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# Dividing Lines: Comparing Predictors of Public Policy Preferences Toward Refugees and Local Involvement in Immigration Enforcement in a U.S. State

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*Following the norm breaking immigration policies of the departed Trump administration, which drastically reduced refugee admissions and pressured state and local governments to join in identifying and deporting unauthorized immigrants, the current Biden administration faces significant choices about the pace and degree of any potential roll back of such Trump policies. In this moment, the importance of the understudied local and state dimensions of migration and integration of newcomers increases for public management and intergovernmental policy research. Numerous studies have tied the creation of national level policy toward immigrants to the examination of national and international public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration (ATII) around broad questions of whether immigrants are perceived as a threat and whether the current flow of immigrants is too high. But few studies have examined factors driving public opinion on more specific sub-national policy options such as local willingness to welcome refugees and the use of local resources for immigration enforcement. This paper makes use of a 2017 representative state level survey from Virginia (USA). Descriptive and logistic regression analysis of data from the VCU Wilder School's Summer 2017 Commonwealth Poll is conducted to determine which factors are significant determinants of the variation in responses for each of these understudied topics. The paper presents the results and concludes by summarizing potential implications for policymakers.*

**S**ince 1970, the immigrant population in the United States grew from 5 percent of the population to more than 13 percent (Steil and Vasi 2014). Immigrants also dispersed across a far greater range of states and localities with nearly half of immigrants living in cities with populations between 5,000 and 200,000 (Williamson 2014). Enabled by the broad immigration policy adopted in 1965, this transformation and the creation of “New Immigrant Destinations (NIDs)” (Suro and Singer 2002) changed the racial/ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity of the United States significantly, sparking various movements to shift policy and curtail immigration (Wroe 2008).

Local governments in these NIDs had little prior experience providing services across multiple languages and cultures and hence faced new challenges in various sectors, including education, community outreach and policing (Steil and Vasi 2014, Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005). These new pressures on state and local governments, alongside policy gridlock at the federal level in the U.S. since the early 2000s, combined to create a situation in which national immigration debates are pushed down to the state and local levels (Triadafilopoulos 2010, Ramakrishnan and Gulasekaram 2013, Wong 2012, Varsanyi 2010, Mitnik and Halpern-Finnerty 2010) where elected officials respond to immigration issues based less on the make-up of their constituency than on the nationalized priorities of their respective party (Avery and Fine 2019, Ramakrishnan and Gulasekaram 2013). Meanwhile, polarization on the issue is regularly stoked by presidential campaigns (Aguilera 2012, Valverde 2016, Cohn 2016, Cohen-Marks, Nuño, and Sanchez 2009, Rosenblum 2011, Triadafilopoulos 2010). With the 2016 election of Donald Trump, the stakes for states and localities increased significantly as the Trump administration sought ways to punish “sanctuary cities” and to empower state and local governments to refuse to resettle refugees (Witte 2019, Jarrett 2017). As the Biden presidency progresses, and as geographic polarization and political debates continue regarding immigrants and immigration in the United States, public opinion at the sub-national level is increasingly worthy of study.

While significant research has explored these public opinions toward immigration overall, research on drivers of public opinion toward specific policies is less robust. The general research has explored public attitudes toward immigrants and immigration (ATII) around broad questions of whether immigrants are perceived as a threat and whether the current flow of immigrants is too high. The resulting insights into what influences people’s perspectives regarding immigration also provide indications as to what policy proposals may be feasible given public sentiment, as well as how it may be possible to frame immigration policy proposals to the broader public to increase or decrease the likelihood of public support (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005, Berg 2009). For example, some advocates for robust immigration cite economic benefits in their argument. Yet Hainmueller and Hopkins’ (2014) finding that “socio-psychological” factors are more important, and an emerging consensus that racial resentment or fear played a key role among white voters in the 2016 election (Green and McElwee 2019), suggest ideological explanations at the state and local level are also key to driving policy.

This paper first reviews existing research on factors that influence attitudes toward immigrants, immigration, and refugees in general and highlights those factors found to be consistently relevant by a growing research consensus. The paper then briefly looks at the two policy areas on which the poll data utilized in the paper provides insight – support for welcoming Syrian refugees and support for the use of local resources for immigration enforcement. Following this literature review, the paper uses data from a July 2017 public opinion survey of Virginians, gathered following the early and controversial shifts in immigration and refugee policy under Trump, to test whether those factors identified as driving attitudes toward immigrants and immigration broadly are also significant in determining preferences on the narrower policy topics. Factors tested include age, sex, race/ethnicity, education levels, income, and ideology. After presenting results of the descriptive and logistic regression analysis, the paper concludes by summarizing potential implications for policymakers.

**Literature Review**

Our literature review first examines what factors have been shown to influence attitudes toward immigrants in general. We then outline two areas of policy - welcoming Syrian refugees and the use of local resources for immigration enforcement - and review existing research on public opinion in these specific policy areas.

**Table 1 Summary of Previous Studies**

Factor causes increase in	Neg. (-) ATII	Not Significant	Pos. (+) ATII
Education			●●●●●●●●●●
White	●	●	
Black		●	
Latino			●
Born in US	●		
Unemployed	●●●●●	●	
Income		●●●	●●●
Age	●●●●		
Male	●●	●●●●●●	
Female	●●	●●●●●●	●●
Rural	●●		
Religiosity		●	●
Conservative	●●●●●●●		
Large minority/ immigrant pop.	●●●●●●	●●●	●●●

Expanded table with individual citations available in Appendix 1

**Research on General Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration**

Existing research provides theoretical arguments for a myriad of individual and contextual characteristics and statistically explores the degree to which they influence immigration policy preferences. Several recent articles review the existing research on factors that impact attitudes toward immigrants and immigration (ATII) and policy preferences across nations (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010, Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014) and in the US (Berg 2010).

A summary of statistically significant factors contained in the reviewed studies is provided in Table 1 (see next page). The categorical grouping of factors in the expanded version (Appendix 1) follows those used by Ceobanu and Escandell (2010).

This matrix of results indicates that many characteristics (sex, ethnicity, presence of a large minority/immigrant population, income levels) have mixed impacts from study to study or even between data sets in the same study (e.g. Burns and Gimpel, 2000). At the same time other factors (educational attainment, conservative ideology) appear consistent from inquiry to inquiry (Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010). Some factors, such as religiosity (Knoll 2009), have been investigated by fewer researchers, making it harder to discern whether the results of one study are consistent in other situations. Such characteristics are often then used to analyze responses based on an assumption of competition between natives and immigrants over limited societal resources (e.g. jobs) (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010, Feagin 2013).

Grounded within economic theory, this privileging of a competitive lens as a basis for analysis of public policy discourse is at least incomplete. Hainmeuller and Hopkins (2014), in a comprehensive review of approximately 100 existing studies on public attitudes toward immigration, argue that there is little empirical evidence for competitive threat hypotheses at the individual level and only mixed evidence supporting economic competition-based hypotheses at the group level. Instead, they argue that research much more consistently demonstrates the role of symbolic factors such as concerns about a changing national identity or perceived threat to the national economy in determining public attitudes toward immigrants. For example, one study of Dutch respondents found that when respondents were presented with culturally threatening cues like an immigrant not speaking Dutch, they were much more likely to report negative attitudes toward immigrants than respondents given economically driven cues (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004). In short, whether immigrants are understood to be highly dissimilar to the host society is critical, and a distinct religious identity, such as Muslim in a historically Christian country, may serve as such a cultural cue (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014).

These findings and the overall importance of the symbolic in determining attitudes toward immigrants are important in two ways. First, they point toward the likely similarity of factors influencing attitudes regarding specific policy areas that relate to enforcement of immigration laws and the welcome of dissimilar refugee groups as are found in attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in general. Hence, we expect many of the same factors (e.g. conservative ideology, lower education attainment) to influence opinion about specific policies toward immigrants. Second, it points to the saliency of specific policy areas in developing a nuanced perspective of the larger debate over immigration because the specific policy stances are often what separate political contenders. Because of this second point, we turn now to a brief review of the two policy areas of interest in this paper - welcoming refugees (and Syrian refugees specifically) and the use of local resources for immigration enforcement.

### **Research on Public Opinion toward Refugee Resettlement**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are 25.4 million refugees in the world today (UNHCR 2018). Refugees have been formally resettled in the United States since shortly after World War II (Westermeyer, 2011; Brown and Scribner, 2014) and the United States has ratified the United Nations' (UN) Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and is thus bound by the resulting Convention. However, refugee admissions have sharply declined in recent years; while 69,993 were resettled in 2015 (Zong and Batalova, 2019) and 84,994 were resettled in 2016, only 53,716 were admitted in 2017,

22,491 were admitted in 2018, and, as of August 31, 2019, 28,052 were admitted (Refugee Processing Center, 2019).

Public opinion toward refugee resettlement in the United States is sharply divided. Considering favorable opinions, Hangartner et al. (2019) found in their study of refugees in Europe that demographic factors can play a large role in one's opinion toward refugee resettlement. Those with higher levels of education and those in professional occupations were more likely to be welcoming to refugees, as were those living in larger cities compared to rural areas. Those who moved to an urban area were more likely to have positive attitudes toward refugees than those who had spent their entire life in the urban area. However, the authors also note that the urban/rural divide could be due the fact that those with more education and professional occupations may be more likely to live in an urban area. Factors that may lead to negative opinions regarding refugee resettlement can include right-wing ideology, which can in turn promote negative representations of refugees (Esses, Hamilton, and Gaucher 2017), as well as concerns related to the security of the host country, cultural differences, and concerns that refugees will not be able to integrate or assimilate (Blitz, 2017). These negative opinions can translate into more exclusionary public policies toward refugees. A summer 2016 poll, conducted by IPSOS of public opinion regarding immigration and refugee policy in 22 countries, found that less than half of participants favored closing their borders to refugees (Ipsos MORI 2016). The United States ranked fourth in support for closing borders, with 48 percent agreeing very much or somewhat that borders should be closed to refugees. There were also concerns regarding threats to safety, i.e. increased violence and/or acts of terrorism, with 70 percent of American participants agreeing very much or somewhat that terrorists could pretend to be refugees. In addition, the poll found that slightly less than half of American respondents believe that refugees would be able to integrate successfully.

### **Welcoming Refugees from Syria and Muslim Majority Countries**

There are few Syrian refugees in the United States. In 2016 the United States admitted 15,497 Syrian refugees; in 2017, the number decreased to 3,024 (Amos 2018). The number decreased significantly in 2018, with only 41 Syrian refugees resettled into the United States, though it increased again in 2019 with 551 admitted as of October (Refugee Processing Center 2019). While at one point Syria was one of the top sending countries for refugees to the United States, this is no longer the case (Krogstad and Radford 2016). The questions thus become – what factors might lead to the public being more or less supportive of resettling such refugees?

Security is a primary concern in conversations related to the resettlement of Syrian refugees. National studies, however, have indicated that the American public generally feels comfortable accepting refugees from Syria as long as appropriate screening and security measures are in place (Telhami 2016). (Before landing in the United States, all refugees must undergo multiple rounds of screening, including background checks, interviews, and biometric checks; the process typically takes 18 to 24 months (U.S. Department of State 2018)). While individuals may have different views on whether these are “appropriate” security measures, there have been no terrorist attacks in the United States committed by refugees (Friedman 2017), and “homegrown extremism” remains the greatest threat to national security (Lindsay 2017). Tehami's conditional finding highlights the need for survey questions that seek to understand the public's stance on refugee resettlement to include a note about screening measures. Concerns amidst the public regarding the ability of refugees from

predominantly Muslim countries to integrate in U.S. society have also been noted in the literature, though community engagement initiatives have been found to help mitigate concerns, especially with refugees from Muslim communities (Blitz 2017).

### **Use of Local Resources for Immigration Enforcement**

Immigration enforcement in the United States is increasingly federalist (pushing certain functions down to state and local levels) than it is federal. During the early 2000's, innovations in federal policy included voluntary partnerships with interested localities to enforce immigration laws (i.e. 287g agreements) followed by the Secure Communities program that automatically activated local law enforcement and justice mechanisms to report immigrants who committed serious crimes or were otherwise targeted for enforcement (Jaeger 2016, Wong 2012).

Ramakrishnan and Gulasekaram (2013), Ramakrishnan and Lewis (2005), Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010) found that adoption of such policies by a locality was consistently attributable to the partisanship of the locality – conservative areas were more likely to participate, and liberal areas were less likely. In addition Lewis, Provine, and Varsanyi (2013) found that existing immigrant supportive policies in the same locality and a Hispanic police chief were additional factors that affected policy adoption, though in an immigrant welcoming direction. Research from Jaeger (2016) and Rissler (2017) notes that this focus on the adoption of policy by political leaders (which might be expected to align more directly with the prevailing political ideology of the locality) without considering bureaucratic implementation of the policy, and the resulting impact on outcomes, was a potential oversight. Using data on deportations emerging from Secure Communities agreements, Jaeger finds that financial incentives built into the program (e.g. reimbursement to the locality for use of local jail bed space) and the financial and structural resources in the locality are larger drivers of implementation and outcomes than the ideological character of the community.

### **Research on Public Opinion - Local Resources for Immigration Enforcement**

As with other narrow policy areas related to immigration, public opinion on such policies and the factors driving those preferences is an understudied area (Casellas and Wallace 2018). Existing research includes findings by Casellas and Wallace (2018) that show partisanship, nativity and education level play a role in explaining attitudes toward sanctuary policies or local/federal collaboration. Likewise, Woods and Marciniak (2017) found in an experimental setting that political orientation and immigrant threat perceptions were significant predictors of normative reactions to vignettes describing local police stopping and then detaining undocumented immigrants. Moreover, Collingwood, O'Brien, and Tafoya (2019) found that shifts in public opinion around the issue of sanctuary cities was driven more by partisan-learning (following the cues of political identity to determine what opinion to hold on a specific policy issue) rather than ethnic explanations. Hence, the limited amount of existing research on the drivers of public opinion toward local involvement in immigration enforcement suggest that partisanship/ideology and education level are key factors to test, in addition to race/ethnicity.

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics from Survey**

Variable	Variable options	Frequency (or mean)
Support accepting Muslim-majority refugees ( <i>Q15</i> )	Support	62.1%
	Oppose	34.7%
	Don't Know/Refused	3.2%
Local resources required for federal enforcement ( <i>Q14</i> )	Should be required	55.2%
	Should NOT be required	40.1%
	Don't Know/Refused	4.7%
Deportation policy preference ( <i>Q13</i> )	None deported	5.5%
	Only serious criminal convictions deported	38.6%
	Any criminal conviction deported	22.4%
	All deported	30.9%
Age ( <i>age</i> )	Age in years (continuous)	46.65 (mean)
Ed Level ( <i>receduc</i> )	1-H.S. Grad or less;	27.4%
	2-Some College;	23.0%
	3-College Grad or more;	49.1%
	9-DK/Ref;	.5%
Race ( <i>raceethn</i> )	1-White Non-Hispanic;	71.1%
	2-Black Non-Hispanic;	15.8%
	3-Hispanic;	3.5%
	4-Other Non-Hispanic;	5.7%
Gender ( <i>d_female</i> )	1-Female	52.4%
Income ( <i>income_rec</i> )	1-< 20,000;	9.2%
	2-20K-49,999;	20.7%
	3-50K-99,999;	26.4%
	4-100,000 +;	28.3%
Community Type ( <i>usr</i> )	1- rural;	13.8%
	2-suburban;	61.7%
	3- urban	24.5%
Ideology ( <i>libl</i> )	1-liberal;	18.5%
	2-moderate;	43.8%
	3-conservative	32.5%



## **Summary Contributions of this Paper**

As this review shows, public opinion on narrower policy toward refugees and the role of local governments in enforcement is both an important and sparsely studied slice of the broader research on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Our research extends the existing research in three ways. First, it uses a unique and recent public opinion data set that contains questions specifically about these policy areas. Second, it provides an opportunity to see if those individual characteristics found to be significant in general research on attitudes toward immigrants are also significant in this focused policy context. Finally, the research contributes to understanding what factors policymakers might need to give attention to about their constituencies when considering shifts in any of these policies.

## **Recent Data Set Provides Unique Window**

This research makes use of a unique data set, a representative poll of public opinion in Virginia that asked a variety of immigration policy questions. The Summer 2017 Wilder School Commonwealth Poll was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI) from July 17-25 on behalf of the VCU Wilder School's Center for Public Policy.

Two questions explore the areas of policy mentioned above – welcoming Syrian refugees and the use of local resources for immigration enforcement. These questions are provided below:

“In general, do you support or oppose Virginia taking in refugees from Syria and other majority-Muslim countries after screening them for security risks?” [1=Support; 0=Oppose].

“As you may know, the federal government has primary responsibility for enforcing federal immigration laws but relies on cooperation from local governments. Do you think local governments should or should not be required to use local resources to enforce federal immigration laws?” [1=Should be required; 0=Should not be required].

The first question was constructed from scratch but modeled in its phrasing on other survey questions used in the same poll for whether respondents favored certain policy shifts. The second question was also written from scratch but other poll questions related to local immigration enforcement were reviewed.

Also included in the data set is information on each respondent's sex, income range, race/ethnicity, education level, political party identification, ideological identification, and community context (i.e. urban/suburban/ rural - descriptive statistics for variables used are summarized in Table 2). This allows the use of complex sample logistic regression analysis to explore which of these factors are statistically significant predictors of specific policy preferences, holding the other factors constant. This analysis can then be compared to the consensus factors identified in more general research on attitudes towards immigrants and immigration to see whether the factors remain consistent in the specific policy context.

## **Methodology**

As outlined above, variables are drawn from a 2017 survey conducted by the Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI) on behalf of the VCU Wilder School's Center for Public Policy. This means all sampling methodology used by PSRAI is imported into this study. The survey was conducted by telephone using a combination of landline and

cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples to represent all adults in Virginia who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone (Rissler and Graham 2017). In addition, the data are weighted on sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region of residence and population density to reflect the demographic composition of the adult population in Virginia and these weightings are utilized in the regression analysis by using complex sample logistic regression in SPSS.

To examine the two policy areas as a focused insight into attitudes toward immigrants and immigration (ATII), we use two dependent variables to measure ATII. Each is a dichotomous dummy variable.

**Table 3 Independent Variables to be tested for impact on ATII**

Variable	Operational Definition	Lit Source	Expected relationship	
			DV1 <i>d_supwelcome</i>	DV2 <i>d_reqlocal</i>
Age ( <i>age</i> )	Age in years (continuous)	Berg, 2009	-	+
Ed Level ( <i>receduc</i> )	1-H.S. Grad or less; 2-Some College; 3-College Grad or more; 9-DK/Ref;	Berg 2010	+	-
Race ( <i>raceethn</i> )	1- Other Non-Hispanic; 2- Hispanic; 3- White Non-Hispanic; 4- Black Non-Hispanic; 9-DK	Cohen, Nuno & Sanchez, 2009	+ + - Ambig	- - + Ambig
Gender ( <i>d_female</i> )	0-Male; 1-Female	Neal & Bohon 2003	Ambig	Ambig
Income ( <i>income_rec</i> )	1-< 20,000; 2-20K-49,999; 3-50K-99,999; 4-100,000 +; 9-DK/Ref	Kehrberg 2007	Ambig	Ambig
Community Type ( <i>usr</i> )	1- rural; 2-suburban; 3-urban	Quillian 1995	+	-
Ideology ( <i>libl</i> )	1-liberal; 2-moderate; 3-conservative	Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007	-	+

**Dependent Variable (DV) 1 (*d\_supwelc*)** is coded 1 if the respondents said they thought Syrian refugees should be welcomed in Virginia. Conceptually, favoring the resettlement of refugees nearby is understood as evidence of a positive attitude toward immigrants. The exact wording of the question was:

“In general, do you support or oppose Virginia taking in refugees from

Syria and other majority-Muslim countries after screening them for security risks?” [1=Support; 0=Oppose].

**Dependent Variable 2** (*d\_reqlocal*) is coded 1 if the respondents said they thought local governments should be required to use local resources to support enforcement of federal immigration laws. Conceptually, favoring such a requirement, counter to calls in some places for localities to provide sanctuary to immigrants, is understood as evidence of a negative attitude toward immigrants, especially as public opinion usually takes a dim view of a higher level of government requiring local governments to help pay for a policy created at the state or federal level. The exact wording of the question was:

“As you may know, the federal government has primary responsibility for enforcing federal immigration laws but relies on cooperation from local governments. Do you think local governments should or should not be required to use local resources to enforce federal immigration laws?” [1=Should be required; 0=Should not be required].

Seven independent micro-factor variables found in the existing literature that have a logical equivalent within the dataset were used to test factors that affect ATII. These variables, the variable name within the dataset (*italics*), the coded categories and the expected relationship to the dependent variable are listed in Table 3 (see next page). Also listed is an example of research that serves as the basis for the expected relationship.

For continuous (Age) and ordinal variables (Education level, household income, ideology), a positive expected relationship means that as the respondent has a “higher” value in that variable, the more likely they are to favor the policy option implicit in the dependent variable. In the case of purely categorical variables (e.g. race/ethnicity), an expectation is listed for each category, meaning that if the relationship is positive, that a respondent being of that category is expected to increase the likelihood of that respondent to favor that policy option. In those cases where the existing literature is mixed, the expectation is noted as ambiguous.

As noted above, because the dependent variables are dummy variables, SPSS was used to run a multivariate complex sample logistic regression analysis for each equation and the results are reported below. The regression equations used were:

Model 1: Support welcome of Syrian/Muslim-majority refugees  
 $d\_supwelcome = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Gender} + \beta_2\text{Age} + \beta_3\text{Income} + \beta_4\text{EdLevel} + \beta_5\text{Ideology} + \beta_6\text{Race/Ethnicity} + \beta_7\text{Community Type}$

Model 2: Local resources should not be required  
 $d\_reqlocal = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Gender} + \beta_2\text{Age} + \beta_3\text{Income} + \beta_4\text{EdLevel} + \beta_5\text{Ideology} + \beta_6\text{Race/Ethnicity} + \beta_7\text{Community Type}$

**Results and Discussion**

As can be seen from the results (see Table 4, next page), both models are significant in explaining some level of relationship between independent and control variables on one hand and the dependent variables on the other. With logistic regression, R<sup>2</sup> is not as easily interpretable as with a linear regression, but clearly, given the relatively low Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup>, ranging from .183 to .263, these factors do not capture all, or even most, of what causes

variation in respondents’ answers. But they still provide statistically significant insight showing that some factors matter while there is no evidence in the current data for other factors. We review the significant factors for each model in turn.

**Table 4 Impact of Factors**

		Likelihood of support for [DV= 1 if Favor; 0 if Oppose]					
		Model 1 – Welcome Syrian/Muslim Refugees			Model 2 – Require Local Funds Use for Immigration Enforcement		
Useable N		620			612		
Nagelkerke R-squared		.263			.183		
Model Signif. (Wald F)		.000 (5.064)			.000 (4.114)		
		Exp(B)	t-Stat	Sig.	Exp(B)	t-Stat	Sig.
CONSTANT		3.224*	1.916	.056	1.272	.437	.662
Liberal		8.054***	5.407	.000	.182***	-5.360	.000
Moderate		2.896***	4.271	.000	.418***	-3.521	.000
Conservative		1.000			1.000		
Other Non-Hispanic		.346**	-2.041	.042	3.010**	2.353	.019
Hispanic		1.003	.005	.996	1.083	.154	.877
White non-Hispanic		.582	-1.623	.105	1.420	1.208	.227
Black		1.000			1.000		
H.S. Grad or less		.309***	-4.097	.000	1.883**	2.250	.025
Some College		.378***	-3.513	.000	2.348***	3.364	.001
College Grad or more		1.000			1.000		
MALE		1.137	.564	.573	.898	-.483	.630
FEMALE		1.000			1.000		
Rural		.488**	-1.837	.067	1.764	1.429	.153
Suburban		.840	-.610	.542	1.168	.590	.555
Urban		1.000			1.000		
< \$20,000		1.819	1.532	.126	1.398	.806	.421
20K-49,999		.876	-.418	.676	.925	-.257	.797
50K-99,999		1.037	.455	.650	1.064	.248	.804
\$100,000+		1.000			1.000		
Age (in years)		.996	-.677	.499	.997	-.490	.624

\*\*\*p<.01; \*\* p<.05; \* p<.1

### **Factors Influencing Support for Taking in Refugees from Majority-Muslim Countries**

In model 1, which evaluates factors that make it more likely for a respondent to indicate a welcoming stance toward Syrian refugees, the factors of gender, age and income show no significant impact on support likelihood. At the same time, four factors are statistically significant at a 90 percent, 95 percent or 99 percent confidence interval (as indicated by one, two or three stars respectively):

- Liberal or moderate ideology (odds ratio of 8.054\*\*\* and 2.896\*\*\* compared to conservative) respondents have an odds ratio more than eight times and two times greater when it comes to a welcoming stance toward Syrian refugees.
- Other non-Hispanic (odds ratio of .346\*\* compared to Black) have an odds ratio of .346 to 1, meaning they are substantially less likely to favor the welcoming of more Syrian refugees. There is no significant difference between the other three ethnic groups. This finding is contrary to expectation as non-whites are generally assumed to be more welcoming than whites.
- Some College and High School or Less respondents (odds ratio of .378\*\*\* and .309\*\* respectively compared to College or more) both are substantially less likely to welcome refugees, a finding consistent with expectations.
- Rural residents (odds ratio of .488\* compared to those in urban areas) are substantially less likely to welcome refugees, a finding consistent with expectations. No significant difference exists between urban and suburban residents.

### **Factors Influencing Preference for Local Government Resources being Required to be used to Enforce Federal Immigration Laws**

Model 2, which evaluates factors that make it more likely for a respondent to indicate support for requiring localities to use local funds to support federal immigration enforcement, shows that only the factors of ideology, race/ethnicity (in the case of Other Non-Hispanic respondents), and education level have a significant impact on support likelihood. Age, income level, community type, and gender are not significant. The following highlights the three significant factors:

- Liberal or moderate ideology (odds ratio of .182\*\*\* and .418\*\*\* compared to conservative) respondents have an odds ratio that indicates a much lower likelihood of support for local funds being directed toward enforcement.
- Other non-Hispanic (odds ratio of 3.010\*\* compared to Black respondents) are substantially more likely to favor such a requirement. There is no significant difference between the other three ethnic groups. This finding is contrary to expectation as non-whites are generally assumed to be more welcoming than whites. In this case, the results indicate Other non-Hispanic respondents were 3 times more likely than black respondents to support the use of local funds for immigration enforcement, other things equal.

- High School or Less and Some College respondents (odds ratio of 1.883\*\*\* and 2.348\*\* respectively compared to College or more) are both substantially more likely to support a local spending requirement. Notably, those with some college are even more likely to support such a policy than are high school or less respondents, demonstrating that education likely does not have a linear impact on a positive attitude toward immigrants and immigration.

Regarding ideology, the findings highlight an interesting tension for conservatives. Conservative ideology is generally associated with a preference for local control of policy where possible and reticence to require the use of local funds for federally mandated policy priorities (e.g. unfunded mandates). Yet the results show conservative support, other factors equal, for such a use of local funds when it comes to immigration enforcement. Future research is needed to test the generalizability of this result as well as to better understand how conservatives make sense of using local resources for immigration enforcement, an area that has largely been in the federal purview since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bernard 1998).

### Conclusions and Implications

Though the caveats covered above require more extensive explanation or further research to unpack, the results of this inquiry generally suggest that factors influencing attitudes toward specific immigrant-responsive policies are largely the same factors that have also consistently been shown to be significant in broader research on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. One factor that almost all existing research finds to be significant - education level – is a significant factor in both models explored here. Ideology is also significant in both models.

Two factors that have been mixed in their significance in existing broader research - race/ethnicity and rural contexts - were mixed in the current research but potentially insightful nonetheless. Race/ethnicity was significant for at least one category in both models, however the more restrictive stances of “other non-Hispanic” respondents was contrary to the expected direction assumed from news reports and previous academic analysis. This finding suggests studies that simply lump all non-white respondents together may be missing important differences within an overly broadly defined minority community.

Conversely, the community type (e.g. rural, suburban, urban) was significant in only the model related to welcoming refugees, but showed that rural respondents were about half as likely, other things equal, to say Virginia should take in refugees from Syria and other Muslim-majority countries. In light of Trump administration proposals to allow states and/or localities to refuse the resettlement of refugees within their boundaries (The White House 2019) and the need for the new Biden administration to stake out a different stance on the policy topic, this finding provides an indication of who is likely to support such a policy . But it also suggests a likely flashpoint of future immigration debates that is already occurring in Tennessee: when more liberal urban localities in a conservative state are pre-empted from accepting refugees by the state government (Rose 2019).

In the end, while recognizing the limitations of a medium-sized, one state survey for generalization, this research generally confirms several implications for practitioners and policymakers:

- Those with more education, especially those who completed college, tend to be more positive in their attitude toward immigrants on specific policies like those tested here, as well as immigrants in general. The fact that Some College respondents in two cases were more negative toward immigrants than those with a high school diploma or less indicates that education is not a linear function in its impact.
- Specific policies toward immigrants, as with attitudes toward immigrants in general, strongly access the liberal/conservative identity that increasingly drives the U.S. political system.
- These factors only explain a small portion of the variation observed – a reminder to practitioners and policymakers that essentialist estimations of what a particular individual will think based on personal characteristics or history are likely to be very imperfect. Considering the context in which opinions are formed, as well as ways in which context and opinions can change, is also important.

As the Biden administration develops policy around these topics, it seems likely that debates related to immigrants and immigration at the local level will continue and possibly become even more heated. In working to create and implement immigration-related policies and adapt to changing pressures from the federal government, those at the local and state levels would benefit from understanding the specific perspectives of their constituents in order to identify solutions that can sustainably balance the diverse interests of the community as a whole.

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**Appendix 1**

**TABLE 1 (EXPANDED): SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS STUDIES**

Factor causes increase in . . .	...Neg. (-) ATH	Not Significant	...Pos. (+) ATH
<b>MICRO NON-ATTITUDINAL FACTORS</b>			
<b>Education</b>			Berg, 2009 , Berg 2010, Burns & Gimpel, 2000; Cohen, Nuno & Sanchez, 2009; Espenshade, 1995; Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007; Hello et al. 2002; Hood, Morris, & Shirkey 1997; Quillian 1995, Wagner & Zick 1995
<b>White</b>	Cohen, Nuno & Sanchez, 2009;	Neal & Bohon 2003	
<b>Black</b>		Neal & Bohon 2003	
<b>Latino or Hispanic</b>			Cohen, Nuno & Sanchez, 2009;
<b>Born in US</b>	Cohen, Nuno & Sanchez, 2009;		
<b>Unemployed</b>	Berg, 2009, Esses et al. 2001; Quillian 1995; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008	Berg, 2009	
<b>Household income levels</b>		Semyonov et al. 2006, 2007; Wilkes et al. 2007	Coenders et al. 2008, Jackson et al. 2001, Kehrberg 2007
<b>Age</b>	Berg, 2009, Cohen, Nuno & Sanchez, 2009; Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009, Quillian 1995		
<b>Male</b>	Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009, Quillian 1995	Espenshade & Hempstead 1996; Hood & Morris 1997, 1998; Neal & Bohon 2003; Sanchez 2006; Berg 2009	
<b>Female</b>	Espenshade & Calhoun 1993; Burns & Gimpel 2000	Espenshade & Hempstead 1996; Hood & Morris 1997, 1998; Neal & Bohon 2003; Sanchez 2006; Berg 2009	Berg, 2009, McLaren 2003
<b>Rural</b>	Gorodzeisky & Semyonov 2009, Quillian 1995		
<b>Religion</b>		Scheepers et al. 2002b	Knoll, 2009
<b>MICRO ATTITUDINAL FACTORS</b>			
<b>Conservative Political/Ideological orientation</b>	Berg, 2009, Cohen, Nuno & Sanchez, 2009; Hainmueller & Hiscox 2007; McLaren 2001, 2003; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008		
<b>CONTEXTUAL DETERMINANTS (MACRO-LEVEL STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS)</b>			
<b>Large minority/immigrant population</b>	Kunovich 2002; Quillian 1995; Scheepers et al. 2002a; Semyonov et al. 2006, 2008; Schneider 2008	Hello et al. 2002, Hjerm 2007, Sides & Citrin 2007	Berg, 2009, Berg 2010, Schlueter & Wagner 2008