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Immigration, Crime, And Punishment: Minorities' Perception Of Immigrants And Attitudes Towards Punitive Policies

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IMMIGRATION, CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT: MINORITIES' PERCEPTION OF
IMMIGRANTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS PUNITIVE POLICIES

by

LILLIE LATTIMORE

Under the Direction of Sarah Roberts Allen Gershon, PhD

ABSTRACT

This project focuses on the perception of immigrants as criminals, but more importantly, how this negative perception of immigrants can influence the population's support for strict punitive policies. The question I seek to answer: will common negative perceptions of immigrants affect public support for more stringent punitive policies? The literature on what makes people punitive mostly focuses on the role of race and hostile feelings that lead to punitive feelings towards an immigrant. In this project, minorities and their attitudes in contrast to past studies that focus on White Americans will be central to the analysis. Analysis of both the 2012 National Election Survey and 2001 Los Angeles Social Survey data is used to explain how the relationship between economic threat and negative perceptions of immigrants lead to respondents becoming more punitive. Although respondents who feel economic threat are more punitive, there is a difference in significance between Whites and Blacks.

INDEX WORDS: Public opinion, Group threat, Economic threat, Out-group threat, Immigrant,
Punitive

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DEDICATION

I want to thank my family and close friends for always listening to my ideas, and helping me talk through them so that I could eventually finish my thesis. I also want to thank family, friends, and my fellow graduate peers for listening to my venting sessions about the difficulty of graduate life. I am truly grateful to have such wonderful people surrounding me. Most of all, I want to dedicate my work to my mother. She has instilled a strong work ethic in me, and I pray that I have made her proud.

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1 INTRODUCTION

On August 31, 2016, Donald Trump made a speech at a rally in Phoenix, Arizona as he was campaigning to become the forty-fifth President of the United States. In his speech, he focused on an issue that has been salient for years: immigration. Trump's speech painted a picture of a group of people that were criminals, saying "according to federal data, there are at least two million, two million, think of it, criminal aliens now inside of our country..." (LA Times). His reiteration of a vast number of "criminal aliens" that reside within the United States creates a sense of panic among those who fervently believe this threat, and reinforces their discontent towards the immigrant population.

Trump's comments are not new in American politics and media. For years, immigrants have come to the United States in hopes of obtaining the American Dream, or a better life than what they had in their home country. As people emigrated to America, there has been pushback from citizens about immigrants and the perceived destruction they bring to American society. According to Gallup, over the past sixteen years, about forty percent of respondents have indicated that they want immigration levels to be reduced or stay the same in contrast to the twenty percent or less that want levels to increase. Why do Americans have such negative feelings towards immigration and do these negative feelings translate into attitudes that affect other public policy?

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This paper focuses on the perception of immigrants bringing more crime into the United States, but more importantly, how this perception of immigrants being criminals can influence the population's support for harsher punitive policies. The question this paper seeks to answer is will the common negative perception of immigrants affect public support for more stringent

penal policies? Past research in sociology has determined time and time again that immigrants do not raise crime rates in an area, and even reduce the rate of crime in their communities (Davies and Fagan 2012; Martinez and Stowell 2012). Nevertheless, the image of a criminal and intrusive Latino immigrant remains prominent in citizens' minds. This can be attributed to the media and even public figures, such as Donald Trump and his infamous quote, calling Mexicans "rapists." Past literature focuses on the role of race in people's punitive views (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Cohn et al. 1991; Green et al. 2006), and there is also some literature that draws attention to the effect on immigrant population on punitive views of the public (Feldmeyer et al. 2015).

There are numerous examples of immigrant groups being targets of animosity. In the nineteenth century, poor and uneducated Irish emigrated to the United States; they were victims of anti-Irish sentiment for reasons such as possessing values and culture that does not mesh with "American culture." The Irish's "rough and boisterous culture" (Kenny 2006, 371) that many believed to be a threat to the stability of the United States put them in a position of being outcasts. Another example of immigrants that have historically been the target of negative public opinion is the Japanese. Long before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent internment of Japanese citizens, the immigrant group was portrayed as a "threat to the American worker" and "corrupting agents to American society" (Library of Congress). There is an apparent pattern in the relationship between immigrants and Americans' opinion towards these people. In many ways, immigration is positive for the economy and the enriched culture of this country. However, there are often negative connotations that accompany immigrants, such as being criminals, terrorists, a strain on social welfare, and stealing jobs away from Americans.

This study aims to explore the impact of immigrants on punitive views of the public, with an emphasis on minorities' punitive views. Specifically, the study would like to consider how

minorities' views may (or may not) diverge from those of White Americans. There is a difference between Whites' and Blacks' punitive attitudes in this country. For instance, a fear of crime (Johnson 2009) and level of trust in law enforcement (Young 1991) influenced punitive attitudes of Blacks. On the other hand, among Whites, race is often a key influencer of punitive attitudes (Soss et al. 2003; Green et al. 2006). Emotion, such as anger has had similar effects on punitive attitudes among both populations according to Johnson (2009), meaning the angrier the respondents are about crime, the more punitive they become. This project will test both groups separately, and the point of this is to examine how Whites and Blacks' feelings of threat and perception affect their attitude towards different punitive policies. It is expected that there will be varying levels of impact on results from both groups because of other factors. Such factors include the issue of racism that is associated with White respondents (Soss et al. 2003; Green et al. 2006; Young 1991) and the Black community having an adverse relationship with law enforcement and harboring less punitive attitudes than other ethnic groups (Bobo and Johnson 2004). I believe that these outside factors will mitigate the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable in this study.

Race may still be a problem between the immigrant group and American minorities, as minorities may harbor their stereotypes of competing minorities perpetrated in the media and share complaints with White Americans toward incoming minorities. According to middleman minority theory, immigrant groups that are particularly cohesive and gain economic strength cause hostilities among the host community (Bonacich 1973). The host community feels economically threatened, because the immigrant community is surpassing them in business, or the labor they provide is taking jobs away from natives who have traditionally held these jobs (Bonacich 1973). An example of this was Whites' response to the growing, albeit small presence

of Japanese in California. Currently, the latter scenario is seen almost always in phrases like one spoken by now President Donald Trump: "They are taking our jobs. They are taking our manufacturing jobs. They are killing us"(Schreckinger 2015). According to a Pew Research Center article, this is sometimes the reality that poorer minorities face (Doherty 2006) and can influence their feelings towards immigrants. Depending on race and preconceptions of an immigrant group, there might be different emotions elicited from the community.

Studying immigration and how it affects public opinion on punitive policies is important because punitive policies are a means to control a particular population: criminals. However, punitive policies can be systematically biased towards a certain group, thus, in turn, controlling a specific subset of people within a community (Tonry 1995). Looking specifically at the minority population in contrast to the majority White American is important because it will give insight as to whether the threat of economic strain and new cultures are important factors to consider in the perception of other groups opposed to race. In much of the literature that studies punitive attitudes, there is a plethora of research that focuses on White Americans and racial factors that influence punitive attitudes (Currin and Percival-Currin 2013; King and Wheelock 2007; Tonry 1995; Soss et a. 2003). There is some literature that concludes that Blacks are less punitive than Whites (Miller, Rossi and Simpson 1986; Bobo and Johnson 2004) and what makes Blacks more punitive. Still, there is far less research on minorities and exploring other possible reasons as to what could make them punitive compared to Whites.

1.2 Expected Results

According to tests run on data from the American National Election Survey, if respondents see that there is a threat to job security because of the influx of immigrants, they are shown to be more punitive, but not to a significant extent. When controlling for political

identification and ideology, these variables tend to overshadow the effect of feelings of economic insecurity. In separate tests run from the Los Angeles County Social Survey, it seems that those who support deportations of immigrants (presumably because of their negative images of immigrants) are more likely to support the three strikes rule.

1.3 Defining Punitive Policies

The term "punitive policy" is quite general and for the sake of clarity, there is a distinction that is placed on punitive policies that affect the public and those that target immigrants specifically. Punitive policies that affect immigrants specifically, such as detention centers for immigrants, are not addressed in this study. Instead, this project will explore general, punitive attitudes, because the focus of the paper is to deduce how an external factor that is salient in social and political discourse affects public policy. More specifically, this paper seeks to focus on the effect immigration has on public policy that affects the population in general, not just a particular group. The concept of social control is at the heart of punitive policy support. Examining policies that target immigrants specifically would be one way to look at public desire to control a group. There have been studies that have considered this, such as a recent study by Ybarra, Sanchez, and Sanchez (2015). These authors found that a combination of economic insecurity and a growing population of non-White Hispanic population increased anti-immigrant attitudes in state policy. Provine and Sanchez's piece on the legislation in Arizona that criminalizes illegal immigrants highlights how anxieties related to race of immigrants led to expanding police presence and laws that specifically target immigrants (2011). Although literature has called attention to support for punitive policies that target immigrants, they also bring into context the role of anxieties, threat, and race. Because of this, it is important also to explore the possibility that after a while these feelings towards immigrants, positive or negative,

could have an effect on public policy that is not limited to their group. If it is the case that people's feelings towards immigrants affect their punitive attitudes in general, we can imply that anti-immigrant sentiment can turn towards having a lasting impression on public policy.

The definition of punitive policies focuses on specific types of policies in criminal justice. Punishment in criminal justice is administered in multiple ways depending on the crime committed and penal laws in federal and state courts. Punitive policies are split into two categories: those that are considered "detering" and "retributive" and those that are "rehabilitative." Policies that are as deterrents are those that bring about displeasure to the criminal as to deter them from committing such a crime again (Demleitner 2014). The retributive theory holds that we punish criminals because "they deserve to be punished" (Demleitner 2014). The United States' justice system works in this capacity since we use the possibility of going to jail if one breaks the law as a form of control for the population. In addition to this, we have sentencing laws that correspond with the type and severity of the crime committed, illustrating the retributive aspect of U.S. punitive measures. Types of policies that would fall under deterrent and retributive are incarceration and length of sentences, the death penalty, probation, community service, fines, restitution, compensation, or even revocation of a driver's license. Rehabilitative policies are designed to help offenders overcome afflictions and gain knowledge and skill to prevent them from re-offending and successfully reintegrate into society. Examples of a rehabilitative policy are receiving a sentence to a treatment or rehabilitation center, counseling, or receiving training or earning a degree while incarcerated.

This study is focusing on "harsh" punitive policies or policies that are considered stricter than the average, such as support for longer sentences for a crime, the three strikes legislation, which focuses on offenders that commit extremely violent felonies, and the death penalty. The

study that influenced the definition of what punitive policies are is that of King and Wheelock (2006). Their dependent variable, punitive attitudes, was comprised of three indicators: (1) the courts are too lenient with criminals (2) we need tougher prison sentences for repeat offenders, and (3) a person convicted of murder deserve the death penalty. This study concentrates on these three punitive policies because they are the most severe among the many ways an offender is punished. The length of sentences can range from a few months to a life sentence, which can negatively effect on the offender, their family, and taxpayers, and have a positive impact on the well-being of the community in which the crimes were committed. The death penalty is the most extreme punitive policy in criminal justice, so it is important to decipher whether people would support the death penalty based on feelings of threat and their perception of the immigrant.

2 THEORY AND LITERATURE

The intent of the study is to decipher the level of threat minorities may feel from immigrants and how this translates to their feelings of support for general harsh punitive policies. The theory essential to the argument focuses on a sense of threat that fuels hostility towards the immigrant group. Sources of threat within the minority community can be economic or cultural (King and Wheelock 2007). The second concept is the perception of the immigrant. Does the respondent view an immigrant as a source of criminal activity? Are they more violent, and are they a threat to the community? As seen in Donald Trump's rally speech in Phoenix, Trump portrays immigrants as both infringing upon the economic well-being of Americans and violent criminals that harm our society. Negative sentiments towards immigrants compounded with feelings of threat could intensify people's support for policies that will make them feel safer, such as stricter sentencing laws. This project aims to find whether feelings of insecurity and

negative perceptions of newcomers will propel individuals to seek security in policies other than those that specifically target immigrants.

2.1 Threat

The threat to economic and cultural security among minorities and their communities are variables that can explain how minorities' negative perception of immigrants play into their support for harsh punitive policies. Group threat theory is a concept that describes interactions between two different groups that interact and cohabitate with one another. It focuses on the mindset of a dominant group versus a subordinate group. The more members of the dominant group believe that members of the subordinate group threaten their economic, cultural or safety interests, the greater their hostility towards subordinates (Wilson, 2001).

One way to describe the negative feelings some Americans have towards immigrants is their believing that this new group is a threat to them. This can be in the form of financial loss, a perceived burden on the economy, loss of “American culture” and even the threat of criminal activity from the incoming group. For minorities, this would most likely be a threat to economic security. As the number of immigrants increases in an area, the threat of them taking lower income jobs from those who already live in the area could foster a feeling of animosity and contempt (Bonacich, 1973).

Change in racial composition of an area can be a predictor of punitive attitudes. Whites' view of Blacks being a strain on material resources more so than seeing them as a threat to public safety is a salient predictor of punitiveness (King and Wheelock 2007). This is because the dominant group (White Americans) are concerned with managing social control over those who are a threat to material resources (Black Americans) (King and Wheelock 2007). Discovering how this logic applies to the immigrant population even among minorities in the United States

would be an interesting and insightful addition to the existing literature. Will their desire to maintain economic security translate to the need for more social control over a group that they view as a threat? King and Wheelock's study of group threat and social control are a vital base for this study, and the expectation is to expand upon their theory and make it more relatable to the broader public, not just White Americans.

The theory of group threat only presents one side of intergroup behaviors. Social contact theory (intergroup contact), which essentially posits that groups that have repeated and sustained interaction with one another results in friendlier feelings toward one another (Whitley and Kite 2010). Gilliam, Valentino and Beckman's (2002) article on the impact of both racial proximity and local television news on attitudes about race and crime test both group threat and social contact hypotheses to decide which of the two holds true in this experiment. Results confirmed the social contact theory, showing that those who lived in more homogenous White neighborhoods endorsed more punitive policies for crime and felt more distanced from Blacks. However, the opposite occurred for Whites of mixed neighborhoods or did not affect them at all. This conflict between social contact and group threat is important to highlight not only between Whites and minorities but also between different minority groups. What is important to recognize is that threat can also result plainly from fear of the unknown, so it is reasonable to conclude that constant interaction results in knowing the group outside of stereotypes and preconceptions.

Hypothesis 1

Respondents who think immigrants take jobs away from Americans are more likely to support harsh punitive policies compared to those who do not think immigrants take jobs away from Americans.

2.2 Perception

Trump framed immigrants as thugs and gang members and said that immigration laws exist to protect all aspects of American life, including the work site, welfare, and education. Donald Trump cited the Center for Immigration Studies, saying that an estimated "sixty-two percent of households headed by illegal immigrants use some form of cash or non-cash welfare programs like food stamps or housing assistance" (LA Times). Donald Trump's rhetoric legitimizes negative views of immigrants already held by many Americans. Also, this type of rhetoric reinforces stereotypes about immigrant groups and a particular ethnicity of immigrants that influences public's perceptions and consequently their opinion and treatment of such immigrants.

Immigrants, like other minorities, have stereotypes and labels attached to them. Race, however, can be a major factor in the negative labeling of immigrants. Asian immigrants and Asian Americans are often referred to as the "model minority" (Alba and Nee 2003). The media rarely portray them as being violent and bringing crime to an area, compared to Hispanic Americans and Hispanic immigrants; Hispanic immigrants are often framed as "illegal immigrants" (Huntington 2004) thus giving an image of this group as breaking the law and being criminal. Immigrants in the media nowadays are often described as Hispanics coming from south of the border, or Muslim immigrants or refugees; both of which have had violent imagery attached to themselves from the media and politicians (Watson and Riffe 2012; Tonry 1999). Minorities are not immune to the constant practice of categorizing immigrants of different ethnic/racial backgrounds as good or bad.

The process of associating a group with an image that consequently stigmatizes that group occurs over time. The image is often repeatedly presented so that one automatically

associates a specific person or group with the image. An example of this is seen in research by Martin Gilens, who in his book *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (1999) explained why people perceived welfare recipients as undeserving of federal funds. He found that as news coverage shifted to Black Americans being in poverty and utilizing welfare expanded, feelings of problems within the welfare system increased. Gilens' work on media and forming stereotypes of Blacks and public opinion on the welfare system is an example of how racial stereotypes converging with media's misrepresentation can produce a cemented image into people's minds and subconscious that has real effects on public opinion and policy. This same framework should be applied when linking perceptions of immigrants to feelings towards crime and punitive measures to combat crime. There is a possibility that images of immigrants provided by the media and notables such as political figures coupled with other factors can affect the populace's support of public policies.

Like other minorities, immigrants are also subject to being negatively portrayed by the media and subsequently stigmatized with a negative image ingrained in people's minds. Martinez and Stowell (2012) highlighted this in an article written on the link between crime and Latino immigrants, particularly the Mariel Cubans in Miami, Florida. Their preface of the article emphasized the propagation of anti-immigration sentiment during the 1980s following the surge of less educated and impoverished Cuban immigrants. The increased immigrant opposition was fueled by images of Cubans and other Latinos as "hardened criminals" and drug dealers in the media, such as the movie *Scarface* (Martinez and Stowell 2012). News and media in addition to political figures and friends, family, and associates shape perception of immigrants through language signals, such as "illegal" and "alien" (Soderlund 2007). Using words like the ones previously mentioned illicit images of a criminal and people what do not belong or fit in. People

maintain these perceptions of others, because “on an unconscious level, individuals tend to believe ideas and events seen with frequency” (Soderlund 2007).

Punitive attitudes can be influenced by the perception an individual has of individuals who live near them. Percival and Currin-Percival's (2013) findings show that a White population that lived in an area where there was a large change in immigrant population thought those immigrants brought more criminal activity than before. Whites who associate immigrants with increased crime are more likely to express support for punitive crime policy alternatives like capital punishment and tougher criminal sentencing. Another finding worth noting: states with lower socioeconomic conditions are more likely to perceive that immigration rates create higher crime rates (Percival and Currin-Percival 2013). It is important to examine the root of why perception matters in support for punitive policies. In the previously reviewed literature, race is a blatant factor in why Whites support harsh punitive crime policies. Deeply embedded racism and stereotyping of Blacks has influenced others' views of Blacks and affected their perception into believing that Blacks are violent and crime-prone. Percival and Currin-Percival's work explains that living in an area with low socioeconomic conditions have a relationship to the perception of immigrants causing higher crime rates. It is possible that areas with low socioeconomic conditions are naturally more likely to have higher crime with or without an immigrant population, simply because of the lack of job opportunities and productive activities. A growing immigrant group is often used as a scapegoat by those who are unfamiliar with this new population and have to deal with growing crime, thus influencing their attitudes on punitive policies.

Hypothesis 2

Respondents with more negative perceptions of immigrant populations will more likely support harsh punitive policies compared to those who have more positive perceptions of immigrants.

Harboring a negative perception of immigrants is the key independent variable in this project because the point is to look at how minorities' perception of immigrants affects their punitive views. However, this project is asserting that the issue of feeling economic threat is also important because the feeling of threat will intensify the negative perception of immigrants the respondents may have. When the in-group is faced with an outside group, they naturally tend to harbor hostility. This paper asserts that this feeling of resentment regarding the new group coupled with stereotypes and preconceptions will magnify negative feelings towards the outgroup. The threat of economic insecurity can add more pressure to the opinions Americans have for immigrants. The added level of resentment could contribute to the strength of the respondents' punitive attitudes.

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Two sources of data that were utilized to answer the research question were the American National Election Survey (2012) and the Los Angeles County Social Survey (2001). The purpose of this was to be able to first, use a less controversial measure for the dependent variable and second, to be able to use data that was more current and generalizable to the public.

The Los Angeles County Survey's data was relevant because as previously mentioned, this dataset allows me to measure how respondents feel about legislation that addresses sentence length for repeat offenders. Three strikes law has less moral and other implications than the death penalty; it is also less extreme than the death penalty. This variable is an ideal measure for punitive policies. In addition to this, the LACSS's data is taken from an area in California that

has a large population of minorities and could be composed of a concentrated group of immigrants. The shortcomings of the LACSS is the smaller sample, and that it is unique to a specific area. However, it adds merit to the study by looking at a smaller group that is concentrated in an area exposed to a range of diversity. The 2001 LACSS is also more nuanced than the ANES in types of questions asked to respondents regarding punitiveness and points of conflict between ethnic groups.

The American National Election Survey is an important data source for this research problem because it has a much larger sample with oversamples of both Black American and Latino American respondents. These features of the ANES will allow me to make more generalized conclusions about people's feelings towards immigrants and punishment for crimes. In contrast to the 2001 LACSS, the 2012 ANES contained more recent information. As stated previously, there is more interest in possible differences or similarities between minorities and Whites in how they view immigrants and punitive measures. Although the dependent variable is measured through support for the death penalty in the ANES, it is still useful to look at respondents' feelings towards immigrants, feelings of economic threat, and its relation to support for the death penalty.

3.1 Data

3.1.1 American National Election Survey

The 2012 ANES Time Series Study is cross-sectional, and the sample contains U.S. eligible voters. The study has two samples: a face to face and an internet sample. The face-to-face sample included oversamples of Black and Hispanic respondents. The face to face interviews was conducted in a pre-election period and a post-election period. The internet sample

was administered the same questions for two periods before the election and twice after the election for a total of four separate times.

3.1.1.1 Measuring Punitive Policies

The dependent variable, (harsh) punitive policies will be defined as support for the death penalty. Capital punishment is the harshest penalty, and it is an issue that consistently divides people in their opinions. Although it is a highly punitive measure, it is almost always a question that is included in public opinion surveys, and therefore is the easiest variable to use that measures support for harsh punitive policies. In the 2012 ANES, it is the only variable that could measure punitive policy support.

3.1.1.2 Measuring Threat

Realistically, threat would be considered as immigrants posing a risk to personal safety, economic security, and the culture of the community in which they reside. Unfortunately, the 2012 ANES contained one question that pertained to financial security. The question that is used to measure economic threat asks respondents whether they thought immigration would take away jobs from people already residing in the area.

3.1.1.3 Measuring Perception

In the ANES there is a feeling thermometer that allows respondents to measure how they feel about different groups (Blacks, Asians, Hispanics and illegal immigrants) on a scale from zero (positive feelings) to one hundred (negative feelings). The feeling thermometer for illegal immigrants was utilized as a measure for the independent variable, negative feelings towards immigrants.

3.1.2 Los Angeles County Social Survey

The LACSS contains a sample of respondents that were selected via random digit dialing of all telephone households in the Los Angeles County area. This dataset includes oversamples of Black American and Asian American families. The makeup of respondents that participated in this sample is as follows: White n=223, Black n=231, Latino n=257 and Asian American n=38; total n=866 (including other ethnicities not explicitly cited). The interview was carried out over the phone and was administered in English or Spanish, depending on the respondents' preferred language.

3.1.2.1 Measuring Punitive Policies

The 2001 LACSS have two questions regarding crime remedies: support for the death penalty and support for the three strikes legislation. The initial approach to measuring this variable was to use the death penalty for the sake of continuity, of the study. However, realizing that policies such as the three strikes legislation are more in line with the definition of punitive policies for this project, it will be the variable used to measure punitive policy for the LACSS data.

3.1.2.2 Measuring Threat

The question "Why are ethnic groups in conflict?" is utilized to measure economic threat. Although the survey highlighted multiple causes of conflict, the focus on the question is whether or not respondents feel that access to jobs and income is a factor in conflict. The responses are on a scale that ranges to four, respondents indicating whether they feel that job access is not at all a source of conflict to feeling that it is definitely as source of conflict.

3.1.2.3 Measuring Perception

Although it is ideal to find a variable that could be used to measure perception of an immigrant as violent or prone to criminal behavior, the LACSS did not contain such a variable. Instead, a respondent's perception as being either positive or negative towards illegal immigrant is conceptualized. In turn, it is concluded that those who harbor negative feelings for immigrants would also have a negative opinion of them. The downside to this is not knowing why the respondent has negative feelings as there are several possible reasons to explain feelings towards a specific group. The variable used to measure respondents' feelings is the question that inquired how respondents feel about the movement of immigrants into the country. Answers are measured on a scale from movement being increased a lot to decreased a lot.

3.1.3 Controls

Previous literature studying punitive attitudes has established several factors that contribute to people's punitiveness. Race of the offender and respondent has been linked in many studies to punitive attitudes among individuals (Soss et al. 2003; Green, Staerkle, and Sears 2006; Young 1991; Bobo and Johnson 2004). The ideology of the respondent also plays a role in how punitive they are. Conservatives are more punitive than liberals (Grasmick and McGill, 1994; Jacobs and Carmichael 2001; Costello et al. 2009; Langworthy and Whitehead 1986). Ideology matters across race lines; Black Americans that are more conservative are more likely to support harsher punitive policies (Combs and Comer 1984). Another variable that is in the model is political identification; Republicans tend to be more punitive than Democrats (Grasmick and McGill, 1994; Jacobs and Carmichael, 2001). Education, gender, socioeconomic status, and age were also placed in the model, as such is standard for studies such as this (Percival and Currin-Percival 2013; King and Wheelock 2007). Black American women are

more punitive than Black American men (Miller, Rossi and Simpson 1986; Cohn et al. 1991), but women, in general, tend to be less supportive of punishment than men (Applegate, Cullen, and Fisher 2002). White males who have less education and earn less income and have concerns about economic security in the future are more punitive than their counterparts (Costelloe et al. 2009). Conversely, Black Americans with higher income tend to be more punitive than those with low incomes. "Southernness" conditions the effects of political conservatism on support for punitive policies (Borg 1997). Among variables that are established predictors of punitive policy support, such as racial prejudice, religious fundamentalism, and finally conservatism, they become stronger influencers to respondents in this region. For this reason, a South region variable has been included in both models from the ANES survey.

3.2 Methodology

For both datasets, the first model contained the sample of only White respondents, and the second model included the sample of only Black respondents. The n of the ANES in model one is 1, 586 respondents, and the n of model two is 233 respondents. The equation that is testing the ANES data is death penalty = a+ economic threat +illegal feelings +e. Respondents either answered oppose or favor to the question “do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?” As for the LACSS, the n in model one is 83 respondents, and model two’s n is 72 respondents¹. The equation testing LACSS data is: three strikes =a+ economic threat+ illegal feelings +e. Respondents answered on a scale from one to four on whether they strongly disagreed or strongly agreed to three strikes legislation remedying crime.

¹ The number of observations for the LACSS was initially 866. After isolating the White and Black sample from all other races and dropping some observations from other variables, the number became dramatically smaller. This is also attributed to the low number of observations for the dependent variable (three strikes legislation). Although all other variables had between 160 and 170 observations, the DV only had between 78 and 93 in the two models.

The dependent variable in the 2012 ANES is dichotomous, so the logit function was utilized to analyze the relationship between threat, the perception of immigrants, and support for punitive policies. Because the dependent variable in the 2001 LACSS was continuous, the two models were run as an ordered logit. The goal of the tests is to find differences or similarities between the White and Black population in their relation to punitive feelings and economic threat and perception of immigrants.

4 RESULTS

4.1 ANES

The first hypothesis posited was that respondents who think immigrants take jobs away from Americans are more likely to support harsh punitive policies than those who do not think immigrants take jobs away from Americans. Hypothesis 1 is supported by the results presented in Table 1. The likelihood that those who feel immigrants take jobs away from Americans also support the death penalty is significantly increased. Hypothesis 2 states that respondents with more negative perceptions of immigrant populations would support harsh punitive policies than those who harbor a positive view of immigrants. The results supported the second hypothesis as the likelihood of those who harbor negative perceptions support the death penalty is increased with high significance.

4.1.1 *Black Americans and Support for the Death Penalty*

In the second model of Table 1, none of the results were statistically significant, thus failing to support both hypotheses. The second hypothesis stated that Black respondents who believe immigrants take jobs away from Americans are more likely to support punitive policies than those who do not believe immigrants take away jobs. The results indicated that those who felt an economic threat from immigrants were 0.11 more likely to favor the death penalty. The

second hypothesis implied that Black respondents that have a negative perception of immigrants are more likely to support harsh punitive policies than those who have a positive perception of immigrants. Those who carried negative feelings towards immigrants were more likely to support the death penalty.

Table 1 Support for the Death Penalty

	Model 1	Model 2
Economic Threat	0.209* (0.081)	0.113 (0.167)
Illegal Feelings	0.020*** (0.003)	0.005 (0.006)
Democrat	0.199 (0.107)	0.072 (0.298)
Liberal	-0.926*** (0.187)	-0.208 (0.322)
South	-0.023 (0.140)	-0.264 (0.282)
Education	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.076 (0.063)
Income	0.110 (0.084)	0.088 (0.181)
Age	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.015 (0.009)
Female	-0.018 (0.128)	-0.713* (0.289)
Constant	0.050 (0.355)	1.98 (1.03)

Model 1 (White respondents only): n=1,586 Model 2 (Black respondents only): n=233
Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses
p <.01* p <.001** p <.0001***

4.2 LACSS

In the first model of Table 2, none of the variables being tested by both hypotheses were statistically significant and failed to support my hypotheses. Those who think that a source of conflict between ethnic groups is access to jobs and income were less likely to support the three strikes legislation as a remedy for crime. This result that measures economic threat shows a trend in the opposite direction than predicted in the first alternative hypothesis, which states that those who think immigrants take away jobs are more likely to support harsh punitive policies. Those who felt that immigrant movement into the United States should be decreased were more likely to support the three strikes legislation.

4.2.1 *Black Americans and Support for Three Strikes Legislation*

Hypothesis one stated that those who feel immigrants take jobs away from Americans would be more likely to support three strikes legislation. The results in the second model of Table 2 revealed that the opposite of hypothesis one occurred. Respondents that did not feel an economic threat were more likely to support the three strikes legislation. The second hypothesis stated that those who have negative perceptions of immigrants would more likely support three strikes legislation. The results in model two of Table 2 indicated that those who felt that immigration rates should be increased were more likely to support the three strikes legislation. For the Black American sample, both hypotheses could not be confirmed. In fact, the results showed that feelings of economic threat or the presence of immigrants did not affect Black American respondents' support of the three strikes legislation.

Table 2 Support for Three Strikes Legislation

	Model 1	Model 2
Economic Threat	-0.201 (0.275)	-0.563 (0.333)
Illegal Feelings	0.133 (0.217)	-0.029 (0.181)
Liberal	0.961* (0.378)	0.479 (0.346)
Democrat	-0.265 (0.283)	0.046 (0.435)
Female	0.569 (0.456)	-0.312 (0.475)
Income	0.072 (0.071)	-0.002 (0.083)
Age	0.013 (0.015)	-0.0007 (0.0008)
Education	-0.091 (0.084)	-0.041 (0.104)
Model 1 (White respondents only): n=83 Model 2 (Black respondents only): n=72		
Coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.		
p <.01* p <.001* p <.0001***		

5 DISCUSSION

The goal of this project was to explore whether people's perception of immigrants and their feelings of threat and hostility towards immigrant. It then sought to find if there was a relationship between perception, threat, and support for stringent punitive policies within the criminal justice system. Another goal of this project was to look solely at minorities in comparison to the majority White population to see if attitudes would vary from the margin. Two different data sources were used to attempt to answer the question of whether common negative

perception of immigrants affects public support for more stringent penal policies. The American National Election Survey contained nationally representative data that also included oversamples of both Latino and Black populations. This dataset allowed for me to make a more generalizable analysis. In contrast, the Los Angeles County Social Survey was localized to one area in California but contained more nuanced variables, and most importantly, a more precise measure for the dependent variable.

Although the results may not ideally show a causal relationship, it shows evidence of a pattern within the American citizenry that those who feel a level of threat to their well-being can react in a way that is potentially harmful to others. It has been seen between Whites and different minority groups in the United States, and the interaction between minorities and immigrants may be no different. Results from the data in the National Election survey indicate that those who feel an economic threat, such as jobs being taken away, when immigrants enter the country are more likely to support harsh punitive policy. Also, those who have negative feelings toward immigrants are more likely to support harsh punitive policy. However, looking solely at Black Americans in the data, there was an inability to assert that they feel the same as the public definitively. There is a possibility that Black Americans do also share the same feelings, but these feelings are not as apparent as the majority. Alternatively, there could be other factors that are affecting the results of the Black American model. One is affinity that Black Americans may share with immigrants, specifically brown immigrants. Latinos and Black Americans have long both been victims of racial bias from law enforcement and within the criminal justice system (Johnson 2001). Since they share the commonality of fighting back against injustices their respective groups have faced because of racial bias, the two groups have grown to form political coalitions (Johnson 2001). Because immigrants are targets of both immigration enforcement and

law enforcement, they are accepted as part of these coalitions as well, and Black Americans can harbor an affinity towards immigrant groups.

When considering economic threat, the Los Angeles County Social Survey's results were baffling because they did not show what was hypothesized. Unlike the ANES, the LACSS's results said that those who felt that job opportunities caused conflict between ethnic groups were less likely to support the three strikes legislation. Also, the hypothesis that those with a negative perception of immigrants were more likely to support the three strikes legislation could not be statistically confirmed, possibly because of the small size of both samples. As with the model that contained Whites only, the model containing Black American respondents was not substantial, but the results exhibited the same pattern. These results tell us a little about the landscape in which Americans live today in regards to immigration and its relation to the criminal justice system.

5.1 General Punitive Policies versus Policies Directed Towards Immigrants

This paper focused on general, punitive policies, but some policies are punitive and directly affect immigrants in the United States. Such policies are different; some include profiling a possible illegal immigrant, subjecting them to confinement in detention centers, and deportation. In comparison to general, punitive policies, policies that directly affect immigrants could generate more punitive attitudes from respondents. These laws that target immigrants are a form of immigration control (Batista 2014), which could then alleviate feelings of economic threat and fear of immigrants producing crime. As seen in the ANES results, Black respondents' responses were not as strong as White respondents. This could be a function of the low sample size of 233 people. It could also be that since Blacks are less punitive because of their history

with the criminal justice system, they would remain less punitive. If the policies were to focus on punishing immigrants solely, it is possible Black respondents would become more punitive.

However, the results from the Los Angeles County Social Survey tells another story. Both hypotheses were not confirmed, and in fact, results showed a trend opposite of the hypotheses. This could be attributed to the history of Black and Latino relations with the criminal justice system in Los Angeles. Blacks in the area are disproportionately affected by profiling, arrest rates, and jail sentences. According to a State of the Black Los Angeles report in 2005, the average sentence for violent offenses is forty-six months for Blacks compared to thirteen months for Whites (Nichols 2005). The Black felony arrest rate is more than four times as high as Whites and more than twice as high as Latinos (Nichols 2005). Racial profiling is also prevalent in the area, as Blacks and Latinos are searched by Los Angeles Police four times more often than Whites or Asians (Nichols 2005). Latinos and undocumented immigrants also face disparities in sentencing and arrest rates (Californians for Safety and Justice 2014).

These statistics show that both Blacks and Latinos (including immigrants) share a bond because of their tense relationship with the justice system and law enforcement. The historical and current struggle both groups have endured explains in part the results of the LACSS and why it differs greatly from results of the ANES.

5.2 *Threat and Hostility*

Theories on group and intergroup threat highlight the impact feelings of threat on how one group views another, interactions and consequently forming opinions that can influence policy in the long run. The results from the ANES model informs us that threat to economic well-being is linked to becoming more punitive. This confirms previous studies that have examined threat through other variables and its effect on how people view immigrants. Studies

like Percival and Currin-Percival's (2013), which focused on White Americans and Asian and Latino immigrants, set a precedent for this study. They established that feelings of threat could often cause the threatened group to react with apprehension and connect the change in demographic makeup of society with negative issues, such as crime and economic downturn (p. 17).

This project aimed to go a step further in research of public opinion on immigration and crime by isolating Black American respondents' opinions from the majority to explore their responses. Aside from the lack of statistical significance, the results tell us that Black Americans also feel economically threatened and support punitive policies, but not to the extent that the majority of Americans feel. The reason this could be is the low number of respondents who responded to questions, but also the fact that Black Americans are historically less punitive than White Americans (Secret and Johnson 1989; Miller, Rossi and Simpson 1986; Bobo and Johnson 2004). A goal of this project was to learn if the threat variable and perception of immigrants would intensify Black Americans' punitive attitudes. However, other variables are influential in moderating the punitiveness of this minority group.

5.3 People's perception of immigrants

Harboring negative opinions of individuals come from prejudices that people have formed about one another, and other factors such as threat that further intensifies resentment. The results show that individuals who harbor these negative feelings towards immigrants tend to be more supportive of the death penalty and three strikes legislation. This information tells us that the negative perception of groups might influence how one views policies that affect them daily. As mentioned in my theory, past literature has highlighted images associated with immigrants, such as them being drug dealers and violent (Martinez and Stowell 2012). There is also proof of

public figures repeating the same image of immigrants being a burden and personally victimizing American citizens through crime, using welfare, and taking jobs. People who perceive a group as the enemy that brings harm to the community may seek to control that group, and punitive action such as longer sentences could be a way to manage that group (Soss et al. 2003).

In the future, it would be interesting to form a study that examines and deduces respondents harbored negative feelings towards immigrants. The fact that the results show a correlation between negative feelings of immigrants and support for policies such as the death penalty warrants a need for further studies to look in depth at what distinct perceptions people hold for immigrants, and why they hold these perceptions. Is it from personal experience, conversations with family and friends, or what knowledge is garnered from images that are portrayed in the media?

5.4 Measuring Perception

No project or measure is ever perfect, but there is a need for survey questions that could better measure people's perceptions of multiple "groups" within the United States. This country is diverse in many ways, such as difference of cultures, languages, religions, and ethnicities. These different groups are also attached with stereotypes and prejudices that have been socially engrained in the public's minds. There have been surveys and quasi-experiments that measure how people imagine specific groups, but it would be beneficial for national surveys to include perceptions of immigrants. It would be interesting to see whether these perceptions match that of Latinos, Middle Eastern groups or whether there are specific prejudices against immigrants alone.

5.5 *Black Americans and Punitive Attitudes*

There is evidence that immigration does displace low-skill and Black American workers (Johanssen and Shulman 2004), however evidence in prior studies by economists show that Black Americans are not as tough on immigration reform as their White counterparts (Pastor and Marcelli 2004). A possible explanation for this that has been explored is the need to build political and social coalitions to fight systematic oppression over supporting immigration restriction, which would help low-skill Black American workers (Pastor and Marcelli 2004).

Like the act of building a coalition, African-Americans' lower support for punitive policies in this study could be the result of having a shared experience of strained relations with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. One of the ways these two groups can experience the same problems with law enforcement is through racial profiling. Black Americans have long been—and still are— targets of racial profiling. Latinos and other immigrants are increasingly victims of racial profiling, because of the possibility of being in the country illegally, but they could also be targeted as a possible suspect just because of the color of their skin. There is conflict between Black American communities and the growing Latino community brought on by cultural change and political competition (Vaca 2004). However, these conflicts seemingly do not override the deeply rooted commonalities these groups share regarding incarceration and interaction with law enforcement.

5.6 *Race and Punitiveness*

Previous literature focuses primarily on White Americans and underlines the role race and prejudice play in punitive attitudes. The Sentencing Project's research points out that White Americans often overestimate the amount of crime committed by people of color, and associate people of color with criminality (Ghandnoosh 2014). Their study also said that Whites who more

strongly associate crime with racial minorities are more supportive of punitive policies. The goal of this project was to look beyond race and find other factors that attributed to support for punitive policies. However, it seems that although threat and perception can be factors, the race of the respondent and subject in question are important variables to consider when exploring punitive attitudes. The race of the immigrant could be a factor for respondents when considering how immigrants are perceived.

6 CONCLUSION

The question posed at the beginning of this paper was will the common negative perception of immigrants affect public support for more stringent penal policies? The other element of this project was to compare the White and Black populations' punitive attitudes. The results have shown that factors such as economic threat and negative perceptions of immigrants correlate with their punitive attitudes for both populations, although the White population was more affected statistically than the Black population. This project has demonstrated the need to explore minority attitudes towards punitive and other public policies. There are merits to observing minority public opinion because although there is a level of cohesion among minorities on issues such as racial inequality, this group also deal with other matters that can mitigate cohesion across ethnic lines. The findings in this paper show that different factors can alter how one feels towards policies that affect everyone. This paper also shows that phenomena that seem unrelated to punitive policy, such as immigration, can influence public attitudes

The results from the American National Election survey tells us that people who think that immigrants take jobs away from Americans tend to support harsh punitive policies. Along with feeling that immigrants take jobs away, respondents that had less affinity towards immigrants were more likely to support harsh punitive policies. Black Americans by themselves,

as seen in the sample, do not conclusively share the same opinions, but there is a hint of information in the results that informs us that we need to continue to look specifically at the minority population and how their feelings can translate into policy.

What can be taken from the results presented, and implications brought forth is that social and demographic changes in the United States not only influence the political and cultural tone of society within the country but go further and influence public policy in the long run. Like Black Americans and other minorities being systematically oppressed and misrepresented in society, immigrants are stigmatized by stereotypes and add to the minority population in the United States. Immigrants can be allies to fellow minorities, but they can also be adversaries, which accounts for hostility and tension between citizen Americans and those who choose to start a life in America. It is important to explore the possibilities that long-standing prejudices that are a component of individuals' perceptions of people and hostility that results from feeling threatened could influence public opinion. Thus, these opinions will continue to reinforce prejudices and possibly influence policy decisions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Variable Coding

2012 American National Election Survey

1. *DV*-death penalty 0=oppose 1=favor
2. *IV*- economic threat (How likely is it that recent immigration levels will take jobs away from people already here?) 1= not at all...4=extremely likely
3. *IV*-illegal feelings (feeling toward illegal immigrant) scale from zero to one hundred; 0=positive...100=negative
4. PID (pid_self) -1 democrat 0 independent 1 republican
5. Ideology (liberal) 0=conservative 1=liberal
6. Region (region_SOUTH) 0= non-south 1= south
7. Income -1 poverty [under\$5,000 to \$22,499] 0 median [\$22,500 to \$59,999] 1 above median [\$60,000 to \$250,000+]
8. Race (white) 0=other 1=white
9. Gender (female) 0=male 1=female
10. Age= age of respondent

2001 Los Angeles County Social Survey

1. *DV*-Three strikes legislation (three_strike) [Tell us if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the proposed remedy. "Three strikes and you're out" legislation.] 1=strongly disagree...4=strongly agree
2. *IV*-Source of ethnic conflict-jobs (economic_threat) [differences in kinds of jobs and income people can get] 1=not a source at all...4=big cause of conflict
3. *IV*-immigrant_movement [Do you think # of immigrants from foreign countries should be increased a lot...decreased a lot?] 1=increased a lot...5=decreased a lot
4. Ideology (liberal) -1 liberal 0 moderate 1 conservative
5. PID (pid) -1 democrat 0 independent 1 republican
6. Race (white) 0=other 1= white
7. Gender (female) 0=male 1=female
8. Age = year respondent born
9. Income 1= <\$10,000...12=>\$150,000

Appendix B Descriptive Statistics

2012 American National Election Survey (First Model)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Illegal Feelings	1586	66.35057	24.50985	0	109
Economic Threat	1586	2.38966	0.9719052	1	4
Democrat	1586	0.1324086	0.8474099	-1	1
Liberal	1586	0.3726356	0.4836588	0	1
South	1586	0.3171501	0.4655132	0	1
Education	1586	12.47226	9.587823	4	95
Income	1586	0.3568726	0.752707	-1	1
Female	1586	0.4785624	0.4996978	0	1
Age	1586	52.94893	15.92516	18	90

2012 American Election Survey (Second Model)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Illegal Feelings	233	49.52361	26.07517	0	109
Economic Threat	233	2.274678	0.9154342	1	4
Democrat	233	-0.7424893	0.5192391	-1	1
Liberal	233	0.7253219	0.4473129	0	1
South	233	0.3171501	0.4655132	0	1
Education	233	11.05579	6.035911	3	95
Income	233	0.0214592	0.8430566	-1	1
Female	233	0.5021459	0.5010718	0	1
Age	233	51.90129	14.96961	18	89

Los Angeles County Social Survey (First Model)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Economic Threat	74	3.148649	0.7883124	1	4
Illegal Feelings	74	3.310811	0.9921013	1	5
Liberal	74	-0.0675676	0.727749	-1	1
Democrat	74	-0.1081081	0.8690661	-1	1
Female	74	0.4864865	0.5032291	0	1
Income	74	6.472973	3.003299	2	12
Education	74	14.58108	2.653541	5	17
Age	74	1956.189	14.7506	1920	1981

2001 Los Angeles County Social Survey (Second Model)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Economic Threat	62	3.532258	0.6946574	1	4
Illegal Feelings	62	3.435484	1.300958	1	5
Liberal	62	-0.2419355	0.7171319	-1	1
Democrat	62	-0.7419355	0.5100782	-1	1
Income	62	4.548387	2.956945	1	12
Female	62	0.5806452	0.4974818	0	1
Education	62	13.64516	2.450137	2	17
Age	62	1897.435	331.4354	99	1982