

Immigrants against Immigrants? Linking Immigrant Attitude to Embeddedness in Social Communities

Abstract

Existing literature often assumes immigrants naturally lean progressive, yet new evidence shows a right-wing, anti-immigration trend within some immigrant communities. Why do these immigrants support candidates whose policies seemingly contradict their interests? This project explores the drivers behind immigrant-origin anti-immigration sentiments, contrasting them with native attitudes. The dominant hypothesis—contact theory—emphasizes that more interaction with immigrants increases acceptance. However, my findings suggest that for immigrants, contact with already anti-immigrant networks drives hostile views. Using a mixed-methods approach—analyzing found, representative surveys, social media discourse, and in-depth interviews—I link people’s cultural attitudes to the structure of their social networks. Preliminary results show that a sizable minority of immigrant respondents endorse stricter immigration measures, citing shared beliefs within conservative-leaning communities. By triangulating quantitative and qualitative data, this study captures how relational ties inform political stances, illuminating intragroup boundaries and the allure of right-wing rhetoric. Ultimately, the project reveals how embeddedness in anti-immigration networks raises exclusionary attitudes. This project advances key conversations in political sociology, immigration and social networks.

Keywords: Immigration Attitudes, Right Wing Politics, Immigrant Conservatism, Social Networks, Belief Formation

Empirical Puzzle

Anti-immigration refers to the prejudice, sentiment, and opposition to (1) various immigrants and (2) policies for entry and coexistence with immigrants. A recent analysis (New York Times 2020) reports a striking trend: areas with large populations of Latinos and residents of Asian descent, including those with high numbers of immigrants, experienced a significant increase in voter turnout and a notable shift toward conservative preferences during the latest election, observed across major cities and diverse regions.

The rise of conservative immigrants has raised a curious puzzle:

- Why would some immigrants vote for anti-immigration candidates despite potential contradictions with their interests?
 - Do they vote for them *because of*—or *despite*—their anti-immigration stances?
 - How are they similar, or different from anti-immigration attitudes from *natives*?
- More broadly, what accounts for the conservative shift among certain immigrant populations?

Context

Table 1. Interlocking Categories of Anti-Immigration Immigrant

Category of Study	Working Definition
Immigrants Who Are Anti-Immigration	Immigrants who express negative attitudes or opposition toward certain categories of immigration, including undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers, or low-skilled migrants, often perceiving these groups as threats to their socioeconomic status or cultural identity.
Immigrants Who Vote for Conservative Candidates	Immigrants who support and cast their votes for political candidates or parties that advocate conservative policies, particularly those that emphasize restrictive immigration measures, national security, and traditional social values.
Immigrants Who Are Conservative	Immigrants who align with conservative political ideologies, characterized by a preference for limited government intervention, traditional family values, and skepticism towards progressive social policies, often reflected in their political beliefs and behaviors.

Interlocking categories of study. At the proposal stage, I consider three interlocking categories together: immigrants who are anti-immigration, immigrants who vote for conservative candidates, and immigrants who are conservative. These categories are often intertwined and best understood in conjunction with one another, as they reflect a web of beliefs and behaviors that shape the political landscape within immigrant communities. For instance, the attitudes of immigrants who oppose certain forms of immigration may influence their voting patterns, leading them to support conservative candidates who align with their views. Similarly, immigrants who identify as conservative may adopt anti-immigration sentiments as part of their broader ideological framework, reinforcing their political choices.

Focal category of study: C1. Although these three categories are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in many cases, the scope of this study enforces a narrower focus on immigrants who are anti-immigration. This group is of particular interest because they challenge the commonly held assumption that immigrants uniformly support liberal immigration policies or align with progressive political platforms. Exploring the motivations, experiences, and discursive strategies of anti-immigration immigrants can illuminate how their stances are shaped by intersecting factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural identity, and intergroup dynamics. It also sheds light on the broader implications of their views, including how they influence intra-community relations, public discourse, and policy debates.

The rise of anti-immigration immigrants. More context to the emerging anti-immigrant immigrant is as follows. A growing number of settled immigrants and their children are adopting a right-wing worldview, often viewing themselves as more deserving of citizenship than recent asylum seekers (The Atlantic 2024). This shift has manifested in support for conservative parties and extremist groups like white supremacists, who frequently blame refugees and undocumented immigrants for societal ills such as unemployment, housing shortages, and crime. Additionally, these individuals have actively opposed policies aimed at assisting marginalized communities, even when they have personally benefited from similar programs in the past.

A nationwide surge of anti-immigration attitudes. The rise of anti-immigration sentiment among immigrants emerges within the broader historical context of increasing anti-immigration sentiment nationwide (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). As immigration becomes an increasingly politicized topic during elections, it serves as a rallying cry for right-wing politicians who exploit fears about job security, national security, and cultural identity. Electoral campaigns often leverage these fears, framing undocumented immigrants as scapegoats for social problems. The media plays a crucial role in this narrative, amplifying anti-immigrant sentiments through selective coverage that emphasizes crime rates and economic burden while downplaying the contributions of immigrants to society.

Urgency. Given the rapid emergence and evolution of these attitudes, it is critically important to study them now. The political landscape is shifting, and understanding the motivations behind the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment among immigrant populations can provide essential insights into broader social dynamics. As these attitudes gain traction, they have significant implications for policy-making and community cohesion. In an era of increasing polarization, this research is not only urgent but necessary to foster an inclusive dialogue about immigration and belonging.

Theoretical Framework

General gap. Research has extensively studied the formation of anti-immigration sentiments (see Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014) and their punitive effect on immigrants. [What the research has talked about]. [immigrants are developing anti-immigration attitudes] However, there is a regrettable gap in understanding how immigrants themselves may fall prey to these sentiments (Anderson and Aida 2015). This raises critical questions: Could immigrants adopt these attitudes? Could anti-immigration attitudes (from the natives) be contagious, spreading through social networks? If so, what mechanisms drive their attitude formation? Moreover, what accounts for the divergent responses to native anti-immigration attitudes, which can manifest as either (1) pro-immigration activism—characterized by an increased sense of linked fate—or (2) anti-immigration opposition to specific categories such as undocumented, asylum-seeking, or high-skilled immigrants?

Contact theory paradigm. The emergence of conservative immigrants challenges existing research and the conventional wisdom of American politics. Much of the literature assumes only natives would be inflicted with anti-immigration attitudes; despite a lack of robust evidence to exempt immigrants from this phenomenon. For example, contact theory suggests that interactions with a marginalized population increase one's tolerance toward them (see transgender contact, Broockman and Kalla 2016). While this theory is frequently cited in discussions of immigration attitudes, its application to immigrants themselves may not hold. It expects that one would be more pro-immigration if one holds durable contact with immigrants (Fussell 2014). By this logic, immigrants with durable contact with other immigrants (which, by arrangement of family or community, is often true) are expected to develop pro-immigration attitudes. The expectation of contact theory falters. As a result, while contact theory holds strong explanatory power for *intergroup* relations, it doesn't purport to or satisfactorily explain anti-immigration *within* immigrant communities.

Group threat paradigm. Two other strands of existing research fail to sufficiently explain this phenomenon. First, current literature often frames native perceptions as rooted in a binary of 'in-group' versus 'out-group', where natives (the in-group) perceive immigrants (the out-group) as a threat (Fussell 2014, Pettigrew 1998). This intergroup threat theory assumes a level of homogeneity, and therefore solidarity, within the in-group. It overlooks the potential that immigrants might perceive these 'in-group' threats among immigrants themselves. This calls for a theoretical extension *beyond* the established paradigm, as suggested by Monks' concept of "intracategorical heterogeneity", which explores the diversities, divisions, and boundary-making that occur *within* groups typically viewed as homogeneous, such as immigrant populations.

Progressive immigrant paradigm. The conventional wisdom in politics has largely positioned immigrants in the United States as a progressive constituency. This perspective is informed by the socioeconomic status of many immigrants and the Democratic Party's supportive stance on immigration, welfare policy, and ethnoracial diversity. However, this assumption fails to capture the growing evidence of conservative voting patterns among certain immigrant groups, which complicates the political landscape. The oversight is significant; it not only challenges the dominant narrative of immigrants as uniformly progressive but also underscores the necessity for a more fine-grained understanding of how political behaviors are formed and how diverse immigrant experiences shape these behaviors.

Outcome paradigm. Existing accounts predominantly focus on the outcomes of anti-immigration sentiments without adequately probing the mechanisms that lead immigrants to adopt these attitudes. This study aims to investigate the potential pathways through which conservative beliefs are transmitted within immigrant networks, thereby providing a deeper understanding of attitude formation in a politically charged environment. By exploring these dynamics, this research seeks to fill critical gaps in the literature, offering fresh insights into the political behavior and the social networks that shape it in an age of political polarization.

Theoretical Puzzle

The puzzle of rational decision making. This immigration case underlies a theoretical puzzle: Why do people appear to act against their self-interest? At least at first glance, people are strongly incentivized to act according to their interests (Miller 1999). This phenomenon parallels other instances in political behavior, such as (a) the emergence of gay Republicans (Young 2024), and (b) economically disadvantaged individuals voting for tax cuts that primarily benefit

the wealthy (Bartels 2005). These cases possibly illustrate a broader trend where individuals align their political choices with group identities or ideologies that may not serve their immediate interests.

Literature on rational decision making. Past studies have emphasized the role of self-interest in decision-making. Rational choice sociologists, such as James Coleman, have emphasized the role of perceived self-interest as a rational motivation in decision-making. However, the decisions of individuals in these contexts suggest that additional factors—such as social identity, peer influence, and ideological alignment—could outweigh purely rational considerations. The immigration case is thus intertwined with these larger issues, as it invites a reconsideration of how immigrants navigate their political affiliations in light of their social networks and cultural contexts. By exploring these dynamics, we gain insight into political behavior and how personal identities and group influences shape attitudes toward policies that might seem contrary to one's self-interest.

The puzzle of intragroup boundaries. This immigration case presents another significant theoretical puzzle: when do intragroup boundaries emerge within immigrant communities? Specifically, under what circumstances do individuals or groups of immigrants prioritize their internal differences over their shared similarities? This question probes the conditions that foster a sense of division among members of an assumed homogenous group.

Literature on intragroup boundaries. In many instances, shared experiences and challenges, such as navigating immigration and adapting to a new society, can cultivate a sense of unity and “minority linked fate” (Jones 2019) among immigrants. However, this unity can fray in the face of competing interests, legality discrimination, assimilation status, or differing socio-economic backgrounds. For example, some immigrants may begin to view newer arrivals or particular subgroups—such as asylum seekers or undocumented individuals—as threats to their own status or opportunities. This shift can lead to an internal hierarchy where long-term residents might feel more entitled to resources or recognition than recent immigrants, ultimately undermining the collective identity that initially bonded them.

Example on intragroup boundaries. A striking example of this internal hierarchy is documented by Jiminez (2008), who elucidates how third-generation Mexican Americans distinguish themselves from newcomers by emphasizing their ‘Americanness’. This dynamic raises important questions about the mechanisms through which intragroup boundaries are formed and justified. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for analyzing how immigrants negotiate their identities and political opinions within a context marked by competition and division.

My Approach

Network approach. This paper introduces a new approach to explain the emerging phenomenon of conservative attitudes within immigrant communities. Prior research indicates that social networks can significantly influence an individual's political beliefs and behaviors (Sinclair 2012). Contact theory draws inspiration from network studies and posits that the immigrant contact of one's network drives attitude toward them. However, what if other aspects of the network also matter, such as the political orientation of one's network (Huckfeldt et al 2004)? Contact theory primarily focuses on interactions with those who share immigrant attributes, leaving open the question of how other aspects of the network—such as its overall political orientation—may also play a critical role in shaping attitudes. I draw from this line of research

and investigate the influence of social networks in shaping immigrant views by considering not only the interactions with fellow immigrants but also the political leanings of the individuals within these networks. I fill a crucial gap in the literature on the mechanisms through which conservative beliefs are propagated among immigrant populations.

Network, or Culture? Critics of my approach may question why I focus on networks rather than cultural factors. They may reference the perennial debate to disentangle the relationship between network and culture: do people with similar views *select* into a network, or do these networks actively shape their views? Past studies (Lazer et al, 2010) offer compelling evidence for the latter: individuals conform their political views to their networks, but political views don't drive individuals' network formation. Additionally, while extensive studies exist on the cultural foundations of American conservatism (Gross, Medvetz, and Russell 2011; Hochschild 2018), we know very little about how immigrants are not simply the *targets* of conservatism but active *endorsers* of it. This calls for understanding how these cultures are formed and maintained within immigrant communities.

Working Hypothesis. I hypothesize on the *networks* that maintain conservatism as a mechanism for immigrant conservatism. This necessitates a reexamination of the prevailing assumption that natives are the sole source of conservatism while immigrants remain immune. Instead, I turn the lens toward how immigrants may be influenced by conservatism through their network practices.

Combining culture. To do this, I pay special attention to the political *beliefs* expressed by an individual's personal network. This approach incorporates cultural content into the consideration of social networks, differing from a rigid structuralist view that often treats networks as static entities (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). I seek to unravel how networks operate in practice (Small 2016), focusing on the narratives and values that circulate within these communities rather than merely their structural composition. I posit that that immigrants embedded in conservative social circles are more likely to adopt conservative views themselves, thus revealing how shared beliefs and values can reinforce conservative attitudes within these communities. By investigating how immigrants' personal networks may propagate conservative views, this research seeks to fill a crucial gap in understanding the connection between networks and political orientation.

Complicating contact theory. This approach then further complicates existing theories, such as contact theory. If my hypothesis holds, even immigrants who are in contact with many other immigrants may adopt anti-immigration stances, suggesting that the dynamics of their networks profoundly influence their political orientations. By tracing the networks that mediate, produce, and enhance conservatism, I aim to explain the anti-immigration immigrant and develop a theorization of how Americans' personal networks could anchor, constrain, or maintain their immigration attitudes, political orientations, and the culture behind them.

Methods

Comparison 1. I introduce (a) natives who are against immigration and (b) pro-immigration people as two comparison groups in this study. These comparisons, as listed in Table 2., are key for establishing the distinctive features of immigrants who hold anti-immigration attitudes. Natives against immigration could be a crucial source of conservatism, including anti-immigration sentiments. I draw from text analysis to understand their cognitive frameworks. In contrast, I draw from existing studies on pro-immigration activism to explore the perspectives

and motivations of those advocating for more inclusive policies. This dual examination aims to illuminate how immigrants adopt, refine, or reject elements of the narratives and ideologies exposed by these groups, thereby revealing how they reconfigure their political expressions to align with right-leaning ideologies. This comparative analysis will enhance the rigor of the study.

Table 2. A Matrix of Immigration Attitudes and Immigrant Status.

	Anti-Immigration	Pro-Immigration
Immigrant	Anti-Immigration Immigrant (Object of Study)	Immigrant Activism (Comparison)
Natives (The Public)	Anti-Immigration Natives (Comparison)	Pro-Immigration Natives (Comparison)

Comparison 2. I incorporate comparisons among key immigrant groups, as outlined in Table 3. These comparisons provide critical insights into the mechanisms shaping anti-immigration attitudes within immigrant communities. The first contrast, *newcomers vs. oldcomers*, examines how the duration of residence influences political attitudes, with oldcomers potentially adopting anti-immigration stances to assert their assimilation and differentiate themselves from recent arrivals. The second, *successful vs. less successful immigrants*, explores the role of economic trajectories, where successful immigrants may adopt conservative ideologies to justify their achievements, while less successful immigrants might oppose new arrivals due to fears of resource competition. The third comparison, *highly integrated vs. out-tied immigrants*, challenges contact theory by investigating how social network composition—whether primarily within ethnic communities or extending to broader out-groups—shapes political behaviors. Lastly, *immigrants with back ties vs. those without back ties* highlights the role of transnational identities, with strong connections to countries of origin potentially reinforcing nationalist sentiments or anti-immigration stances.

Table 3. Key Immigrant Groups for Potential Comparison

Comparison	Definition	Theoretical Implications	Key Questions
Newcomers vs. Oldcomers	New immigrants vs. long-settled immigrants, including second and third generations.	Highlights intra-group competition; examines symbolic boundaries and assimilation pressures within immigrant communities.	How does the duration of residence shape anti-immigration attitudes?
Successful vs. Less Successful	Economically successful immigrants vs. those with limited economic mobility.	Explores the influence of social mobility on political ideologies; considers how economic success reinforces conservative attitudes and status distinctions.	How do economic trajectories affect immigrants' perceptions of other immigrants and immigration policies?

Highly Integrated vs. Out-Tied	Immigrants deeply embedded in ethnic communities vs. those with extensive social ties outside their communities.	Challenges the assumptions of contact theory; examines whether intra-group or inter-group ties foster or hinder anti-immigration attitudes.	How does the composition of social networks influence political attitudes among immigrants?
Back Ties vs. No Back Ties	Immigrants with strong transnational connections to their country of origin vs. those without significant ties.	Explores the role of transnational identity in shaping political behavior; considers how nationalist sentiments influence attitudes toward other immigrants.	How do transnational ties impact immigrants' alignment with anti-immigration stances and conservative ideologies?

Mixed-methods design. I employ a mixed-methods design that allows for triangulation of data sources and methodologies. The study follows a sequential design consisting of four key steps:

- *Found survey analysis.* I will analyze existing public opinion data to gather descriptive statistics on anti-immigration attitudes among immigrants compared to the general public. The data sources potentially include the *Pew Research Center's 2018 National Survey of Latinos* (Roper #31115634), the *American Trends Panel Wave 113*, and the *National Asian American Survey*. This analysis will provide representative baseline insights into the prevalence of anti-immigration attitudes across diverse demographic groups.
- *Computational text analysis.* I will perform computational text analysis of immigration discourse on city subreddits representing native viewpoints. This analysis will help uncover the distinct cognitive frameworks behind anti-immigration and conservative sentiments, serving as a comparative baseline and theoretical guide to inform my survey and interview designs.
- *Screening surveys.* I will implement screening surveys for potential interview participants, measuring demographic characteristics, immigration attitudes, network circumstances, and political orientations. These surveys will help identify individuals who are representative of the broader immigrant population while also ensuring diversity within the sample. The survey will also gather personal network data that provides the basis for further quantitative analysis. This step lays the groundwork for drawing insightful interview samples for further exploration.
- *In-depth interviews.* Finally, I will conduct in-depth interviews with a weighted sample of survey respondents. This qualitative component aims to further probe and contextualize immigrant views, moral values, justifications, and motivations that emerge from the survey data.

Unusual data sources. The integration of Reddit discussions as a data source is unusual but valuable. Reddit provides an accessible, open forum where people express unfiltered views. Its regional subreddits enable exploration of geographic variation in attitudes. This complements

more traditional sources like surveys and interviews by offering real-time insights into public discourse.

Strength. Overall, my mixed-methods design uniquely captures the *context* and the *structure* of personal networks—aspects that purely quantitative approaches focused on network structure often miss. The focus on personal networks mediates macro-level factors (i.e., political narratives, public policy) and micro-level factors (personal perceptions, political orientations) shaping immigration attitudes. This study offers an effective corrective to the conditions of contact theory. That is, the immigration attitude of immigrants in substantial contact with other immigrants *further* depends on whether they are embedded in conservative (immigrant) circles. Ultimately, my arguments underscore the collective nature of opinion formation, highlighting how individual's attitudes are influenced by the networks.

Case Selection: United States

A nation of immigration. The United States offers a compelling case for studying immigration politics due to its diverse immigrant population and rich history of immigration debates. As a nation largely built by immigrants, the U.S. provides a unique context to examine how immigrant communities navigate identity, political affiliation, and attitudes toward immigration policies amid a contentious political climate. Immigration has been a central issue in American politics, shaped by demographic shifts and increasing polarization around national identity. Anti-immigration rhetoric has escalated, particularly from right-wing groups that frame immigration as a threat to economic stability and cultural cohesion. This rhetoric often depicts immigrants as scapegoats during times of economic and social strain, influencing policy outcomes and fostering community tensions (Massey & Pren, 2012; Hochschild et al., 2018).

Rising anti-immigration sentiment. These exclusionary narratives create a challenging landscape for immigrant communities, influencing civic engagement, identity formation, and community cohesion. For example, Latino communities have experienced heightened scrutiny and systemic barriers as anti-immigration rhetoric has grown, influencing both policy outcomes and community cohesion (Chavez, 2008). Right-wing groups and media have increasingly promoted “threat” narratives, framing immigration as a driver of economic and cultural disruption, which bolsters nativist attitudes and heightens anti-immigrant sentiments among native-born Americans, particularly in areas undergoing demographic changes (Carter et al., 2018).

Critical juncture and direction for the future. The political discourse on immigration reflects broader struggles over national identity, as the U.S. confronts foundational questions about who belongs and how American identity should be defined in an increasingly diverse society. As the United States grapples with its national identity, it stands at a critical juncture where debates over whether to adopt more restrictionist or inclusive immigration policies could shape the future of American society (Bloemraad, 2012). In sum, the U.S. context provides a microcosm of global immigration dynamics, highlighting how economic pressures, political ideology, and racial identity intersect to shape public attitudes and policy orientations toward immigration.

Case Selection: Immigration

Newcomers versus natives. The politics of immigration in the United States fundamentally revolves around intergroup relations and resource allocation, echoing broader debates within normative philosophy and sociology about inclusion, social boundaries, and rights (Soysal, 1994; Brubaker, 1992). Immigration becomes a site of ongoing negotiation over belonging, access, and

entitlement, where immigrant and native-born groups confront competing narratives about who deserves membership in the national community (Bloemraad, 2006; Alba & Nee, 2003). Anti-immigrant sentiments often hinge on resource competition, with immigrants perceived as threats to employment, social services, and cultural values, particularly during economic downturns (Hochschild et al., 2018; Massey & Pren, 2012). This framing amplifies the “us versus them” dynamic that has shaped much of contemporary immigration discourse in the U.S.

Divisions within newcomers. This project extends this analysis by diving deeper into the “us versus them” dynamic *within* immigrant communities, exploring how intergroup relations evolve internally among immigrants. Evidence suggests that immigrants, too, may adopt anti-immigrant stances to navigate their own social positioning and respond to competition for resources or status within host societies. By examining anti-immigration sentiments from within immigrant communities, this research sheds light on how intra-group boundaries are drawn, revealing evolving hierarchies and shifting allegiances that shape immigrant identities and their stance on immigration policies.

What Is My Case a Case of? Intergroup Relations and Social Membership

In the U.S., immigration politics serves as a lens through which the concept of social membership is contested and defined (Bloemraad, 2000). Social membership extends beyond formal citizenship, encompassing shared identity, cultural integration, and mutual recognition within society. This case illustrates how immigrant communities navigate a sense of belonging within a national identity framework that is itself deeply divided. =

Sampling

Existing surveys. I will begin by analyzing existing surveys to understand the *prevalence, distribution, and correlation* between anti-immigration sentiments and conservative voting behaviors among diverse immigrant populations. These surveys include the *Pew Hispanic Surveys* and the *Asian American Survey*, which has representative samples of the U.S. population. The analysis from population surveys will be statistically generalizable.

Computational text. In addition to survey analysis, I will conduct computational text sampling of immigration-related discussions from city subreddits on Reddit in California, Chicago, Arizona, and Texas. By examining discursive contents in these online communities, I can uncover the underlying narratives, attitudes, and reasonings toward immigration. Although text data cannot ensure representativeness, my primary goal is to extract cognitive frameworks shared by the general population to justify their views on immigration. This will arrive at *theoretical* generalizability.

Novel survey. My case involves selecting diverse immigrant communities within the U.S. that exhibit varying degrees of anti-immigration sentiment and conservative voting patterns. I will aim for a representative sample of people in California, Chicago, Arizona, and Texas. I will employ strategies such as post-sample stratification. The generalizability of my sample will depend on its stratification.

- Cultural backgrounds. I will include immigrant communities from different cultural backgrounds, such as Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern populations. This variety will allow for comparisons across groups with distinct historical narratives and socio-political contexts, enriching the analysis of how cultural identity shapes political attitudes.

- Socioeconomic statuses: The sample will involve immigrant groups from various socioeconomic statuses, including those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are more affluent. This dimension is crucial, as economic factors can significantly influence political preferences and perceptions of immigration policies.
- Lengths of residency: I will consider immigrants at different stages of their residency, including recent arrivals, long-term residents, second-generation immigrants, and multi-generation immigrants. This variation will help elucidate how the length of residency impacts political alignment and attitudes toward other immigrant groups, particularly regarding notions of belonging and entitlement (Jiminez 2008).
- Geographic diversity: To ensure a comprehensive understanding of regional dynamics, I will sample communities from various geographic locations across the U.S., such as California, Texas, Arizona, and Chicago. Each of these regions has its own political climate and immigrant populations, providing valuable context for analyzing the factors that contribute to anti-immigration sentiments among immigrants.

Interview Sampling. I will draw from the survey sample to develop a post-data collection stratification sample of immigrants. In this step, I focus on emerging themes, surprising outcomes, negative cases, and comparative cases. By identifying key themes from the survey responses, I can select interview participants who exemplify shared experiences and common perceptions regarding immigration policy. I will prioritize individuals representing surprising outcomes, such as high levels of anti-immigration sentiment among groups typically viewed as pro-immigration, to explore the underlying factors contributing to these unexpected attitudes. Including negative cases—participants whose beliefs and experiences contrast sharply with prevailing themes—will further enrich the analysis by highlighting the diversity of political alignments within immigrant communities. By strategically sampling these diverse groups, I aim to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences. This strategy will contribute to *theoretical* generalizability.

Regional Context: California, Chicago, Arizona, and Texas

To examine attitudes toward immigration in the United States, I will conduct a purposive sampling of communities in California, Chicago, Arizona, and Texas. These locations were chosen to represent a diverse set of political orientations, historical interactions with immigrant communities, and distinct cultural dynamics. This range allows me to capture both unique regional views and overarching cognitive frameworks that reflect the general population's approach to immigration.

- *California.* California, a historically progressive state, houses significant immigrant communities across its urban centers. Known for policies that support immigrant integration—such as sanctuary cities and access to social services—California often embodies pro-immigrant sentiments, particularly in cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco. However, contrasting perspectives are present within conservative areas like parts of Orange County and the Central Valley, where both immigrant and native-born groups may express reservations about immigration. This diversity within a single state allows for an examination of how anti-immigration sentiments among immigrants intersect with broader pro- and anti-immigration attitudes within a predominantly progressive context.

- *Chicago, Illinois.* As a major urban center in the Midwest, Chicago represents a regional context with distinct immigration patterns and networks connecting recent immigrants with long-established communities. Chicago's policies often reflect a progressive stance on immigrant rights, but Illinois's mixed political climate offers a complex landscape of immigration attitudes. Examining immigrant communities within Chicago provides insight into how anti-immigration sentiments may emerge even in environments supportive of integration, while also allowing for comparisons with the mixed attitudes of native-born residents.
- *Arizona.* Arizona, as a border state with Mexico, is a critical area where immigration debates often focus on border security, economic impact, and cultural integration. The state's proximity to the border and its demographic shifts have amplified polarized views on immigration among both immigrant and native-born groups. In Arizona, immigrant communities may adopt anti-immigration stances as a response to perceived resource competition or security concerns, offering a valuable contrast to native-born attitudes that range from supportive to restrictionist, especially in rural versus urban areas.
- *Texas.* Texas brings an evolving perspective to this analysis. The state's large immigrant population and significant border with Mexico closely tie immigration issues to Texas's identity. While Texas traditionally leans conservative, cities like Austin and Houston are seeing growth in progressive perspectives on immigration. Texas's blend of urban and rural viewpoints, coupled with a shifting political landscape, allows for an analysis of how anti-immigration sentiments may develop among immigrant communities within conservative contexts, while also capturing the comparison between immigrant and native-born attitudes toward immigration.

Together, these areas provide a well-rounded sample of the discourse, culture, and networks on immigration. By examining both major urban centers and geographically diverse states, I aim to capture distinct perspectives rooted in local experiences while identifying shared cognitive frameworks that can reflect broader American attitudes. This approach enhances the generalizability of my findings, providing insights into how people justify their views on immigration across varied political and social environments.

Data Analysis Plan

Survey analysis. Survey data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis will provide an overview of demographic characteristics, political orientations, and anti-immigration sentiments across sampled populations. Inferential methods, including regression analysis, will explore relationships between variables such as network composition, length of residency, and political attitudes. Stratification techniques will control for confounding factors like socioeconomic status and cultural background.

Computational text analysis. Text data from subreddits will be processed using natural language processing (NLP) techniques to identify recurring themes, sentiment patterns, and cognitive frames. Topic modeling (e.g., Latent Dirichlet Allocation) will uncover latent discourses, while sentiment analysis will measure attitudes toward immigration. Keyword co-occurrence networks will be constructed to map relationships between key terms, providing insight into how narratives are constructed and shared.

Qualitative interviews. Interview data will be transcribed and analyzed thematically using coding frameworks developed from the initial screening surveys and computational text findings. A

grounded theory approach will be employed to identify emerging themes, with particular attention to mechanisms of boundary-making, moral justifications, and network influences. Negative case analysis will ensure that deviations from dominant narratives are rigorously examined.

Ethical Considerations

Consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. This study adheres to the principles of ethical research as outlined by University of California, San Diego's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participant consent will be obtained for all surveys and interviews, with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation provided in advance. Confidentiality will be maintained by anonymizing all survey and interview data. Online data collection from subreddits will be conducted in accordance with the platform's terms of use and ethical guidelines for research on public forums. However, any identifying information from usernames or comments will be excluded from analysis to preserve anonymity.

Immigration-related sensitivity. Special consideration will be given to the sensitivity of immigration-related topics, which may evoke strong emotions or pose risks to participants' privacy. Participants will have the option to withdraw at any point without penalty. To mitigate potential discomfort, interview questions will be designed to be non-intrusive, and support resources will be offered to participants if needed.

Data Management Plan

Secure storage. All data collected will be stored securely in password-protected files on an encrypted drive, with access limited to the research team. Raw data from surveys and interviews will be anonymized upon collection to prevent identification of participants. A coding system will be used to link anonymized data across datasets, ensuring consistency while preserving confidentiality. Text data from subreddits will be stored in aggregated, non-identifiable formats. Transcriptions of interviews will omit any personally identifiable information, and audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription and validation.

Five-year data retainment. Data will be retained for five years after the study's conclusion to allow for follow-up analyses and replication studies. After this period, all raw data will be permanently deleted. Summarized, de-identified datasets may be shared in publicly accessible repositories to promote transparency and facilitate future research, subject to IRB approval.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, while the mixed-methods design allows for triangulation, the reliance on computational text analysis and online discourse may not fully capture offline dynamics of anti-immigration sentiments among immigrant communities. Online participants may differ in key demographic or ideological ways from offline populations. Second, while the survey sampling strategy aims for representativeness, practical constraints such as response rates and access to certain populations may limit the generalizability of findings. Similarly, while in-depth interviews provide rich qualitative insights, they are not statistically generalizable and are influenced by the subjective experiences of participants. Third, there is a potential for bias in self-reported survey and interview data, as participants may underreport attitudes they perceive as socially undesirable. Finally, the study's

geographic focus on the U.S. provides context-specific findings, limiting the applicability of results to immigrant communities in other nations with distinct socio-political environments.

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