again-a-study-on-news-coverage-of-immigration/>
- Public's Priorities for 2010: Economy, Jobs, Terrorism. (2010, January 25). Retrieved April 26, 2019, from Pew Research Center website:

<https://www.people-press.org/2010/01/25/publics-priorities-for-2010-economy-jobs-terrorism/>

The State of American Public Opinion on Immigration in Spring 2006: A Review of Major Surveys. (2006, May 17). Retrieved April 26, 2019, from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewhispanic.org/2006/05/17/the-state-of-american-public-opinion-on-immigration-in-spring-2006-a-review-of-major-surveys/>

Sussman, D. D. (2017). Immigration, Trump and Agenda-Setting in the 2016 Election. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 41(2), 75-98.

Tropp, L. R., Okamoto, D. G., Marrow, H. B., & Jones-Correa, M. (2018). How Contact Experiences Shape Welcoming: Perspectives from U.S.-Born and Immigrant Groups. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 81(1), 23-27.

Valentino, N. A., Brader, T., & Jardina, A. E. (2013). Immigration Opposition Among U.S. Whites: General Ethnocentrism or Media Priming of Attitudes About Latinos? *Political Psychology*, 34(2), 149-166.

Woods, J., & Marciniak, A. (2016). The Effects of Perceived Threat, Political Orientation, and Framing on Public Reactions to Punitive Immigration Law Enforcement Practices. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 3(2), 202-217.