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“They’re bringing Drugs... They’re bringing Crime... They’re Rapists”: Exploring Latino Immigration, Crime, and Voting Patterns in the 2016 Presidential Election

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“They’re bringing Drugs...They’re bringing Crime... They’re Rapists”:
Exploring Latino Immigration, Crime, and Voting Patterns in the 2016 Presidential Election

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Sociology

by

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University of Arkansas
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Abstract

The political race for the 2016 United States President brimmed with conflict over an array of issues, notably Latino immigration from Mexico and Latin America to the U.S. The rhetoric of then Presidential Candidate Donald Trump centered around the idea that Mexico was not sending its finest immigrants; that, in place, they were sending rapists and criminals. This rhetoric was heard loud and clear and has since affected various U.S. policies and programs that actively exclude Latino immigrants. Using census data from 2015, rates of immigration and rates of violent crime were compared against 2016 election results, *all at the county-level*. The goal was to assess whether county-level rates of violent crime *or* the county-level rates of Latino immigrants were correlated with how these communities ultimately voted in the 2016 election. Whereas existing literature reveals overall immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than U.S. born citizens, this research show that counties with higher rates of immigration are more likely to vote Democrat, net other key predictors, regardless of crime rate; counties with lower rates of immigration are more likely to vote Republican, regardless of crime rate and net other key predictors.

Keywords: Latino immigration, elections, crime, diversity, community, 2016, education

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Introduction

The immigration of Latinos to the United States has long been considered a threat to the dominant culture, language, values, and safety (Chavez, 2020; Cervantes, 2018; Branton et al., 2011). A narrative beginning in the early 1900s and continuing to the present, Latinos were framed as ‘foreigners’ and ‘aliens’ - ‘invading’, ‘flooding’, and ‘infecting’ the country. Often times referred to as ‘reconquistas’ by white America, it is feared Latinos will ‘reconquer’ the land lost during the Mexican-American war (Guardino, 1963; Chavez, 2020; Fernández, 2010; Lopez, 2013). This story, repeated over 100 years, has deeply impacted public perceptions and prejudices of Latinos overall.

Targeted as ‘unwilling’ to assimilate and ‘undeserving’ of opportunity, Latino immigrants are often considered a burden to the state and public education system. Education classes aimed at ‘assimilation’ to the dominant English language, such as ESL, are viewed with distrust. Gang, alcohol, and drug-related offenses committed by immigrants are weaponized politically and highlighted in the news media. Even though literature contradict this, the biggest perceived threat the narrative tells is that linking immigration to crime.

Donald Trump’s 2016 U.S. election bid was arguably the first in which immigration, specifically Latino immigration, was the target of a presidential campaign. Trump’s rhetoric decrying Latinos as rapists, bad people, and invaders was widely echoed from multiple platforms, including by other politicians and the news media. The focal point of rallies became ‘build the wall’ [between Mexico and the U.S.] and the response to the ‘immigrant problem’ was ‘shoot them’ (Chavez, 2020; Cervantes, 2018). With this rhetoric at the heart of the campaign, the question remains: to what extent did the Latino threat narrative affect the 2016 U.S. presidential election results *at the county level and across all incorporated census places*? Using

federal 2015 U.S. census data, we test whether rates of Latino immigration and rates of crime had an effect on political party vote, net other key predictors of poverty (food insecurity, female-headed households, low employment, and low education). More openly, through the use of hierarchical multiple regression models, we explore whether local crime rate *or* local immigration rate were *actually* associated with how communities ultimately voted.

Literature Review

The Contact Hypothesis and Latino Threat Narrative

Coined contemporarily in 1945 by Gordon Allport, the Contact Hypothesis theorizes that between-group contact not only tends to result in less inter-group animosity, it can also reduce intergroup prejudice and discrimination (Allport et al., 1954; McKeown and Dixon, 2016; Gaertner et al., 1996). Existing research show this increased and extended contact can lead to greater tolerance, reduce inter-group anxieties, and ultimately increase group salience and common goals (Dovidio et al., 2003; Hewstone and Swart, 2011; Turner et al, 2008). The closer and more situated the contact, the more accurate representation of other cultures and races emerge, oftentimes far removed from the stereotypes surrounding them (Ellison et al., 2011). In other words, communities that are more heterogenous in their ethnic will be more tolerant of unlike others, forming “we” mentalities and communities as opposed to “us” and “them” frameworks.

Alternatively, the absence diversity in homogenous communities can lead to increased fear, anxiety, and decreased tolerance of unlike others. Racial prejudices are less likely to diminish, as beliefs surrounding minority culture and language form without the opportunity for significant intergroup contact to occur, at any level (Ellison et al. 2011; Mancini et al., 2015).

Arising from homogenously situated and historically dominant White America, the Latino Threat Narrative targets both Latinos and Latino immigrants as unwilling to assimilate to dominant U.S. culture, politics, and language, instead forming emerging communities and social networks from the East coast to the West. This narrative depicts Latino immigrants as undeserving, illegal, burdensome, and criminal aliens (Chavez, 2020; Cervantes et al., 2018; Branton et al., 2011). The perceived abandonment of white American values and the white American dream, along with rising rates of Latino immigration to the U.S. lead to fear that American culture and identity were in danger (Chavez, 2020). Emerging in the 1920s, public discourse framed Mexican and Latino immigrants as a criminal threat; in the 1970s, they became ‘illegal aliens’, likened to an ‘invasion’ of U.S. soil (Chavez, 2020).

Emerging from the Latino threat narrative include misconceptions that are substantial in consequence. Taking this narrative at face value, Latino immigrant populations are largely overestimated by the public. They are oftentimes blamed for criminal violence, particularly including gang violence and drug trafficking, loss or lack of employment, and seen as burdensome to social welfare programs, the public education system, and healthcare systems in the U.S. (Chomsky, 2007; Tirman, 2015; Leo, 2020; Harris and Gruenewald, 2012).

Drastically overestimating the number of immigrants in the U.S., research by Pew Research Center (2019) shows only 76% of respondents estimated immigrant counts to be between two and three times the actual figure of 12%. A majority of respondents, over 50%, also believed Latino immigrants held undocumented status (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Drug and alcohol related incidents that did involve Latino immigrants were pushed into the spotlight, reiterating the myth of the dangerous and violent ‘criminal immigrant’. The focus on arrests and deportation of members from street gangs, such as Mara Salvatrucha, commonly

known as MS-13, was a focal point in support of anti-immigration policies and stoked public fear and distrust. Crimes that are committed by Latino immigrants are headlined by politicians and news media, increasing fear and singling out an already disadvantaged and targeted community (Harris and Gruenewald, 2012). This framing has aided in negative views of Latino immigrants. In a recent Pew Research Center (2019) study, 33% of respondents expressed the belief Latino immigrants significantly increase crime (Pew Research Center, 2019).

The narrative that immigration increases crime while decreasing job opportunities for citizens and harming the taxpayer is real (Davies and Fagan, 2012; McCan and Boateng, 2020). In a recent study by Pew Research Center (2019), 75% of respondents believed either themselves or someone they knew had lost a job to an immigrants, citing immigrants as a burden to the U.S., supporting immigration decreases (61%), and viewing immigration as a major problem for the country. Interchangeable with economic anxiety and instability is the perception of wage suppression. Fear of economic instability leads to large numbers of Latino immigrants being viewed as a critical, very serious issue (Gallup, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2019). Job loss and economic anxieties aid in overestimating the number of immigrants, supporting anti-immigration rhetoric and political action.

The narrative that immigrants are a burden on public resources such as medical care, SNAP for food insecure families, and public education system is rampant. According to Pew Research Center (2019), 37% of Americans believe Latino immigrants are likely to end up on welfare. An additional misperception is that Latino immigrants are a burden on the public education system. U.S.-born children and thus American citizens of immigrants were labeled ‘anchor babies’, to portray how immigrant parents ‘used’ the birth of their child(ren) to stay locked to U.S. soil, avoiding deportation (Tirman, 2015; Kim et al., 2018; Foster, 2017) At the

academic level, the use of ESL (English as a Second Language) classes for students in various stages of learning the English language are often viewed with fear. This inclusion in education is often perceived as an ‘unwillingness’ to learn the language and as a ‘personal choice’ to be segregated with like ‘un-assimilating’ others (Carter, 2014).

The Immigrant-Crime Paradox

Prior research on the intersection of immigration and crime present a paradoxical position to common social and political discourse – either Latino immigration has *no* effect, a negative effect, *or* a weak association with crime (Fagan and Davies, 2012; Green, 2016; Leiva and Ponce Olivia, 2020; McCann and Boateng, 2020). Literature shows immigrants *overall* are not only less often incarcerated in the U.S. than born natives, they are also less likely to commit crimes (Cervantes et al., 2018). Existing literature correlates rates of violent crimes with rates of poverty and disadvantage. Higher rates of violent crime are also observed in areas where there are high rates disadvantage. Significantly excluded from most of the social safety net in the United States, oftentimes, Latino immigrants reside in places with existing high rates of economic disadvantage.

Because most immigrants, including Latino immigrants, typically migrate to new locations without established social networks, they are more likely to live in places where high rates of disadvantage are present. Lumped together over mutual poverty, immigrants share a disproportionate amount of social demographics as groups that already contribute considerably to crime (Davies and Fagan, 2012). Oftentimes, this includes living in poverty in the same high-risk, disadvantaged neighborhoods, working similar low-income jobs, and having limited skills for upward social mobility (Chouhy and Madero-Hernandez, 2019). Economic opportunities afforded to citizens are seldom available to immigrant groups, making the move up and out of

poverty difficult. Structural barriers faced by Latino immigrants include limited proficiency in English, fear of deportation, uncertain or unsteady employment, and low levels of education. Excluded from most government social safety net programs, immigrants face social isolation, along with discrimination and prejudice (Munger et al., 2014).

Ironically, immigrants oftentimes become the victims of a crime and are at greater risk of victimization, such as hate crimes and sex crimes, all while facing social isolation due to language barriers (Davies and Fagan, 2012; Comino et al., 2020).

The Current Study: Anti-immigration as the Focus of the 2016 Presidential Election

Anti-immigration rhetoric continues to perpetuate the inaccurate narrative associating crime with immigration. Uniquely, the 2016 presidential election was arguably the first presidential election that actively targeted Latino immigrants, specifically. Referring to Latino immigrants during campaign speeches as “these people” and “bad hombres”, Donald Trump supporting rallied campaign cries of “shoot them”. Latino immigrants fleeing conflict and lawfully seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border were labeled as an “invasion”. In response to the perceived immigrant invasion, “build the wall” became a chant at most campaign rallies and public speeches, insisting Mexico would be responsible for the cost of its erection (Washington Post, 2015; Chouhy and Madero-Hernandez; Winders, 2016; 2019; Phillips, 2017; Ross, 2016). Post-colonialized struggling nations became “shit-hole countries”, from which immigration was not considered economically advantageous to the United States (Washington Post, 2018; Blake, 2018; Laguerre, 2018).

Despite prior research and data that contradict this narrative, Latino immigrants continued to be associated and further blamed for rates of violent crimes, including rape. Declaring a state of emergency in 2019 to control ‘the growing threat at the border’, the Trump

administration secured \$3.8 billion in Pentagon funding for a border wall between the United States and Mexico. Not only was the Latino threat narrative arguably the focus of this entire campaign, it was also expressed in policy.

In 2017, the Trump administration announced its plan to terminate DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), which granted certain protections and opportunities to those brought to the U.S. as children. The termination of DACA aimed to strip recipients of certain employment rights and protection from deportation (Hainmueller et al., 2017).

In addition, the introduction of the Zero Tolerance Policy in 2018, Donald Trump's administration paved the way for parent-child separations for the most vulnerable Latino immigrants. *All* of those seeking asylum and *all* undocumented immigrants were referred to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to be prosecuted. *All* children under the age of 18 were handed over to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, resulting in over 4,300 separations with 900 still waiting to be reunited as of 2021. (SPLC, 2020).

Donald Trump's infamous 2016 campaign speech summarizes the heightened immigrant-crime narrative surrounding this election in particular:

“When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people ... But I speak to border guards and they tell us what we're getting ... They're sending us not the right people” (Trump, 2016 cited in Chouhy and Madero-Hernandez, 2019).

This repeated misleading narrative framing immigration as a determinant in predicting rates of violent crime was used to mobilize Republican voters during the 2016 presidential election, exacerbating widespread misperceptions and moral panic.

On a humanistic level, this research is not just a Master's Thesis - it is personal *for me* and important *to me*. Growing up in the San Bernardino Valleys of Southern California, my peer

groups, social groups, neighbors, and educators were primarily Latino. The proximity of my hometown to the Mexican border at Tijuana is a grand total of 211 miles. I married into a Latino family, I have Afro-Latina daughters, and I speak Español. The Latino-criminal narrative exploded exponentially during Donald Trump's 2016 campaign for president, targeting some of those dearest to my heart, encouraging discrimination, verbal assault, and even physical violence. It is important to me to be able to explore, through the use of data, research, and theory, how deep this narrative resonates with the public – if this narrative did in fact affect the way the majority of the United States voted in the 2016 presidential election.

Methods

Based on President Donald Trump's 2016 speech assessing the characteristics of Latino immigrants, data were drawn from two sources. The first is 2015 data from the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), which contains key poverty variables used in conducting this research. The second is 2016 county-level election data which contain voting tallies for both parties. These databases were merged using FIPS codes to create a single cohesive dataset for analysis.

U.S. Census data were used to analyze whether county-level rates of Latino immigration *or* county-level rates of violent crime were significant in predicting county-level voting patterns net other predictors such as poverty *pctpopnohs* and *pctpopunem*, and racial diversity, *entropy2*. All analyses were conducted solely on the county-level. There were no missing cases in these datasets. Tolerance and VIF values in Table 4 indicate no issues of collinearity.

Units of Analysis

The units of analysis for this research are incorporated census places, representing populated areas that are (1) named, (2) recognized locally, and (3) not part of any existing place. These

places may or may not have powers, functions, and legally assigned limits. Although census places as units of analyses vary in size, crime rate, and in both demographic and social make-up, census places uniquely contribute to discourse surrounding immigration. Using census places to explore immigrant communities at the local, state, and national or regional level allows invaluable information regarding mobility, immigrant group sizes by region, rates of serious crimes, and affords for substantial statistical analyses.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables for this research include percent of Latin American immigrants (*pctfbla*), diversity index (*entropy2*), violence index (*violence_rate*), percent of population unemployed over age 16 (*pctpopunem*), and percent of population without a high school degree (*pctpopnohs*) for each census place. Violence rate is an index containing multiple highly correlated types of violent crimes including counts for assault, robbery, rape, and homicide for each census place. Diversity is an index containing measures of ‘race’ including White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian.

Exploring the rates of violent crime at the level of the census place accounts for a majority of potential violent crime types addressed in the literature review section of this paper, including rape. The percentage of Latin American immigrants allows us to examine the statistical significance of Latino immigrant presence at the county level and its potential relationship to 2016 Republican voting patterns. As described below, the variable *entropy2* will control for racial diversity.

Additional Control Variables

The first control variable *entropy2* is an index measuring diversity and includes White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian where higher scores equate to racial heterogeneity and lower scores equate to more racial homogeneity.

The second set of control variables, *pctpopnohs* and *pctpopunem*, measure the percent of the county-level population without a high school degree and the percent of the county-level population unemployed, respectively.

Analytic Technique

The purpose of this research is to explore the potential relationship between immigration, crime, and GOP voting patterns during the 2016 presidential election, controlling for predictors of poverty and racial heterogeneity. This analysis is three-fold. First, descriptive statistics are provided for each variable, including mean and standard deviation.

Second, simple bivariate correlations are provided across all variables used in the model, allowing exploration of the unique relationship between immigration and crime both *before* and *after* accounting for differences in predictors of poverty. These simple bivariate correlations afford for the direct exploration into the relationship between immigration and crime at the county-level in the United States. The goal in doing this is to speak in simpler terms regarding the relationship between the two, and more importantly, independent of any stakeholder discourse occurring external to empirical research.

Third, results from a series of hierarchical regression models are presented, predicting county-level GOP votes from the 2016 election, net other predictors of poverty such as the percent of the county without a high school degree and percent unemployment. This research began in January 2021 and was completed by the end of April 2021.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics have been provided for all independent and dependent variables in Table 1. The first column identifies the variable, while the next two columns present the corresponding means and standard deviations ($n = 2959$). We note several findings.

First, the average county-level percent of Latino immigrants ($M=47.58$, $SD=26.99$), and average county-level rates of violent crime ($M=1347.82$, $SD=996.32$) vary greatly by census location. Second, overall average diversity, including White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian, ranges from approximately 17% to 56% ($M=.38$, $SD=.20$). The percent of the population with low education ranges from approximately 11% to 21%, which parallels the 2015 national average ($M=14.51$, $SD=1.75$); (Ryan et. al, 2015). Finally, unemployment rates, on average, are relatively low ($M=4.51$, $SD=1.71$), again, consistent with the 2015 national average (Kang and Williamson, 2016).

Bivariate Associations

We find *negative* weak-to-moderate associations between percent GOP vote and the predictors violence rate, diversity, and percent unemployment (r ranges from $-.205$ to $-.473$, $p<.001$). Next, regarding immigration, we find a *weak positive* relationship between Latino immigration and rates of violent crime ($r= .061$, $p<.001$).

Altogether, *before* controlling for any key predictors of communities into which Latino immigrants settle, *census places with higher percentages of Latino immigrants tend to have higher rates of GOP votes, while census places with higher rates of diversity and violent crime tend to have lower rates of GOP votes.* This finding is important as the Latino Threat Narrative

and supporting rhetoric by Donald Trump in his infamous 2016 speech focus on the criminal menace posed by immigrating Latinos.

Third, the county-level percent of Latino immigrants is *positively* correlated with all other predictors from weak-to-moderate, including diversity ($r=.416$, $p<.001$), low education ($r=.478$, $p<.001$), and unemployment ($r=.042$, $p<.001$). Violence rate has consistent weak-to-moderate positive correlations with diversity, low education, and unemployment (r ranges from $r=.131$ to $.338$, $p<.001$).

Fourth, as previously mentioned, the additional control predictors low education, rate of Latino immigration, unemployment, and diversity all have *positive* weak-to-moderate correlations. Diversity has a positive and moderate correlation with low education ($r=.323$, $p<.001$), unemployment ($r=.348$, $p<.001$), and Latino immigration ($r=.416$, $p<.001$). Low education has a positive weak-to-moderate correlation between the percent GOP votes ($r=.127$, $p<.001$), Latino immigration ($r=.478$, $p<.001$), violence rate ($r=.131$, $p<.001$), low education ($r=.323$, $p<.001$), and unemployment ($r=.316$, $p<.001$). Finally, unemployment has a positive weak-to-moderate correlation between Latino immigration, violence rate, diversity, low education, and unemployment (r ranges from $.042$ to $.348$, $p<.001$).

Multivariate Models

We conclude our primary analysis with a series of three hierarchical linear regression models displayed in Table 3. For each additional predictor set, we construct a new model: one containing the total percentage Latino immigrants and rate of violent crime to predict the percent of county-level GOP votes (Model 1), a model that includes rate of Latino immigration, rate of violent crime and diversity index (Model 2), and a model containing rate of Latino immigration, rate of violent crime, diversity index, along with the additional set of control variables, unemployment

and low education (Model 3). Across all of these models, our interest is in (a) the direction and statistical significance of the relationship between 2016 GOP votes and percentage of Latino immigrants, coinciding with the Threat Narrative, as well as (b) whether there are any differences in 2016 GOP voting patterns net other key predictors.

Table 3 provides the model summary for all three of our hierarchical regression models. Model 1 regression indicate the predictors violence rate and Latino immigration explain approximately 6.3% of the variance in 2016 county-level GOP votes (adjusted $R^2 = .063$, $F(2,2956)=100.451$, $p<.001$). Retaining violence rate and Latino immigration, Model 2 contains the additional control variable *diversity* and increases the variance explained in 2016 county-level GOP votes to 35.6% (adjusted $R^2=.356$, $F=(1, 2955)=1345.602$, $p<.001$). The final model, Model 3, contains violence rate, Latino immigration, diversity, with the additional control variables unemployment and low education. The third and final model explains approximately 42.5% of variance in 2016 county-level GOP votes (adjusted $R^2=.425$, $F=(177.21)$, $p<.001$).

Table 4 provides the regression coefficients and significance for each model. For Model 1, violence rate ($\beta = -.214$, $p<.001$) does a better job at explaining 2016 county-level GOP votes than Latino immigration ($\beta = .147$, $p<.001$). Explaining 6.3% of variance in 2016 county-level GOP votes, a one unit *increase* in percent of county-level Latino immigrants corresponds with a .001 *increase* in percent of 2016 county-level GOP votes. A one unit *increase* in county-level violence rate corresponds with a $3.302E^{-5}$ *decrease* in 2016 county-level GOP votes. The regression equation for Model 1 is as follows:

$$\hat{y} = .635x + .001 \text{ pctfbla} - 3.302E^{-5} \text{ violence_rate}$$

For Model 2, the addition of the control variable diversity renders violence rate statistically insignificant in predicting 2016 county-level GOP votes ($\beta = -.015$, $p = .341$). Diversity now

explains the most variance ($\beta = -.634$, $p < .001$), followed by county-level percent of Latino immigrants ($\beta = .398$, $p < .001$). Explaining 35.6% of variance in GOP votes, a one unit *increase* in percent of county-level Latino immigrants corresponds with a .002 *increase* in county-level GOP votes. A one unit increase in county-level violence rate corresponds with a $-2.313E^{-5}$ unit *decrease* in county-level GOP votes. A one unit *increase* in county-level diversity corresponds with a $-.476$ *decrease* in county-level GOP votes. The regression equation for Model 2 is as follows:

$$\hat{y} = .705x + .002 \text{ pctfbla} - 2.313E^{-6} \text{ violence rate} - .476 \text{ entropy2}$$

For Model 3, the addition of the control variables low education and unemployment sees violence rate to be, once again, statistically insignificant in predicting 2016 county-level GOP votes ($\beta = 1.776E^{-6}$, $p = .447$). Again, diversity explains the most variance ($\beta = -.590$, $p < .001$), followed by education ($\beta = .265$, $p < .001$), unemployment ($\beta = -.234$, $p < .001$), and Latino immigration ($\beta = .262$, $p < .001$). Model 3 explains approximately 42.5% of variance in 2016 GOP votes, where a 1 unit *increase* in percent of county-level Latino immigrants corresponds with a .001 *increase* in county-level GOP votes. A one unit *increase* in county-level percent diversity corresponds with a $-.590$ *decrease* in percent of county-level GOP votes. A one unit increase in percent without a high school diploma (low education) corresponds with a .006 unit *increase* in county-level GOP votes. A one unit increase in county-level unemployment corresponds with a .021 unit *decrease* in county-level GOP votes. The regression equation for Model 3 is as follows:

$$\hat{y} = .726x + .001 \text{ pctfbla} + 1.776E^{-6} \text{ violence_rate} - .443 \text{ entropy2} + .006 \text{ education} - .021 \text{ unemployment}$$

As revealed by Models 2 and 3, not only do places with *higher* percentages of Latino immigration tend to have *lower* levels of GOP votes, these locations also render rates of violent crime insignificant in predicting the occurrence of GOP votes. Furthermore, our models reveal that overall diversity (*entropy*²) conditions the relationship with GOP votes. Essentially, county-level GOP votes, on average, were more likely to occur in places with not only *higher* rates of Latino immigrants, but in places with *higher* rates of low education. Inversely, county-level Democrat votes, on average, were more likely to occur in counties with *higher* rates of overall diversity, and *higher* rates of education (high school diploma attainment).

Discussion and Conclusion

Current literature documents the settling of Latino immigrants in U.S. communities and the relevant patterns that emerge, such as crime reduction, positive community building, and social interaction. Yet, an important gap remained. Hence, the focus of this research has been to examine to what extent the overall county-level presence of Latino immigrants and overall county-level rates of violent crime were significant in predicting GOP votes. In doing so, this research addressed what has become common rhetoric among policy makers and the public in general: the idea that Latino immigration is not only disadvantageous to the U.S. as a country, but poses a real threat to citizens' safety and security.

From our final analysis (Model 3) of near three-thousand census places across the United States, several key findings emerge. First, 2016 GOP votes were *positively* associated with county-level rates of Latino immigration, and county-level rates of low education. This suggests U.S. census places with *higher* rates of Latino immigration tended to vote GOP. In summary GOP votes were affected by county-level rates of low education *and* Latino immigration in our final model (Model 3), *but not* by county-level rates of violent crime, which becomes statistically

insignificant in Models 2 and 3, when controlling for other key predictors. It is important to note that low education, operationalized by the data as the percent of the county-level population age 25 and older without a high school diploma, is positively associated with 2016 county-level GOP votes.

Second, we find 2016 county-level GOP votes are *negatively* associated with diversity and rates of violent crime. For both Models 2 and 3, rates of violent crime becomes statistically insignificant when controlling for other predictors. Here we see 2016 county-level GOP votes were largely, on average, situated in homogenously saturated census locations with low rates of diversity. Furthermore, these census location also happen to be places with low overall education, identified by the county-level percent of the population age 25 and older without a high school diploma.

Inversely, greater diversity in county-level populations was positively associated with voting democrat, as seen in Models 2 and 3. Overall, diversity explained the most amount of variation in 2016 county-level GOP votes. In both of Models 2 and 3, diversity (*entropy2*) had the largest Beta weights (-.634 and -.590, respectively). Additionally, census locations with more educated populations, those having at least a high school diploma, along with census places with higher rates of unemployment, were also more likely to vote democrat.

Findings align closely with existing literature and support the supposition of the contact hypothesis, while rejecting the Latino Threat Narrative. The data from this research shows increased contact with unlike others, increased diversity, can lead to reduced fear, anxiety, prejudice, and discrimination, and thus, reduced likelihood of 2016 county-level GOP votes. As mentioned previously, this contact oftentimes begins at the micro level through community social interaction. Increased interaction with those unlike oneself typically results in more

tolerance, and perhaps, even tentative *acceptance*, of differences in areas such as language, culture, and ethnic origin.

Findings reject the national discourse stimulated by Donald Trump promoting the narrative that Latino immigrants are dangerously violent criminals. The immigrant-crime paradox and supporting research in itself rejects the Latino Threat Narrative. In this rejection, support gathers for existing research for the immigrant-crime paradox. County-level GOP votes were predicted to occur more in places with *less* crime, again, rejecting narrative that Latino immigrants are dangerous and violently criminal. However, the *presence* of Latino immigrants, regardless of rates of violent crime, led to increased votes for Donald Trump. Although discourse surrounding the Latino Threat Narrative is factually and statistically inaccurate, data shows it continued to drive county-level GOP votes in the 2016 presidential election.

This research has the potential to have implications in various fields of the social sciences and public policy. Possible impacts on the fields of social science include accurate framing of historical narratives and increased education and promotion of diversity at both the micro and macro level. The acknowledgement from both major political parties in the U.S. of the immense power and effect of political rhetoric could also play a significant role in shifting to a more accurate narrative surrounding Latino immigration.

This study answers the initial research question of how county-level rates of Latino immigration and county-level rates of violent crime affected 2016 presidential voting patterns. We found rates of violent crime to be either *negatively* associated, or *statistically insignificant* in predicting county-level GOP votes. Latino immigration was a significant factor across all models presented, even when controlling for other key predictors such as diversity, education, and unemployment. We conclude that the *presence of Latino immigrants*, along with rates of *low*

educational attainment and homogenous social environments, not rates of violence crime, were actually associated with how these communities voted.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Consistent with prior research, our bivariate results clearly and in a simplistic fashion indicate that census places with larger relative Latino immigrant populations, and larger diversity overall, tend to have lower rates of GOP votes. Yet, this research has several key limitations, including future voting patterns, geographic location, race, and additional predictors of poverty. Future research might take into account region of the country where there are more racially homogenous census places, such as the U.S. South, or more ethnically heterogeneous census places, such as the U.S. West. Controlling for ‘race-specific’ variables in place of an overall diversity index may yield more insight into how ‘racial groups’ voted. As more data becomes available, it will be important for researchers to consider Latino immigration is framed in general, and its relation to policy.

The data yielded interesting theoretical implications, as it coincides with existing data showing the Latino Threat Narrative to be fictitious in discourse, but existential in implication. Many policy makers and native-born U.S. residents must reconcile with the fact that immigrant communities are not as dangerous as the rhetoric suggests. Instead, diversity is linked to lower, not higher, rates of crime that enhances the protective effects of immigration more broadly. The results of this paper contributes theoretically to the discourse surrounding Latino immigration, crime, and voting, and, simultaneously leads to deeper and more pressing questions. If the mere *presence* of a Latino immigrants affects conservative voting and policy at the macro-level, what does this mean for this already marginalized population, both presently and in the future?

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Appendix

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the independent variable and all dependent variables (n=2595).

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
per_gop	.63025	.153604	2959
% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	47.5781	26.98967	2959
Index violence rate per 100,000	1347.8196	996.31790	2959
Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian	.37604	.204543	2959
% of total pop. 25+ w/o high school degree	14.5081	6.50050	2959
% of total population 16+ unemployed	4.5116	1.74726	2959

Table 2: Bivariate Correlations for the independent variable, per_gop, and all dependent variables (n=2959).

		per_gop	% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	Index violence rate per 100,000	Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian	% of total pop. 25+ w/o high school degree	% of total population 16+ unemployed
Pearson	per_gop	1.000	.134	-.205	-.473	.127	-.341
Correlation	% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	.	1.00	.061	.416	.478	.042
	Index violence rate per 100,000	-.205		1.000	.338	.131	.290
	Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian	-.473	.416	.338	1.000	.323	.348
	% of total pop. 25+ w/o high school degree	.	.478		.323	1.000	.316
	% of total population 16+ unemployed	-.341	.	.290	.348	.316	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	per_gop	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	.000	.	.000	.000	.000	.012
	Index violence rate per 100,000	.000	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian	.000	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	% of total pop. 25+ w/o high school degree	.000	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	% of total population 16+ unemployed	.000	.012	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	per_gop	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959
N	% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959
	Index violence rate per 100,000	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959
	Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959
	% of total pop. 25+ w/o high school degree	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959
	% of total population 16+ unemployed	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959	2959

Table 3: Model Summary containing variance explained by each model and overall model significance (n=2959).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.252 ^a	.064	.063	.148686	.064	100.451	2	2956	.000
2	.597 ^b	.357	.356	.123270	.293	1345.602	1	2955	.000
3	.652 ^c	.426	.425	.116518	.069	177.211	2	2953	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Index violence rate per 100,000, % of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born

b. Predictors: (Constant), Index violence rate per 100,000, % of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born, Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian

c. Predictors: (Constant), Index violence rate per 100,000, % of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born, Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian, % of total population 16+ unemployed, % of total pop. 25+ w/o high school degree

Table 4: Coefficients for Models 1, 2, and 3 predicting 2016 county-level GOP votes, net other key predictors (n=2959)

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval		Correlations			Collinearity	
		Coefficients		Coefficients			for B		Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound					
1	(Constant)	.635	.007		97.587	.000	.622	.648					
	% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	.001	.000	.147	8.237	.000	.001	.001	.134	.150	.147	.996	1.004
	Index violence rate per 100,000	-3.302E-5	.000	-.214	-12.013	.000	.000	.000	-.205	-.216	-.214	.996	1.004
2	(Constant)	.705	.006		123.212	.000	.693	.716					
	% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	.002	.000	.398	24.450	.000	.002	.002	.134	.410	.361	.820	1.220
	Index violence rate per 100,000	-2.313E-6	.000	-.015	-.953	.341	.000	.000	-.205	-.018	-.014	.878	1.139
3	Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian	-.476	.013	-.634	-36.682	.000	-.502	-.451	-.473	-.559	-.541	.729	1.372
	(Constant)	.726	.007		100.638	.000	.711	.740					
	% of FB pop that are Lat Am foreign born	.001	.000	.262	15.160	.000	.001	.002	.134	.269	.211	.652	1.533
	Index violence rate per 100,000	1.776E-6	.000	.012	.760	.447	.000	.000	-.205	.014	.011	.847	1.180
	Diversity - standardized - W, B, H, Asian	-.443	.013	-.590	-34.510	.000	-.469	-.418	-.473	-.536	-.481	.665	1.504
% of total pop. 25+ w/o high school degree	.006	.000	.265	15.685	.000	.005	.007	.127	.277	.219	.682	1.466	
% of total population 16+ unemployed	-.021	.001	-.234	-14.622	.000	-.023	-.018	-.341	-.260	-.204	.761	1.314	

a. Dependent Variable: per_gop



To: Brogan E Arguelles
BELL 4188

From: Chair, Douglas J Adams
IRB Expedited Review

Date: 04/02/2021

Action: **Review Not Required**

Action Date: 04/02/2021

Protocol #: 2104326323

Study Title: "They're bringing Drugs... They're bringing Crime... They're Rapists": Exploring Latino Immigration, Crime, and Voting Patterns in the 2016 Presidential Election

Please keep this form for your records. Investigators are required to notify the IRB if any changes are made to the referenced study that may change the status of this determination. Please contact your IRB Administrator if you have any questions regarding this determination or future changes to this determination.