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## Violent Crime and Immigrant Removals: Reasons and Determinants of Immigrant Deportations, 1908-1986

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### Abstract

This research describes and explains changes in non-citizen deportations from the United States between 1908 and 1986. Using data from historical immigration yearbooks, we first document and quantify the primary reasons given for removing immigrants from U.S. soil. A key finding is that perceived dispositional defects and threatening behavior (e.g., criminal behavior, mental or physical defects) accounted for a large proportion of deportations in the early 20th century, but these gave way to administrative rationales (e.g., improper documentation) as immigration law and the enforcement bureaucracy expanded. Results of time-series analyses further suggest that the homicide rate is correlated with deportations for administrative reasons and with deportations based on perceived dispositional defects and threatening behavior. Implications and relevance for understanding current immigration debates are discussed.

**Keywords:** deportation; violent crime; immigration law.

### Introduction

The line between immigration law and criminal punishment became increasingly blurry during the past half-century (Stumpf, 2013). For instance, some major immigration laws have included provisions for criminal law enforcement (e.g., the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act; see Juffras, 1991), and deportation has become a common sanction when non-citizens are convicted of crimes on U.S. soil. This melding of criminal and immigration law, a merger often referred to as *crimmigration*, aligns with a longstanding perception that immigrants are more crime prone than native-born Americans. There is little research to actually support this assumption (Martinez and Lee, 2000; Ousey and Kubrin, 2009), yet the rhetoric remains powerful, as illustrated by several of President Trump's comments about immigrants during the months preceding the 2016 election.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, the President's rhetoric resonated with a large swath of the American electorate during a year in which the 30 largest cities in the United States experienced double-digit

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<sup>1</sup> For example, then candidate Trump declared without evidence on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016, in Springfield, Ohio, that "Thousands of Americans have been killed by illegal immigrants" (Valverde, 2016).



increases in their homicide rates. This co-occurrence of anti-immigrant rhetoric and a spike in violent crime informs a pair of questions pertinent to the crimmigration discussion. To what extent are violent crime rates a driving force behind immigrant deportations? And do violent crime rates similarly influence deportations based on perceived dispositional problems and threatening behavior (e.g., immorality, crime, or poor mental health) and administrative rationales (e.g., overstaying visas)?

We set out to answer these questions by drawing on historical deportation data for the United States, with the expectation that history provides some guidance for understanding when non-citizens are at higher risk of deportation. To this end, we see the topic as timely and consequential for several reasons. For one, the rhetoric about crime and immigration reached a fever pitch during the 2016 presidential campaign, and the Trump administration is making good on promises to reduce the number of immigrants and ramp up deportations of non-citizens currently in the country. This recent call for more deportation enforcement piles on top of a two-decade period in which deportations have far exceeded the historical averages (King, Massoglia and Uggen, 2012). For example, more than 1.5 million non-citizens were deported between 2012 and 2016, and even more were deported during the previous five-year period (USICE, 2017). Second, social scientists have not zeroed in on the issue of crime rates and deportations, and hence we are still in want of answers to the abovementioned questions. King et al.'s (2012) historical analysis of criminal deportations suggests no robust correlation between year-to-year changes in homicide rates and explicitly *criminal* deportations. Yet there is more work to be done in this vein. For instance, and as we articulate below, there is good reason to hypothesize that violent crime rates will influence *non-criminal* deportations, which is a hypothesis not considered in prior work. Further, focusing only on criminal deportations may be too narrow because some reasons for removal in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were clearly aimed at public order, even if they did not fall under the heading of 'criminal deportation' (e.g., "likely to become a public charge," "moral turpitude," or being of an "immoral class"). Yet, to our knowledge, no prior research has attempted to code the rationales for deportation and bring this information into a single file to assess how they changed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We thus add to the existing literature on deportation by describing how the reasons for deporting non-citizens changed over time, and what social and economic changes explain some of this variation.

To accomplish this task, we coded nearly 80 years of historical deportation data (1908-1986) by reason for deportation, and then organized the data by year for time-series analysis. Our time span begins in 1908 because this is the first year in which the data on deportations were categorized by reason for removal. We end in 1986 for two reasons. First, and most importantly, the removal categories detailed in annual reports on immigration matters (e.g., the Statistical Yearbook



of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and its predecessors) changed in the 1980s, and hence we could not track the same reasons for removal through to the present day. Second, and coincidentally, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was a watershed law that brought in a new era of immigration law enforcement (King et al., 2012), and thus makes for a suitable bookend for our analysis.

These historical data enable us to examine (1) *what reasons* were given for deporting non-citizens during the bulk of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; (2) *how* these reasons changed over time; and (3) *why* more non-citizens were deported during some years than others. Our results indicate that changes in the legal environment shifted the primary rationales for deportation away from perceived dispositional concerns and towards administrative reasons for removal, particularly around 1940 and the passage of the Alien Registration Act. Further, the homicide rate explains some of the variation in deportations of both types, suggesting that violent crime – even if not perpetrated disproportionately by non-citizens – nonetheless influences deportations.

### **Crime and Immigration in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Law Formation**

The United States has long been a nation of immigrants, but not always a nation of coherent immigration law (Kanstroom, 2007). The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century would be a formative period for immigration law, as organizations such as the Immigration Restriction League questioned the ability of new immigrants to assimilate and thereby called for literacy tests and other restrictions, especially for Southern and Eastern Europeans who would allegedly “shift the burden of public charges upon us.”<sup>2</sup> This belief persisted and was shared by leaders in Congress who, for instance, formed the United States Immigration Commission (also known as the “Dillingham Commission”, after Senator William Paul Dillingham) in 1907 to assess the current state of immigration and set forth recommendations for reform. Included in the volumes of the Commission’s report was an explicit discussion of immigration and crime (volume #36), which concluded that the policies of the day were “not effectively excluding criminal aliens” (Moehling and Piehl, 2009: 739) and the committee therefore recommended further restrictions. To this end, subsequent laws in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century increased the number of deportable offenses (Maslow, 1956). For instance, in 1917 Congress passed the first law allowing for deportation of non-citizens for the ambiguous ‘crimes of moral turpitude,’ which was geared towards removing immigrants who were viewed as feebleminded, crime prone, and likely to be reliant on charities or become a public charge (Birn, 1997; Baynton, 2005; U.S. Senate, 1970). Given

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted from documents of the Immigration Restriction League, U.S. Records, 1893-1921. Available online from the Houghton Library, Harvard University: [https://iifl.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:5398778\\$8i](https://iifl.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:5398778$8i).

the decidedly negative rhetoric about immigrants during this period, we expect that an analysis of reasons for deportations from the country will reveal that the dominant rationale for deporting immigrants was their alleged dispositional defects and threatening behavior, including crime, perceived moral shortcomings, mental health problems, and fears that the immigrant will be dependent on others or the state (public charge).

Yet the administration of immigration law, and deportations in particular, changed during the interwar period. Of particular consequence was the expansion and centralization of the immigration law enforcement bureaucracy during the 1920s and 1930s (Kanstroom, 2007), culminating in the 1940 Alien Registration Act (ARA), which required all aliens entering the country to be fingerprinted and to register with immigration authorities, thereby “expand[ing] the state’s capacity to track and monitor noncitizens and systematize the entire deportation apparatus” (King et al., 2012: 1796). As part of the growing government bureaucracy that unfolded during the New Deal, the ARA substantially increased the ability of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to monitor and track non-citizens. The motivation for the act was partly political; Congress feared the threat of communism and the importation of socialist ideas from Eastern Europe, and later those from the Axis powers during WWII. A likely consequence of the ARA was that non-citizens were more easily tracked and apprehended, especially given the concurrent transfer of the INS from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice in 1940 (Messina and Lahav, 2006; Daniels, 2002). The registration procedures also provide greater opportunity and risk for immigrants to violate the law by improperly registering, and hence we expect that administrative reasons for removal became more prevalent during the New Deal years and especially after the passage of the ARA in 1940.

### **Explaining Variation in Immigrant Deportations**

Prior research on deportations largely focuses on the impact of economic conditions and changes in the legal environment on immigrant removals. For instance, Marxist scholarship (e.g., Rusche and Kirchheimer, 1939) argued that convict transportation from Britain to America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was motivated by the desire to provide cheap labor for extracting resources from the colonies (Ekrich, 1987). Recent scholarship finds some support for the thesis that labor markets determine the rate of deportations. For instance, King et al. (2012) find that unemployment was a significant predictor of criminal deportations in the United States, particularly for the period between WWII and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, a period in which immigration law was well developed and immigration judges were permitted more discretion than in the post-IRCA period. Building on Melossi (1985), King et al. argue that the public discourse hardens towards immigrants and they



are perceived as the root of social problems during periods of economic stagnation and high unemployment. As such, law enforcement and judges become harsher when the economy is in actual or perceived decline.

Yet the economy is hardly the only facet of social life that can cause consternation among the public and drive law enforcement to become more stringent. For instance, it appears that terrorism, perhaps more than joblessness, has caused alarm about immigration in contemporary Europe (Legewie, 2013). We suggest that high violent crime rates – regardless of whether the violence is perpetrated by citizens or non-citizens – serves the same end as dire economic conditions. That is, immigrants are likely to be scapegoated during times of high and rising crime rates, and as a consequence we hypothesize that deportations of many types (not just criminal) are likely to be higher during high-crime periods. Public and elite opinion has long been concerned about the connection between immigration and crime (e.g., The Dillingham Commission), and indeed the perception that immigrants are crime prone was particularly strong in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even articles in leading sociology journals overtly maligned immigrant groups as the “the scum of the melting pot” (Grant, 1925: 641). More recent research continues to show that immigrants are perceived as more crime prone than natives. For instance, Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz (2005: 918) draw from General Social Survey data to show that a majority of Americans think crime rates will increase if more immigrants are permitted to enter the country. Further evidence suggests that Americans who perceive undocumented immigration rates as rising are particularly likely to view the undocumented as likely to increase the crime rate (Wang, 2012). Interestingly, the research on immigration and *actual* – as opposed to *perceived* – changes in crime rates paints an entirely different picture. For instance, Bianchi, Buonanno, and Pinotti (2012) find no evidence that immigration causes a widespread increase in crime, and indeed immigration may even contribute to lower crime rates (Wadsworth, 2010).

Given the longstanding perception that immigration is associated with higher crime rates, we see utility in empirically investigating a related question: Do higher crime rates in turn lead to more immigrant removals? We hypothesize that deportations increase with violent crime rate, and we explore whether violent crime affects deportations for reasons related to perceived dispositional defects and threatening behavior in a manner similar to or different from deportations for administrative reasons.

## Data and Trends

Our inquiry into violent crime and non-citizen deportations in U.S. history relies heavily on data on aliens deported by cause. The Immigration and Naturalization Services reported for each year the number of non-citizens deported, along with the categorical reason for their removal. We digitized these

data and organized a file by year and reason for removal as catalogued in the U.S. Immigration Commissioner Annual Reports (for the early years) and related publications in later years. Data on reason for deportation are first available for the year 1908, and our annual time series stops in 1986 because this is approximately the time at which the available data on reasons for deportations changed.<sup>3</sup> By analyzing data through 1986, which is also the year in which a major immigration law was passed (the Immigration Reform and Control Act [IRCA]), we retain the same categories as included in Table 1 (below) for the entire time span.

The annual immigration commissioner reports identify thirteen categories of removal through 1986, which are listed in Table 1, along with the percentages for the two periods separated by the 1940 Alien Registration Act: 1908-1940, and 1941-1986. As mentioned above, we anticipate that deportations shifted from perceived dispositional problems to more bureaucratic and administrative reasons in the post ARA era, in part because registration allowed for better tracking and verification of immigration documents. Table 1 generally supports this supposition. Prior to the ARA, a sizeable proportion of deportations were for reasons related to perceived dispositional problems or threatening behavior. For instance, a combined 11.4% were deported for reasons of criminal behavior or narcotics violations, which is comparable to the proportion deported for mental or physical health problems (10.2%) or fear that the immigrant will be a public charge (9.1%).<sup>4</sup> By comparison, the proportion of deportations for crime and narcotics violations is only 6% for the period 1941-1986 and only a fraction of a percentage are deported for concerns about becoming a public charge or mental or physical defect. Rather, during the latter period the primary reasons for removal are administrative in nature, such as entering without inspection (70.3%) or improper documentation (14.1%).

This apparent shift from concerns about dispositional defects and threatening behavior to administrative reasons for deportation is further evident in Figure 1. Here we group the reasons for removal into two categories. We refer to the first category as removals because of *perceived dispositional defects or threatening behavior*, which includes the following reasons: criminal violations, being part of an 'immoral class,' narcotics violation, mental or physical defect, subversive and anarchist activities, being a public charge, and inability to read. The second group constitutes *administrative reasons for removal*, which includes the following: remaining longer than authorized, previously excluded or deported, entered

<sup>3</sup> See p.205 in the *1999 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* about changing definition for criminal removals. For an example of changes in removal categories, compare Tables 42 (Aliens Removed by Administrative Reason for Removal: Fiscal Years 1991-2004) with Table 45 (same title, but for years 1908-1980) in the *2004 Year Book of Immigration and Naturalization*.

<sup>4</sup> These proportions were particularly large during the early years of the time series. For instance, the two most frequent reasons for removal prior to the end of WWI were 'mental or physical defect' and 'likely to become a public charge' (27% each), with immoral conduct coming in third (14%).



without proper documents, abandon the status of admission, or entered without inspection or by false statements. The trends over time are depicted in Figure 1 below.

**Table 1:** Reasons for Deportations by Time Period (Percentage within Each Period)

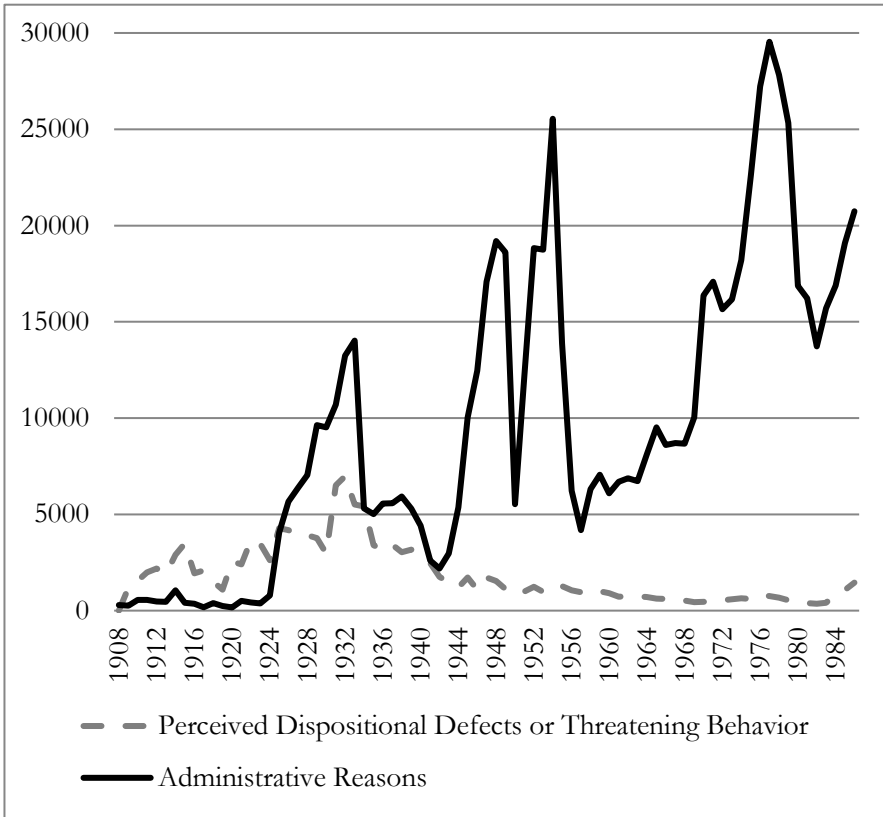
Reason for Deportation	1908-1940		1941-1986	
	Number	%	Number	%
Subversive or anarchist activities	1,248	0.5%	295	0.1%
Criminal violations	26,425	10.8%	25,203	4.4%
Immoral classes	14,184	5.8%	2,429	0.4%
Narcotics violation	1,482	0.6%	9,548	1.7%
Mental or Physical Defectives	24,829	10.2%	2,391	0.4%
Previously excluded or deported	11,749	4.8%	29,939	5.3%
Remained longer than authorized	20,020	8.2%	12,075	2.1%
Entered without proper documents	77,184	31.6%	79,969	14.1%
Entered without inspection or by false statements	15,648	6.4%	399,896	70.3%
Likely to become public charges	22,149	9.1%	413	0.1%
Unable to read	15,010	6.2%	1,752	0.3%
Abandoned status of admission	205	0.1%	1,831	0.3%
Other	13,900	5.7%	2,713	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>244,033</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>568,454</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1989 (Flanagan and Maguire, 1990), Table 4.47, and various editions of the Yearbook of Immigration Statistics.*

Figure 1 shows three notable patterns. First, the data support our expectation that early 20<sup>th</sup> century deportations were more often for dispositional defects or perceived threatening behavior, but deportations for administrative reasons increased sharply as the legal apparatus grew and the state bureaucracy increasingly registered and tracked non-citizens (e.g., the Alien Registration Act of 1940). It is a near certainty that some non-citizens removed for administrative reasons in the later years would have been removed for dispositional defects or threatening behavior in the earlier part of the century, but administrative reasons provide a more straightforward justification. For instance, showing the absence of documentation is an easier process than proving a criminal offense beyond a reasonable doubt. Second, and related, the two types of deportation are inversely correlated over time. The Pearson

correlation for behavioral and administrative reasons for removal during this 79 year period is  $-.34$ . Third, the trend lines do not simply move upward or downward in a smooth and consistent fashion. Rather, we observe some significant year-to-year variation in the number of deportations of both kinds, with various peaks and valleys evident through the period of interest.

**Figure 1:** Non-Citizen Deportations by Category of Removal and Year, 1908-1986



**Time-Series Analysis**

This latter point about fluctuations in each type of deportation raises an important question: What factors explain such temporal variation in deportations? As explained above, the political rhetoric and prior research on immigration and crime suggests that violent crime rates play a role. To shed light on this question we first modify our outcome variables by dividing the number of each type of deportation (dispositional/threatening and administrative) by the foreign-born population in the country during the contemporaneous year, and then multiplying that number by 100,000 to get the



deportation rate per hundred thousand foreign-born persons.<sup>5</sup> We then regress the deportation rate on several independent variables. First, we detrend our time series by controlling for year in the model. We also include a quadratic term in the model because some unobserved factors (e.g., undocumented immigrant population) may have changed in non-linear fashion during our observation period. Second, our models include two indicators of economic performance. Prior work suggests that labor markets could influence deportations under certain conditions (King et al., 2012), and hence we control for the unemployment rate. Further, we include a measure of real GDP per capital (in 1996 dollars) to capture economic growth, with the expectation that higher growth will reduce the rate of deportations.<sup>6</sup> Third, we control for the percentage of the population that is foreign born as a proxy for the proportionate non-citizen population size. This variable is strongly correlated with year (-.91), and thus we include this variable as a change score ( $x_t - x_{t-1}$ ) to reduce collinearity and capture the year-to-year change in the non-citizen population. Fourth, the model includes a dummy variable for the post-1940 period, as non-citizens were increasingly registered and monitored after the ARA. Fifth, we examine whether deportation rates were higher during Republican relative to Democratic administrations. Prior work on punishment suggests that Republicans tend to be more punitive (Jacobs and Carmichael, 2002) and some past Republican presidential administrations were more favorable towards immigration restrictions.<sup>7</sup> Finally, we measure the violent crime rate with annual homicide rate because neither the Uniform Crime Reports nor the National Crime Victimization Survey data cover the full time span of our study.<sup>8</sup> We also include an interaction term between the homicide rate and the post-1940 dummy variable. We expect that the homicide rate will have a stronger effect on deportations for perceived dispositional defects and threatening behavior in the early period because this category of removal was more common and exhibits more variation. Related, we expect the homicide rate to more strongly correlate with administrative deportations in the latter part of the time series, again because the reason for deportation shifted heavily towards administrative reasons.

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<sup>5</sup> Foreign-born population values were interpolated for years in which estimates were not available between censuses.

<sup>6</sup> Unemployment data are from Dunlop and Galenson (1978) for the early years of our time series and from the Bureau of Labor Statistics after 1976. GDP data are from the *Historical Statistics of the United States, Millennial Edition* (2006).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Republican Presidents Harding and Coolidge appeared sympathetic to legislation requiring immigration quotas. Each signed laws to this effect.

<sup>8</sup> Homicide data and immigration estimates are taken from the *Historical Statistics of the United States* (2000).

## Findings

The regression coefficients for deportations based on perceived dispositional defect or threatening behavior are shown in Model 1 of Table 2.<sup>9</sup> Beginning with the control variables, we see that year and its squared term are associated with deportations in a manner that reflects that pattern depicted in Figure 1 above. That is, the year coefficient is positive but the squared term is negative and small in magnitude, indicating an early increase in deportations of this type that dissipates over time. The coefficients also indicate no association between real GDP per capita and deportations because of perceived dispositional defects or threatening behavior, and the coefficient on change in foreign-born population is negative in model 1, although not robust (see model 2). However, the results show that deportations because of perceived dispositional defects or threatening behavior increase when unemployment increases ( $b=.554$ ) and during Republican presidential administrations ( $b=4.640$ ). Most notably for our purposes, model 1 in Table 2 supports our hypothesis that deportations of this nature increase with the homicide rate ( $b=1.691$ ). Yet the magnitude of the homicide coefficient differs after 1940. The interaction term in model 2 suggests that the homicide rate is strongly associated with deportations based on dispositional defects and threatening behavior prior to the ARA in 1940 ( $b=4.307$ ). Specifically, each increase in the homicide per capita is associated with 4.307 additional deportations per 100,000 foreign born. However, the coefficient reduces to approximately zero in the post-ARA era ( $b=4.307-4.603=-0.296$ ).

Models 3 and 4 show the comparable models when analyzing administrative deportations as the outcome. For this class of deportations, only one variable in model 3 is significantly associated with the rate of administrative deportations: the homicide rate. Specifically, a unit increase in the homicide rate per capita is associated with an increase of more than 10 deportations per 100,000 foreign born. Yet this coefficient also varies over time, as indicated by the significant product term in model 4. The coefficient for the period prior to 1941 indicates no significant association between the homicide rate and administrative deportations ( $b=1.348$ ). However, a strong association emerges in the post-ARA period. Each additional homicide per capita in the latter period of study increases the administrative deportation rate by more than 17 per 100,000 foreign born ( $b=1.348+16.267=17.615$ ).

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<sup>9</sup> Regression diagnostics revealed evidence of serial correlation. As such, we present coefficients with Newey-West standard errors, which is an appropriate estimator in the presence of heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation. The models shown here assume first-order autocorrelation, but results were robust regardless of the maximum lag assumed in the autocorrelation structure. Note that the Newey-West models result in a loss of one case in the analysis ( $N=78$ ).



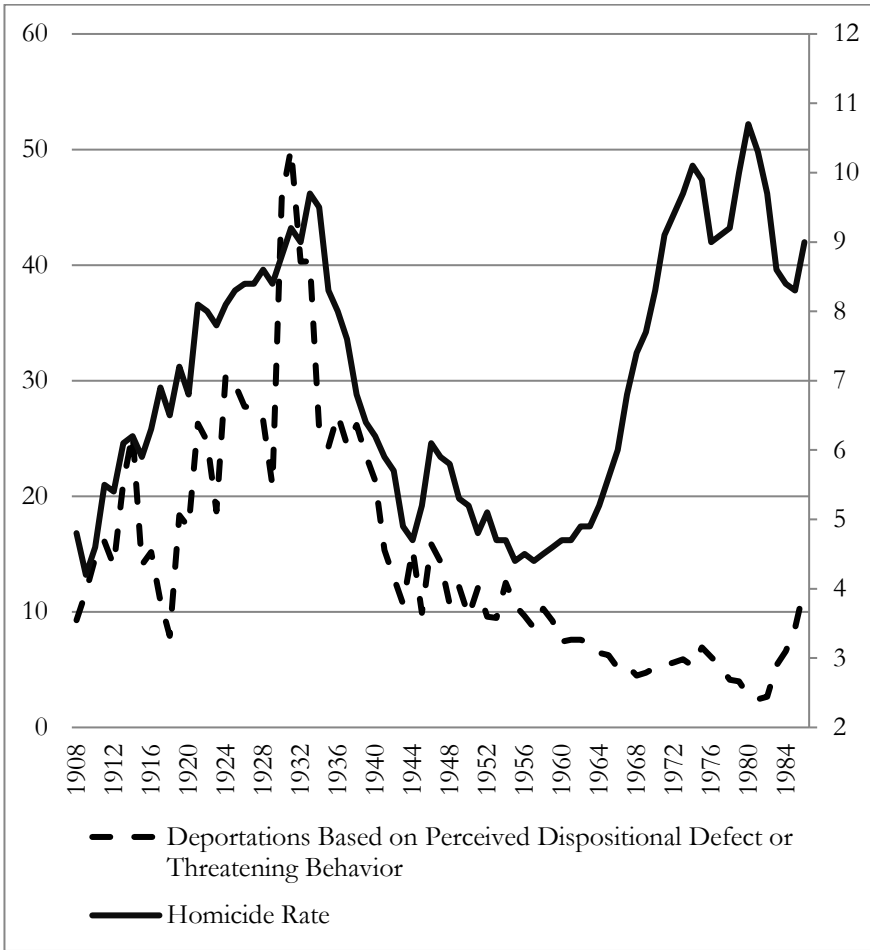
**Table 2:** Regression with Newey-West Standard Errors: Deportations per 100k on Predictor Variables, 1908-1986

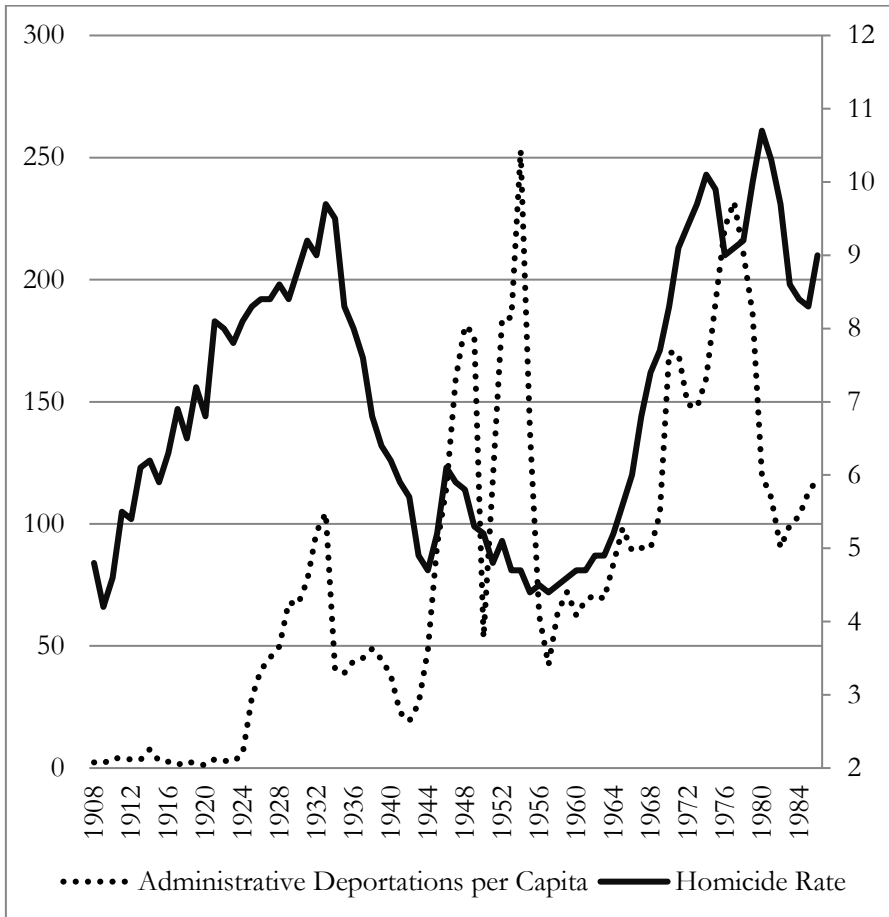
	Perceived Dispositional Defect or Threat		Administrative Reasons	
Year	31.390*	21.942*	135.929	169.319
	(13.006)	(10.946)	(176.323)	(156.186)
Year squared	-.008*	-.006*	-.035	-.043
	(.003)	(.003)	(.046)	(.041)
Unemployment rate	.554**	.719**	1.186	.604
	(.180)	(.186)	(2.112)	(2.170)
Real GDP per capita	.001	.002**	-.001	-.004
	(.001)	(.001)	(.014)	(.013)
Homicide rate	1.691**	4.307**	10.595*	1.348
	(.535)	(1.014)	(5.361)	(5.032)
Change in % foreign born	-26.109*	-13.125	98.120	52.233
	(11.481)	(11.094)	(71.806)	(75.048)
Republican president	4.640**	3.315**	5.268	9.950
	(1.374)	(1.200)	(14.556)	(14.409)
Post-1940	-6.603	25.333**	82.911	-29.954
	(3.607)	(9.172)	(53.934)	(58.572)
Homicide x Post- 1940		-4.603**		16.267*
		(1.260)		(7.646)
Constant	-30151.29*	-20776.74	-132478.7	-165608.7
	(12570.58)	(10578.16)	(168828.1)	(149370.8)
N	78	78	78	78

\*p&lt;=.05 \*\*p&lt;.01

To give a better idea of the nature of the correlation between the homicide rate and deportations of each type, we graph them in Figures 2a and 2b below. Consistent with the product terms in models 2 and 4 in Table 2, we see that the homicide rate tracks remarkably close to deportations based on dispositional defects and perceived threatening behavior prior to the ARA (Figure 2a), yet this association is weaker in the later decades. Conversely, as the overall rate of administrative deportations increases after 1940, we see that peaks and troughs in administrative deportations are more strongly correlated with the homicide rate (Figure 2b).

**Figure 2a:** Homicide Rate and Deportations Based on Perceived Dispositional Defect or Threatening Behavior, 1908-1986



**Figure 2b:** Homicide Rate and Deportations for Administrative Reasons, 1908-1986

### Discussion

We set out to answer two questions in this research: what justifications were used to deport non-citizens throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? And what explains variation in these types of deportations over time? Our analysis of nearly eight decades of deportation data suggests that early 20<sup>th</sup> century deportations were often related to concerns about perceived dispositional defects (e.g., mental health problems) and threatening behavior (e.g., crime), yet administrative reasons became more prominent as immigration law developed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and registration procedures were enhanced by the ARA. Further, the homicide rate partly drove deportations for each category of deportation, such that a higher violent crime rate is associated with more deportations per capita.

We wish to clarify one aspect of our finding that the reasons for deportation shifted over time. We speculate that many non-citizens may have been at risk of deportation for criminal or mental health issues in the mid- and late-20<sup>th</sup> century, yet some of these potential deportees may have also submitted improper documentation, and hence that was the listed reason for deportation. In other words, changing reasons for removal does not imply that the state became less concerned with the perceived dispositional characteristics of immigrants. We suspect this is a likely reason why administrative deportations continued to increase when the crime rate rose in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We further speculate that the discourse around immigration, which we could not directly measure in this research, becomes more fervent during high-crime periods, and restrictive immigration laws and higher rates of deportations are potential consequences. We think a focus on whether and how the discourse around immigration changes in response to the crime rate would be an important issue for future research.

These historical findings give us some context for understanding contemporary immigration debates and calls for more removals during the administration of President Donald Trump. If past is prologue, then the recent increase in the homicide rate is likely to fuel a narrative that immigration and crime are connected, and hence the deportation rate is likely to increase. The results in Table 2 further suggest that criminal deportations are likely to increase under a Republican administration, particularly one as vocal and blunt in its unfavorable view towards immigration as the Trump administration. Our results provide some historical evidence that the Trump administration would not be unique if this were the case, although we must wait to see whether the correlations uncovered in this research ultimately bear out in the current era as well.

We acknowledge that our research is limited by the nature of the data, particularly the changing classification of deportations after 1986. The post-IRCA years are intriguing because of the rise in overall deportations and the flurry of legislative activity around immigration between 1986 and 1996 (Kanstroom, 2007). To this end, future research should focus on this period to assess whether the present findings are consistent, and to assess the impact of the post-1986 legislation on deportations. King et al. (2012) suggest that IRCA was a game-changer, and that after 1986 many factors that had previously predicted criminal deportations were no longer significant. Future research should assess whether this is the case for other types of deportations and for the case of violent crime. Related, research should examine whether restrictive immigration laws and border enforcement are more likely to be passed during high crime periods.

In closing, we think this research contributes to the academic and political discussion of immigration and crime. Immigrants are not only associated with crime in the public discourse; they may also be subject to harsher enforcement



when violence increases, even if the spike in crime is in actuality unrelated to immigration. Indeed, as discussed earlier, the bulk of the recent research suggests that more immigrants means *less* crime. Yet the perception may matter more than the reality. Our results may be timely given the recent uptick in crime, the sensationalized discussion of crime during the 2016 presidential election, and the current administration's call for more deportations. If our model is correct, then a sustained increase in crime could signal more stringent enforcement of U.S. immigration law.

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