

Immigration and the 2016 presidential election of the united states



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To what extent did cultural, political, demographic, socioeconomic, and historic factors concerning Mexican immigration affect voter turnout and outcome of the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election?

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The U. S. Presidential Election of 2016 was perhaps one of the most complex and polarizing elections in U. S. History. Political ideologies between Americans were strained to the extent that relations between the peoples of the U. S. were slowed or destroyed entirely: especially on the stance of Mexican immigration more specifically. Looking back on past perspectives of Mexican immigration from American citizens, opinions have fluctuated and often during times of national economic hardship or war. For example, “ the American public adopted a more [welcoming] outlook on international migration following World War II” (Morris). Today, Americans are torn apart by the underlying and complex factors behind immigration such as the economics behind the labor force, humanitarian ethics for those seeking political asylum, and the cultural elements that immigrants bring to the United States. Moreover, immigration attitudes also differ by national origin group, citizenship status, and region of the country (Espenshade & Hempstead). Using research and comparative analysis of data, the following questions will be addressed. How might the past attitudes affect today’s? To what extent did cultural, political, demographic, socioeconomic, and historic factors concerning Mexican immigration affect voter turnout and outcome of the 2016 U. S. Presidential Election?

As an outcome of the Mexican-American War, Mexico suffered massive amounts of lost territory including Texas and soon to be states: California: New Mexico: Arizona: and Nevada. Under the ideals of Manifest Destiny, Americans were looking to expand westward as it was seen to be God's intentions. The creation of the Pacific Railway Acts of 1862 made this possible, thus creating the first transcontinental railway enabling thousands of Americans to migrate west. At the same time, President Diaz of Mexico was looking to expand the Mexican population into the north by also building his own system of railways. As a result, " the almost simultaneous development of railroad networks in both countries, as well as agricultural expansion in the United States, gave birth to a bi-national labour market in which an increasing accumulation of Mexican workers with experience in both sectors sustained a large portion of the expansion of these activities in the neighbour country to the north, the U. S." (Sicremi). Furthermore, the U. S. would see more Mexican labourers working on these farms and railways in the developing west. This initial impression of the strong Hispanic workforce appealed promising to Americans. They saw the potential of these workers and their capabilities to expand the American economy and began to utilize Mexican migration.

For instance, The first program allowing contract workers to enter on a massive scale was between 1917 and 1921 in response to World War I, exempting them from the literacy tests that applies to most immigrants from other regions, like Asia for example (Aguila, et al.). As a result, Mexicans dominated the labour workforce due to a lack of ethnic competition. These workers would remain in the United States until the The Great Depression

hit. Jobs became more competitive and white Americans began to feel threatened by immigration as they did before with the Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882. The total number of Mexicans deported for this reason is calculated to be more than half a million (Durand & Massey; Carreras). Following up to World War II, Americans again “ adopted a more liberal outlook on international migration” (Morris). Thereby, instituting the Bracero Program of 1942: “ a binational treaty for the temporary employment of Mexican farmworkers in the United states” (Aguila, et al.). As an increase in demand for agricultural workers began to grow, the temporary World War II measure was extended up until 1964. As a result, the Bracero Program of 1942 allowed about 5 million temporary migrant workers into the United States (Aguila, et al).

However despite this program, undocumented immigration was still a major source of Mexican labour in the United States. In fact, the amount of arrests made by United States immigration authorities was 5. 2 million, greater than the amount of the admitted (Morales). In order to stop this, the U. S. instituted the quota-based Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965; their first attempt to stall Mexican immigration. The INA would restrict legal immigration under the ideal that only 20, 000 visas should be granted to the countries of the entire western hemisphere: thus forcing Mexican immigrants to compete with neighboring nations for admission (Aguila et al.) As a result, undocumented immigration increased rapidly. According to Morales, “ Apprehension of these migrants tripled in the first five years after the termination of the “ bracero program”; going from forty thousand annual incidents during the first five-year period of the 1960’s to 120 thousand in

the second five-year period; it was five-fold during the 70's (670 thousand incidents), and reached almost one million incidents or more between 1977 and 1985, reaching 1.6 million in 1986" (Morales). To counter this, the United States produced the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. The IRCA cracked down on immigrants by increasing immigration enforcement by 50% and imposing sanctions against employers of the undocumented. However, it did grant amnesty to long term aliens, increased budgets for worksite inspections, and even granted programs for the legalization of agricultural workers. (Aguila, et al). This was necessary to gain the political support of the liberals by making compromises such as amnesty and workplace benefits in order to pass the legislation. In order to fight against liberal lawmakers and illegal immigration a " wave of ' neo-restrictionist' [conservative] sentiment emerged late in the 1970's and early 1980's" as public opinion began to oppose immigrants and refugees (Espenshade & Hempstead; Simon).

In 1971, Richard Nixon declared drug abuse " public enemy number one" and later the " war on drugs" as illegal drug smuggling through immigration began to worsen pressuring the Federal Government to take further action. With little effect on slowing illegal immigration, the Federal Government revised and instituted domestic laws in the 1990's, including The Immigration Act of 1990. The new immigration act took significant action by increasing the number of U. S Border Patrol Agents, providing funding for fencing in San Diego, developing new military technology, wiretapping, and increasing penalties for smugglers and aliens alike (Aguila et al). As the United States grew further into the 21st century, neo-restrictionist sentiment

would grow stronger under the Republican party as the image of Mexicans began to worsen under the public eye due to drug criminalization. In addition, Liberals started to become the political vehicle for immigrants, legal or not, to push for pro-immigrant agendas such as amnesty, government assistance, and protection in workforces where Hispanics are populous.

According to Hainmueller & Hopkins, “ one approach to immigration attitudes takes economic self-interest as its starting point. In this view, the native born perceive immigrants as competitors and will oppose immigrants if they have skill profiles and occupations similar to their own,” (Hainmueller & Hopkins). Furthermore, “ one’s job security is the crucial source of opposition to immigration. The threat of economic competition from today’s immigrants is generally seen as greatest in the low-skill, low-wage occupations, such as agriculture and entry-level positions” (Citrin, et al). Historically, Mexican immigrants have dominated in these areas, in fact ever since these immigrants arrived on U. S. soil they’ve been agriculturally invested. The argument continues by the belief that native workers may lose their jobs or opportunity and that in these industries wages may depress. Many argue that illegal Mexican immigrants impose increasingly heavy fiscal burdens on state and local governments concerning taxes through government programs such as welfare. The Federal Government itself has been sued by several state governors with claims concerning the costs of providing services to illegal immigrants (Brinkley). Thus anti-immigration preferences can be predicted by one’s anxiety over the amount of taxes one pays, whether they reside in states with high taxes, or whether one lives in

areas where there are large concentrations of immigrants (Citrin, et al). It is found by Kluegel and Smith that “ even low-skilled and uneducated whites have been found to express racism because of the glut of unskilled immigrants” (Kluegel & Smith). According to Hainmueller and Hopkins, “ immigration policy will be decided on the basis of peoples’ racial attitudes... [and] that economic insecurity may manifest itself in racial prejudice” (Hainmueller & Hopkins).

Immigrants may also pose a threat to other voting minorities such as African-Americans who operate under the same workforce. In contrast to those who are of lower socioeconomic class, economically successful natives may view continued and/or increased influxes of low-skilled, less educated immigrants as a potential economic drain among the upper class considering taxes and government funded programs for Mexican immigrants (Hood & Morris). It is noted that when the economy appears to be doing well, civilians are more open to immigration while on the contrary is also common for these immigrants to be blamed for economic hardships. According to Gimpel & Edwards, “ many investigators have noted that opposition to immigration rises during recessionary periods (Gimpel & Edwards). Simultaneously, increased restriction of legal immigration, if it has any effect on undocumented migration, is likely to generate an increase in the level of undocumented immigration; hence, an even greater increase at the expense of the documented population through taxes” (Hood & Morris). In a 1992 study by the American National Election Study (ANES), it was detected that “ fully 80% of [a] sample favored a residency requirement of at least one year before immigrants would be eligible for many government benefits”

[including welfare, medicaid, and food stamps] (ANES). Leading up to the 2016 election, opinions became increasingly polarized between the Democrats and Republicans. The Democrats stood representing the immigrants while the Republicans refused to tolerate illegal immigration no longer. Moreover, “ taking all into account [when considering the differences between the two primaries], pessimism about the national economy, beliefs about the negative consequences of immigration for jobs and taxes, and relatively “ cool” feelings towards Hispanic are statistically significant predictors of support for reducing the level of immigration and delaying benefits for those admitted” (Citrin, et al.).

As immigrants have settled over the generations and assimilated to American culture, the fear of xenophobia and nativism still exists in the hearts of many Anglo-Americans today. Cultural aspects of the Mexican immigrant population may appear to be harmful to the ideals of Americans and may sway many to oppose welcoming immigrants. In recent years, “ the immigrant population has grown rapidly, and it now stands at over 40 million” according to the U. S. Census Bureau in 2011. Motivated by this statistic, scholars and researchers have attained the desire to further understand immigration attitudes and whether these attitudes are primarily influenced by “ economic competition, ethnocentrism, concerns about norms, and national identity (Hainmueller & Hopkins). Anecdotal evidence is provided by Huntington during the U. S.-Mexico soccer match in Los Angeles of 1998, where the U. S. national anthem was booed and American players were assaulted by Mexican-Americans. This behavior indicates a “ dramatic rejection of American identity, which is an integral feature of the supposed

cultural threat posed by Hispanic Immigrants to American society (Huntington). From speaking English to celebrating American national holidays, assimilation to the American culture is essential for an immigrant to survive and be accepted. A study by Hainmueller and Hopkins found that there are “ two types of explanations [to justify attitudes towards immigration]- sociotropic explanations and norms-based explanations-[and these] receive strong support” (Hainmueller & Hopkins). When considering immigration, Americans approve of immigrants who are well educated, highly skilled, and who are planning to work and contribute to the progression of society. The notion of a productive immigrant is based on the idea that these individuals will survive on their own without draining resources such as government aid: American tax dollars (Hainmueller & Hopkins). In contrast, the majority of Mexican undocumented immigrants do not have one of these qualities, suggesting why many Americans are opposed to immigration.

In order to appeal to the fear of Americans, Trump paints his own image of Mexican immigrants and goes as far to say, “[Mexican immigrants] are rapists... but some, I assume are good people... [Mexico takes] advantage of the United States by using illegal immigration to export the crime and poverty” (Make America Great Again! Donald J. Trump for President). Trump was able to gain substantial support from these claims (refer to demographics) as well as critical skepticism in the eyes of opposing political opponents and liberals. Trump’s language and rhetoric became very damaging to the reputations of the Mexican populous, legal or not. In fact, according to Burns & Gimpel, “ the more the term ‘ immigrant’ becomes

associated with negatively-stereotyped minority groups, the more likely immigration policy will be decided on the basis of racial attitudes and this is exactly what happened" (Burns & Gimpel). Furthermore a study by Kteily and Bruneau found that " Latino residents- one of the groups regularly on the receiving ends of dehumanizing rhetoric in the United States during the 2016 election cycle- perceived that their group is strongly dehumanized in the eyes of Republicans, especially Donald Trump"(Kteily & Bruneau). A justified prediction can be draw from this: " the fear of immigrants would urge Americans to vote but those who felt attacked or dehumanized were also ushered to the polls in an attempt to combat oppressive Republicans" (Kteily & Bruneau). However, the undocumented Mexican population cannot exercise the right to vote but instead must advocate for representation at the polling boxes to gain political support.

Donald Trump's plan on handling immigration is to build a wall across the U. S.-Mexico border and deport 11 million unauthorized immigrants (Make America Great Again! Donald J. Trump for President). Trump also plans to reverse Obama's executive orders that provide temporary legal status to some unauthorized immigrants in order to " put American workers first" (Martin). On the other hand, Hillary Clinton wanted to push for comprehensive immigration reform that protects families while still protecting borders and national security (Winders). When Donald Trump brought up the idea of deporting all immigrants, it sparked controversy of pro-immigration vs anti-immigration and essentially the political divide between Republican and Democrats. In other words, the conservative agenda of preserving American culture combats the progression and

modernization of a novel culture. Division to this extent has been brought up in similar ways throughout our past known as the Minutemen Project. The Minutemen Project was an anti-immigration organization made by citizens to, “serve as part of a blocking force against entry into the U. S. by illegal aliens” (Mastro et al.). The Minutemen believed that immigrants caused cultural, economic, and security threats to the United States and would retaliate by utilizing local and state governments to limit immigrant rights or by using violence like the Garden Grove incident in 2005. Similar to the Minutemen project was Proposition 187 of Los Angeles California.

Throughout most of the 1990's, the political battle lines of the immigration debate were largely drawn in states bordering Mexico. Within these states, pressure mounted among citizen-activists for local and state leaders to address issues posed by the increasingly large immigrant population (Branton, et al.). This action denied illegal migrants access to government aid and social services; thus, making life in America very difficult. One commonality between these two anti-immigration ideas is the tremendous media attention, that resulted in rallies and protest on both sides. Looking at Donald Trump's point of view, it can be determined that controversial issues brought up by them have resulted in cultural issues as well. One example of this is when he “...linked immigration and terrorism, asserting that several terrorist attacks in the U. S. were carried out by immigrants, or the children of immigrants” (Martin). This depiction of immigrants being said by someone who is now considered a national representative creates the idea that all immigrants are “terrorists”. Research has proved and examined the ability language and communication of stereotypes has on creating unconscious

biases that can perpetuate stereotypical notions (Maass, et al). This can be explained by the News Coverage of Immigration where "...attitudes toward immigration are interconnected with people's perceptions of the ethnic minority group as a whole...media coverage of Latino Americans and Latino immigrants... echo this trend, as media portrayals of both groups emphasize stereotypes such as drugs and criminality, depicting Latinos as a threat to the White majority group."(Mastro et al.).

This supports the notion that when people hear the word "terrorist" associated with immigrants, they perceive all immigrants as terrorist rather than looking at the individuals that cause the terrorist acts. It also limits perspectives on Hillary Clinton's side because it was mentioned that people did not want to be supportive of immigrants that were apart of terrorist acts. According to a peer reviewed article A Call for Sanctuary it says, "Trump's campaign strategy, notably the misogynistic demonization of Clinton... Clinton was the face of Washington elitism and corruption, the establishment that had forsaken American jobs. It all worked, to stunning effect" (Ngai). Surprisingly, this strategy flirted with the problems of immigration in Trump's favor. Not only did he create an image of Latino immigrants as destructive, he managed to target the other candidates to elicit fear in the minds of voters. This essentially proves that people were subconsciously making stereotypic biases against immigrants because of the words Donald Trump used to portray immigrants. Here are the statistics behind this.

VOTER TURNOUT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Results by county

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Republican \geq 40%

Republican \geq 50%

Republican \geq 60%

Republican \geq 70%

Republican \geq 80%

Republican \geq 90%

Democrat \geq 40%

Democrat \geq 50%

Democrat \geq 60%

Democrat \geq 70%

Democrat \geq 80%

*Dubuque, Ray, et al. "2016 US Presidential Election Map By County & Vote Share." Brilliant Maps, 29 Nov. 2016, 20 November 2018, brilliantmaps.com/2016-county-election-map/.

*"2016 United States Presidential Election." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 Jan. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_United_States_presidential_election.

States closer to the border as predicted would vote in favor of Trump as the issue of illegal immigration was very close to home and a great issue. For

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example, non-border states in the 1990's experienced massive Hispanic population growth, especially in the south and southeastern states, where populations of Hispanics grew up to 70% (Branton et al). Due to these higher concentrations of Hispanics, these states were awarded to Trump as the majority population was comprised of mostly conservative anglos who feared immigrants would not culturally assimilate or take American jobs as Trump imposed. According to Pew Research, " on the contrary compared to Trump's voter turnout, Hillary managed to achieve 66% of the Hispanic participating vote" (Pew Research).

Drawing this into conclusion, it was found that Hispanics make up the majority (70-91%) of undocumented populations from the states bordering the U. S.-Mexico border: California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. It was also found that states with greater Hispanic populations tended to lean more democratic and those with lower Hispanics populations belonged to the Republicans due to overruling Anglo population. From this information, it can be determined that states along the U. S.-Mexico border did experience a significant undocumented Hispanic population which proves the ability to accurately predict a state's popular vote.

Trump played a vital role in the polarization of the nation between the downsides of immigration and the questionable language used to describe immigrants. The economic and social anxieties on immigration were perhaps the driving forces of Trump's argument which was supported by tariffs and tax cuts in order to stimulate the economy. Grasping to remain in power, blue-collar white Americans went to the polls to protect their beliefs on immigration as so did those in favor of immigration. Political debate between <https://assignbuster.com/immigration-and-the-2016-presidential-election-of-the-united-states/>

Republicans and Democrats on neo-restrictionism and economic disputes would lead to a greater voter turnout. In effect, factors concerning economics and neo-restrictionism prompted the majority of Americans to oppose Mexican immigration; hence, to otherwise agree with Trump's agenda leading to his Presidency. As well as his own person greed coming to politics, Trump believed that Mexican immigrants were taking American jobs, while asking for government welfare and assistance. In reality, most immigrants never ask for government assistance, because of their culture. In most Mexican families, they take care of their own from child to grandparent, whether it's money or a roof over their head.

Also, the statement of Trump saying that Mexican immigrants is further disputed through the evidence provided in the recent paragraphs. Trump uses the fact that the few blue collar workers left in America are operated by mostly immigrants and a few low income American citizens. That argument of "taking jobs" is only relative to the hard jobs that most Mexican-Americans don't even have. Blaming Mexican immigrants for "taking American jobs" was not only a false scare tactic, but instead a cover up for Trump's fear. He fears non-assimilation and economic burden from immigrants. Thus, he must preserve the traditional anglo-American culture because immigrants will destroy it otherwise. In effect, factors concerning economics and neo-restrictionism prompted the majority of Americans to oppose Mexican immigration; hence, the agreements with Trump's agenda and why he won Presidency.