The Effects of Immigration Policy Enforcement on Public Attitudes Regarding Immigration Policy

Overview
How does immigration policy enforcement influence attitudes regarding immigration policy and enforcement?

Importance: is policy creating an anti-immigration feedback effect?

Theory
Policy Design and Social Construction Theory (Mettler, 2002)
• Policies that address the immigration system tend to punish immigrants with harsh immigration measures
• The public views and interprets this by placing immigrants into a negative socially constructed category
• The negative perception of immigrants (caused by the policy design) leads the public to continuously support policies that further punish immigrants

Hypothesis
H1: Increased enforcement of immigration policy leads individuals to believe that immigration policy should be more restrictive

Research Design
To collect data for this research study, information was gathered on:

Independent Variable: the total number of ICE detainer requests per 1,000 people residing in each Iowa county
• Detainer requests are “written request that a local jail or other law enforcement agency detain an individual for an additional 48 hours ... after his or her release date in order to provide ICE agents extra time to decide whether to take the individual into federal custody for removal purposes” (ACLU)
• the total number of citizens and non-citizens residing in each Iowa county

Dependent Variable: attitudes toward immigration policy
• responses to attitudinal questions from the 2015 Hawkeye Poll
  • “Do you think that a child born on US soil to unauthorized immigrant parents should automatically receive US citizenship?”
  • “Do you believe that current US immigration policy is too strict, too lenient, or is fine as it is?”
  • In 2015, the Hawkeye Poll had over 800 respondents

Statistical Method
• Logit model: a predictive analysis method used when the dependent variable is categorical

Results

Conclusions
• The number of detainer requests has a positive effect on attitudes regarding stricter immigration policy enforcement
• There is a mismatch between the public perception on immigration policy enforcement and actual immigration policy enforcement
• Iowa citizens are more likely to believe that U.S. citizenship rights should be restricted
• Future research should focus on the extent to which public attitudes toward immigration policy directly affect immigration policy

References
2015 Hawkeye Poll of Iowa.]