

# Introduction to the American Political Process

## Class 25: Immigration

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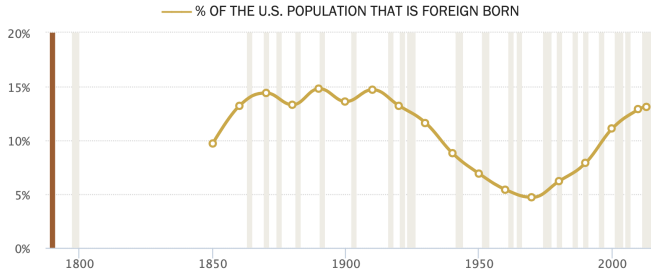
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# Goals for Today

We seek explanations for two phenomena:

1. Variation in immigration **policy** over time
2. Variation in immigration **attitudes** over time

# Immigration Policy Over Time

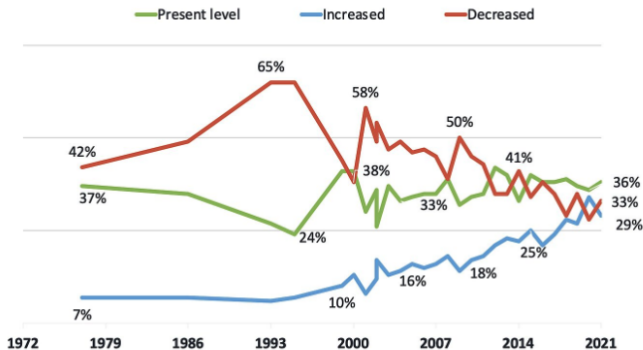


Source for the share of the U.S. population that is foreign born: U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850-2000" and Pew Research Center tabulations of 2010 and 2013 American Community Surveys (IPUMS).

# Immigration Attitudes Over Time

## Support for more immigration has increased over the past several decades

*In your view, should immigration to the U.S. be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?*

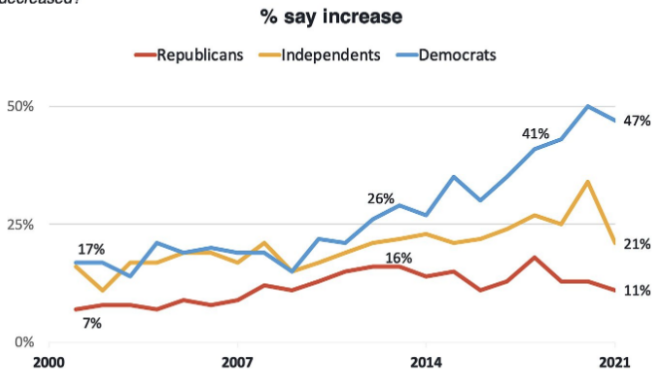


SOURCE: CATO/YOUGOV 2021; GALLUP 1965–2020

# Immigration Attitudes Over Time

## Democratic support for more immigration rose most over past 20 years

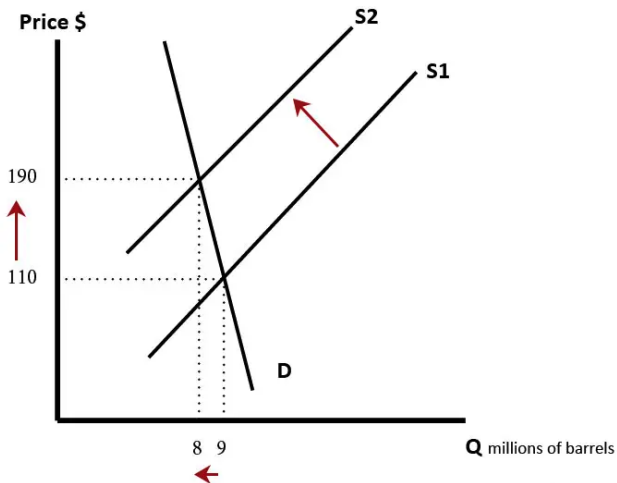
*In your view, should immigration to the U.S. be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?*



SOURCE: CATO/YOUGOV 2021; GALLUP 2001–2020

# Immigration through an economic lens

Supply Shifts to the left



# Unpacking economic arguments

What is the economic argument for wholesale immigration restrictionism?

- Note the **political** features of this argument

What is the economic argument for restrictionism when the economy is weak?

What is the economic argument for open borders?

Be wary of arguments that issue is “just” economics

- Immigration is a relatively blunt economic instrument, always accompanied by other instruments
- As always, a question of who gets what

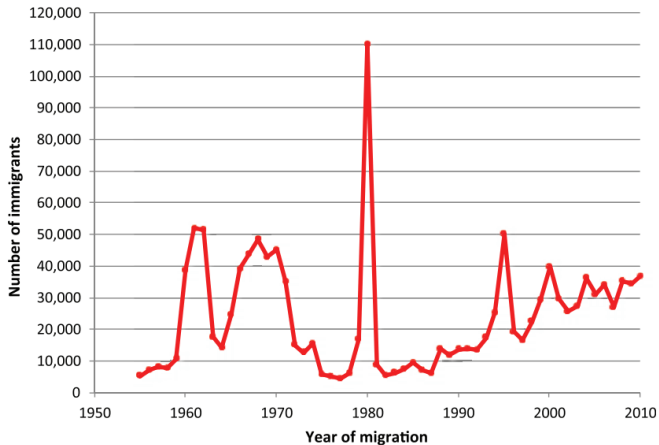
# The Mariel Boatlift Studies





# The Mariel Boatlift as an Exogenous Shock

*Figure 1.* Number of Cuban Immigrants, by Year of Migration, 1955–2010



## THE IMPACT OF THE MARIEL BOATLIFT ON THE MIAMI LABOR MARKET

DAVID CARD\*

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Using data from the Current Population Survey, this paper describes the effect of the Mariel Boatlift of 1980 on the Miami labor market. The Mariel immigrants increased the Miami labor force by 7%, and the percentage increase in labor supply to less-skilled occupations and industries was even greater because most of the immigrants were relatively unskilled. Nevertheless, the Mariel influx appears to have had virtually no effect on the wages or unemployment rates of less-skilled workers, even among Cubans who had immigrated earlier. The author suggests that the ability of Miami's labor market to rapidly absorb the Mariel immigrants was largely owing to its adjustment to other large waves of immigrants in the two decades before the Mariel Boatlift.

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# The Mariel Boatlift Studies

- Replication by Borjas (2015)
  - Finds sizeable wage effects in what he argues is the relevant sample
- Further work by Peri and Yasenov (2015) and Clemens and Hunt (2017)
  - Debate about what constitutes the “relevant sample,” applying more sophisticated methods to find this sample

→ There is not conclusive evidence that even large shocks to the labor supply decrease wages. Why might this be?

# Tichenor: incomplete explanations for regime change

## 1. Economy

- Theory: stable and prosperous economy → liberal and expansive policy
- But, empirically it has gone both ways

## 2. National values

- But how do values explain policy **shifts**?

## 3. Partisan realignment

- But how to account for short-term change?

# Immigration through a political science lens

We can apply what we learned in the class to analyze immigration policy and attitudes in a number of ways.

## 1. From institutions:

- Interest groups & collective action
- Institutional veto points
- Federalism

## 2. From behavior:

- Populist movements/white identity
- Public opinion formation
- Partisanship & issues

# Immigration from an interest group lens

Who are the relevant interests?

- Business: tech, agriculture, small business...
- Workers (skilled, unskilled)
- Citizens with preferences

Shortcomings of the pluralist perspective:

- Government is not a neutral arbiter of group interests. Why does group power wax and wane?
- Skocpol: *"socially deterministic theories overlook the ways in which the identities, goals, and capacities of all politically active groups are influenced by political structures and processes."*

# Institutional Veto Points

TABLE 2.3  
Structural Veto and Opportunity Points in American Immigration Policymaking

<i>Immigration Policy Proposal</i>	<i>Institutional Veto-Points</i>	<i>Institutional Opportunity Points</i>
Chinese Exclusion Bills of 1880s	Fleeting presidential resistance	Receptive national parties Supportive House and Senate leadership Supportive Supreme Court
Literacy Test Bills of the 1890s (intended to restrict Southern and Eastern European immigration)	Strong presidential resistance Democratic party resistance	New congressional Immigration Committees Supportive House Leadership
Literacy Test Bill of 1906	Resistant House leadership (especially Speaker Cannon) Congressional Northern Democrats	Supportive White House Supportive House and Senate Immigra- tion Committees Responsive Senate leadership
Restrictive Bills of the 1910s and early 1920s	Presidential resistance Congressional Northern Democrats	Overthrow of "Cannonism" Stronger Immigration Committees Restrictionist Immigration Commission Supportive new executive agencies
Refugee Relief Bill of 1939	Immigration Committee barons Congressional "Conservative Coalition" State Department agencies	Congressional liberals Executive Branch liberals
McCarran-Walter Bill of 1952 (reaffirming national origins quota system)	Presidential resistance Congressional liberals	Immigration Committee Barons Congressional "Conservative Coalition"

The law leaves open-ended which governments (national, state, local) have the final say on many aspects of immigration policy. How might we explain:

- variation in policy **across space**?
- variation in intergovernmental balance of power **over time**?



# Possible regimes

1. Centralized
2. Decentralized
3. Cooperative federalism
4. Competitive federalism

## Example: Immigration Enforcement

Ideal points,  $\{\bar{y}_L, \bar{y}_f, \bar{y}_H\}$ , over the intensity of immigration enforcement



"no human is illegal"

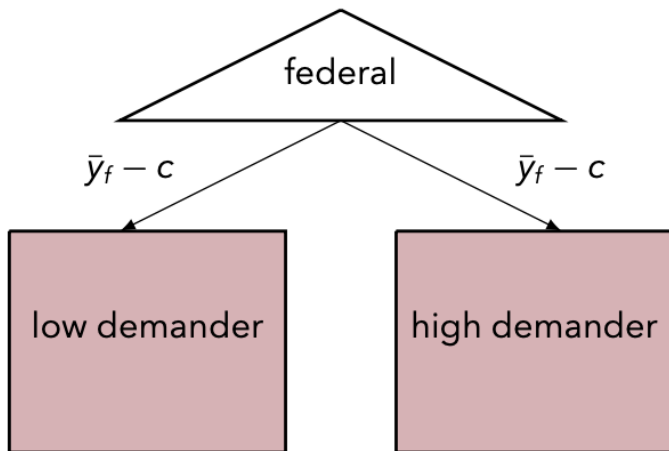


"felons, not families"

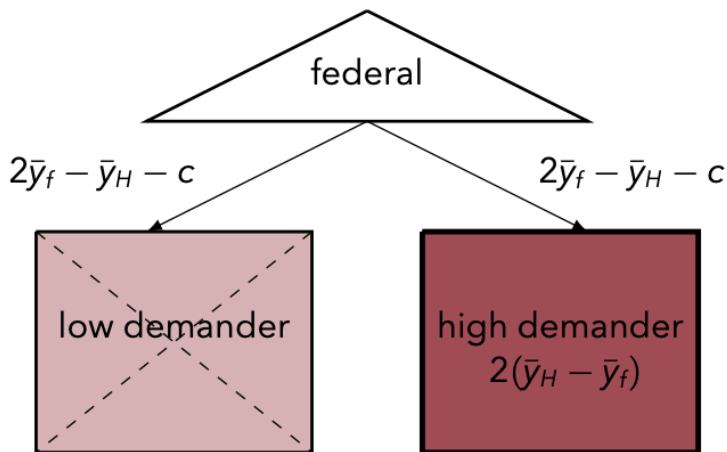


"America's  
Toughest  
Sheriff"

# Centralized Regime



# Cooperative Regime

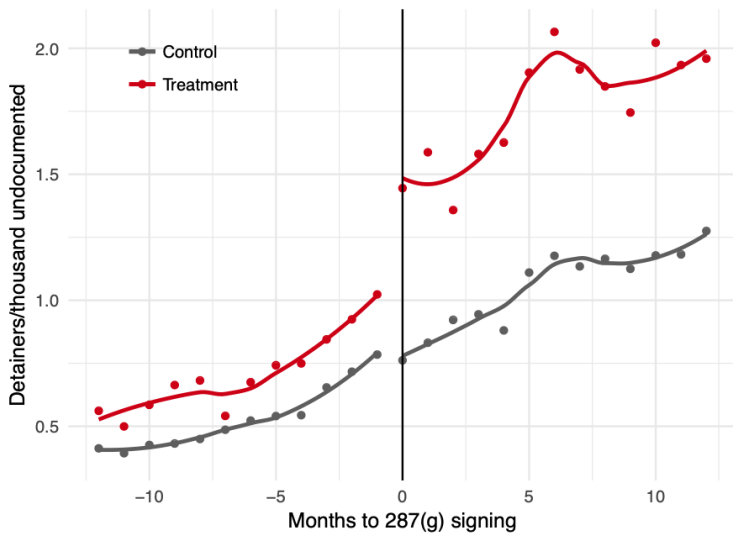


# Immigration Detainers: Cooperative Federalism

Since the ramp-up of Secure Communities program under Obama Administration, immigration policy has followed a cooperative federalism model:

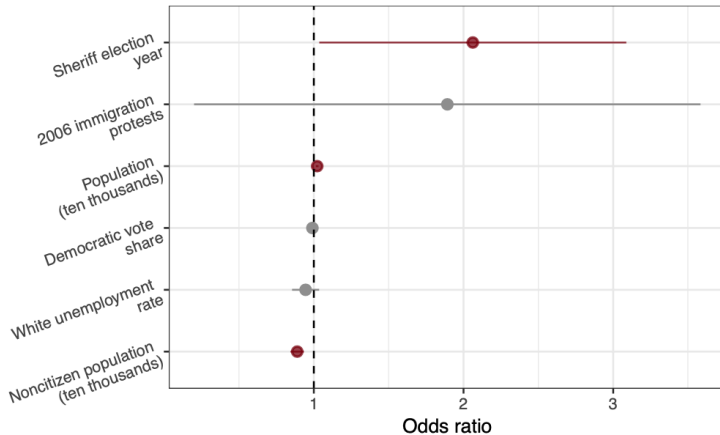
- Detainers: Local jails + ICE
- 287(g) program: opportunities for localities to contribute own resources toward enforcement
- On the other hand, “sanctuary” jurisdictions: localities that refuse to cooperate with ICE

# Immigration Policing through Traffic Violations



1. What are the costs and benefits to a rational federal executive of a centralized vs. cooperative regime? Under what conditions is one preferred over another?
2. What are the costs and benefits of a centralized vs. cooperative regime from a democratic standpoint? From a criminal justice standpoint?

# Sheriff Election Years Predict 287(g) Signing





## Sheriff Election Years Predict 287(g) Signing



*Why would I want to be  
governor when I can be king?*