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SPEAKERS

Eric Baumer, Jenn Tostlebe, Min Xie, Jose Sanchez



Jose Sanchez 00:14

Welcome, everybody, to The Crim Academy, where we are criminally academic. My name is Jose and I'm joined by my co-host, Jenn.



Jenn Tostlebe 00:21

Hi everyone!



Jose Sanchez 00:22

And today we're speaking with Professors Eric Baumer and Min Xie about their work on crime reporting, immigration, crime trends, and victimization.



Jenn Tostlebe 00:33

Eric Baumer is a professor and head of the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Pennsylvania State University. After completing his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Truman State University, he completed a master's in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri St. Louis, and his PhD in Sociology at the University of Albany, SUNY. Eric's research explores demographic, temporal and spatial patterns of violence, the mobilization of law, and the application of criminal justice sanctions. He is

currently conducting research on the substantial contemporary reduction in youth crime and the intersection of immigration, immigration policy, crime, and police notification.



Jose Sanchez 01:16

Min Xie is a professor and the Director of Graduate Studies in the department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland, College Park. She received her bachelor's and her master's in Information Management from Peking University and her PhD in Criminal Justice from University at Albany, SUNY. Her research interests include theories of criminal victimization; race/ethnicity, gender, and immigration; multilevel and longitudinal models; and spatial data analysis. She has received funding from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study violent victimization in relation to immigration and the making of immigration enforcement policies in different states and local jurisdictions. Thank you both for joining us today. We're very happy to have you.



Min Xie 02:06

Thank you for having us.



Eric Baumer 02:07

Yeah, definitely. Thanks.



Jenn Tostlebe 02:09

Alright. So before we get started, just kind of a brief overview of what we're going to be talking about today. We're going to start off talking about perceptions of immigration and crime over time, as well as crime trends with a focus on immigration. We'll talk about a paper that Min and Eric have recently co-authored together in Criminology that came out in 2019. And then we'll talk about some of their future directions for research. Yeah. Let's get started. Jose, do you want to go ahead and start?



Jose Sanchez 02:40

Sure. So given that the topic for this podcast is going to be focused around immigration, crime reporting, and victimization, it's probably a good idea for us to start a little broad with how and why perceptions of immigration and immigrants changed over time in the

United States?

M

Min Xie 03:00

Eric, do you want started?

E

Eric Baumer 03:01

I mean, I'm happy to. When we thought about this podcast, we were, I was thinking, how do we get here? And one of the perplexing issues that we saw a few years back, was, there were lots of studies coming out about immigration and crime, many of which show that some of the safer places in America are those with a larger immigrant populations. And yet, polls would have you believe otherwise. So one of the trends in public perceptions that I think is relevant here is this question that Gallup and others have asked about Americans. They've asked Americans the contribution of immigrants and immigration to crime and the crime trends. So despite evidence to the contrary, a near near majority of Americans will answer that question by saying that immigrants or immigration is increasing crime in America. And so that's one reason that we became interested in understanding a little bit about why that might be. You know, would it be because people were suspicious of the science? Would it be for other reasons or whatnot. So we can talk a little bit more about some of that work that we've done. The broader kind of theme that you asked about. It's kind of nuanced, right? I think when you talk about public opinion about immigration, you have to throw a lot of caveats out there. A big one that we hear about everyday now is political orientation. So this has long been but increasingly become a politicized issue. So I think over the last two decades, it's safe to say that Americans have become increasingly tolerant of and accepting of immigrants, even as politically rhetoric, and the conversation has become maybe more divisive. So that's one way. Min, do you want to add anything to that?

M

Min Xie 04:47

Yeah, I think the, with the question, you're asking about the perceptions of Americans towards immigrants, it's a very important one, in the sense because we as we said, immigration is part of the US history. So when we asked people about their perceptions it's forcing people to sort of like, confront their issues about their identity, their racial, ethnic identity, talking about both our past and our future of this country. So it's important to look at how historically the trends, either it's people's perception towards, you know, the contribution of immigrants to the US or about their crime patterns. It will be very important in the sense like, it's going to be affected by the social context. So as Eric mentioned, think about what happened during the last two decades, right. The crime has

been coming down significantly, at the same time the economy has changed into a service industry structure where we require a lot of immigrants to do the work that many Americans won't do. So there are reasons that why Americans, at least according to the poll data, when people are willing to talk about their perception, seems to indicate they have becoming somewhat more receptive to the immigrants. I think it's affected by the fact that we see crime coming down, we see the economy's really requiring a lot of labors and so these sort of like contextualized, how our perceptions of immigrants. Which would mean that when those things change so that we have the crime trends change, if the economy changes, the perceptions of Americans towards immigrants are likely to change. So it's very important to understand the trend. So we're encouraged by seeing some warming attitudes change towards the immigrants, but at the same time, we need to be aware of the situation like right now. For example, if the economy suffers for a long time, would people start to blame immigrants for those issues? That's likely the pattern, I think.

J

Jose Sanchez 06:46

Yeah. Have you guys or do you know if there's any variation in these perceptions of foreign born individuals based on race and ethnicity? Or is it sort of universal? I guess that's a terrible word for it. But like, are there differences between groups?

M

Min Xie 07:03

My view, think about this theoretically, right? So there are different factors affecting people's perceptions, attitudes. So race/ethnicity would be a very important factor because it's deeply rooted in what we call American identities. And therefore, both the race/ethnicity of native born, whether they're non-Hispanic whites, and then they're Blacks, and then there are Asians, and there are other groups. So there are a lot of papers like reviews you can read, talk about how these will become very important factors to affect people's opinions or attitudes. The same time research also shown that there are within group heterogeneity. So you talk about Latinos, there are different nationalities, different groups. And that's so that's my take of it. It's like there are definitely race, ethnicity differences, but they are intersection. So like, you you interact with their class, with their social context, and other characteristics like gender and education. Eric?

E

Eric Baumer 08:09

Yeah, I think that's very well said. You know, I think, another kind of building on the education, I think social class is also an issue that cuts against race and ethnicity when it comes to immigration and source country of immigration. So that's another issue, that it's sometimes hard to separate those things. Certainly in America, much of the rhetoric, and

much of the rhetoric about about crime, until very recently has focused on immigration from Mexico. And more recently, I think you see that broadening to other Central American and Latin American countries, as we've seen, you know, people flee those nations and come to the border. But yeah, I wouldn't add anything beyond that.

M

Min Xie 08:51

Yeah, I think about religion. So for example, you and their political affiliation, all those would be, all have a relationship to race, ethnicity, and they're all together and need a lot of data to sort it out.



Jenn Tostlebe 09:06

Yeah, I think that's a really good point that we have all of these different identities, really in perspectives that are coming together to influence how people are perceiving other people. Then that goes on to influence how they perceive them when it comes to crime. That's interesting. Alright. So to kind of switch from immigration to crime, and then bringing them together. I know it's been mentioned, especially by you, Eric, in our email dialogues, that the dialogue about crime and crime trends, it's largely political, it's too non scientific and that that's something that is frustrating to not only you, but to a lot of people, I think. And so just kind of a broad question. And Min you talked about this a little bit in one of your previous answers, but how have crime trends in the United States changed over time. So with historical time trends, as well. And then how are they looking now compared to even the 1980s? Or the 1990s?

M

Min Xie 10:05

Eric has a paper on this.

E

Eric Baumer 10:08

Yeah, well, yeah. So I mean, I think most people, and these days, you know, crime rates and violence, especially, but this has been pretty universal, universal to a point, you know. So what we're talking about really is street crime, you know, it's a different animal, if we start to think about cybercrime and fraud online, but even forms of expression online that are violent, you know, in terms of cyberbullying, and things like that, these have been coming down substantially for now 25 or 30 years. There's a caveat, you know, we just saw a bunch of violence erupt in some cities this summer. And so you mentioned how this, you know, conversation tends to be one way in terms of policymakers and the public and then

the other way in terms of research. So the research is pretty clear on this, there's been a long term substantial decline. We're, we're living in a world right now, at least in our country, but other nations too, that's peaceful, you know, obviously, there, there are exceptions. But the politicization of crime often misses that point. So, you know, you hear politicians, for example, talk about rising violence. And there are some examples of that in a couple places, but we're still seeing very low levels of crime. So that's one sort of very important backdrop, part of the disconnection there is really with what we do as a country to study crime. We don't invest in tracking crime the same way we do, say, invest in tracking the economy, for example. So even right now, as we're wondering what's happening in our country, as the pandemic kind of rolls on, and there's been unrest in certain places, we don't have the kind of data infrastructure in place to give us good answers about whether violence is increasing, and to sort of check some of the claims that people are making. But just to your your to question, you know, seeing very strong declines in crime in an era where we've seen pretty substantial increases in immigration. Min, do you want to add anything to that?

M

Min Xie 12:10

Yeah, I think the point that Eric is making that is, these questions would require data that at a certain kind of precision, we don't have, we don't have any geographic levels, and also require we measure crime consistently, across time and space. But using the limited number of data we have in terms of saying this is a change from the early 90s to now, it's very impressive, right? So many, many scholars have spent a lot of time trying to figure it out and many people would try to claim credit, like what happened? So it's kind of important to see at the same time, immigration was increasing, and partly because the immigrants are looking for economic opportunities. And so when the economy is doing well, and we attract a lot of people, and when they become safer to come here, they will even attract more people. So scientifically, it would be really challenging to sort out the relationship. But as far as the data that are available, we have seen very little evidence to show that immigration would cause crime problems in the US. Then the question becomes, you know, like, how do we sort out different types of immigration and how they are related to the crime issues. And I think that's where Eric and I come in, it's like, you know, you're sort of to see how the limitations of police data or database correctional facilities, all those will tell you something about the crime, but because of the limitation of how we see when crime occurs and how that data gets into the official statistics, there's a big gap. And so that makes it very important for the country to have another data source, which is the surveys to allow us to say something more about immigration and crime, and that's where I think we want to do work.



Jenn Tostlebe 14:01

And I think that's very important. This was actually, so I'm teaching a class or I'm the TA for a class right now on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency, and we just spent like an entire class period talking about crime reporting, which I didn't know as much about, even three weeks ago, as I do now. And it's just like fascinating, all of the different limitations that come with it.



Min Xie 14:24

Collecting data about delinquency is even more challenging, right?



Jenn Tostlebe 14:29

So, very interesting.



Jose Sanchez 14:31

Now I've run into a little bit of that, too. So one of the projects that I'm working on right now, we're actually thinking of using the dataset that you guys used in your paper that we'll get to in just a second. But also with gang research you often hear or we sort of learned that we have to take official police data with a little bit of skepticism and a grain of salt because, you know, like who is a gang member? What is a gang? And each jurisdiction will do it a little bit differently. And, you know, we've seen some departments sort of get in hot water because of the way that they're doing it. So yeah, I think the more data points you have, or the more data sources you have, is good, right? Because both have their limitations.



Eric Baumer 15:21


That's right.




Jose Sanchez 15:22

So with that being said, I think we can move into your paper where you do look at a different data source than most immigration and crime studies that you mentioned. And that's your paper, "Neighborhood, immigrant concentration, and violent crime reporting to the police: A multilevel analysis of data from the National Crime Victimization Survey," it is in the journal *Criminology*, and it was published last year in 2019. In this paper, Min and Eric drawn on four theoretical perspectives, as well as the historical immigration

context of the area in which the immigrant neighborhood is located, to examine whether victims are less or more likely to report violent victimization, occurring in immigrant neighborhoods. In order to do so they use 19 years of data from the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is a national survey of approximately 140,000 persons each year in the United States that asks questions on the frequency of crime victimization, and the characteristics and consequences of victimization. Does that sound like an accurate introduction to your paper? Did I miss anything?


 Eric Baumer 16:37
Great.

 Min Xie 16:37
No, it's good.



Jenn Tostlebe 16:39

Alright. So we are going to delve into kind of this more theoretical elaboration that you guys have for the paper. But before doing so, there's a bit of space devoted to something that we've brought up, which is crime reporting, or reporting a crime to the police, for those people who don't know what crime reporting would be. But in it, you mentioned, and this just like blew my mind because I didn't realize how high it was, but you said that oftentimes more than half of crimes are not reported to the police. I figured and Jose and I've talked about this, we were thinking more like 30%, which still seems high to a lot of people, I think, so 50%, or more just seemed really surprising. And so can you elaborate a bit on why so many crimes go unreported? Like, generally speaking, so not specifically thinking about this community conditions perspective, but in general?

 Min Xie 17:33
Yeah, I think Eric and I both have done extensive research in this area. So I can start. It's actually interesting because think about doing anything, there's a cost and benefit, right? And so when we've reported more than half, that's on average, and therefore there are certain types of crimes, who would have higher reporting rates, certain types of crimes would have lower. So for example, think about burglary, or motor vehicle theft, those tend to have higher rates because they have a reason they want to report because of the insurance. Even if you don't catch the person who did the crime, but you need the paperwork in order to file for insurance purposes, for example. But for violent crimes, there

are reasons people being asked why you don't report. A lot of times, for example, people will say, nothing can be done by the police, because you don't know who did the crime. If it's a property crime, for violent crime, you if you might know them, but if they're a stranger, or you don't know, actually, that the capture of these people would be very difficult. And then you have to put in the time in order to process the criminal cases. And then even if you know the people, in order to prosecute them and bring them to justice, there will be a lot of time investment. And therefore crime reporting rate is always associated with the seriousness of the incident, and whether there is injury, whether there is a weapon, whether there are other kinds of property loss, so on. And so that's sort of like this rational choice theory is one important. And then there are social factors, like people's race/ethnicity, how they are perceiving that they're going to be treated by the criminal justice system. That's other factors. I think Eric probably have a lot more to say about this issue.

E

Eric Baumer 19:19

Yeah. So they're, you know, you might think, what are some of the reasons why people might not contact the police? What one could be that they don't trust the police, they don't have faith. Doing so is the best way to kind of handle the situation, whatever that situation might be. There's also ambiguity, you know, not around some crimes, right? You know, that there are certain things that happen that we all know--that's criminal, that's something that, you know, is illegal--but if somebody is, you know, being asked a question about an argument or something that happened with another person, they personally may not define it as a crime, they might define it as a disagreement, you know, so there there is some gray area in some cases, where are we, good, reasonable people might classify something that's been described as a crime, but that person themselves may not. So, you know, I think there are lots of potential disincentives. Others might be, we know that, at least with violence, a large majority of those incidents are perpetrated by people we know. And so there could be motivations and various sorts to protect those people, to try to work it out with those people, whether they're a friend, a co-worker, or some other types. So, you know, I think that reporting crimes to the police is useful because it engages a system that can help with respect to, you know, prevention, protection, deterrence. But it's not the only system. Min and I have also written about this, there are lots of things that victims of crime might do, or even people who witness crime, to make matters better, you know, whether that is getting sort of just protecting themselves or another person from a future attack or a future crime or trying to remedy the issue some other way. So they might reach out to a friend or to a social service agency, they might go to a medical professional. So they're, you know, the police are not the only means by which to accomplish what victims and others might think we should do. So all those things are probably why we've, you know, seen for years, half of crimes go unreported, but as Min

mentioned, for some crimes, and what comes to mind, on the other end of the spectrum, from say, a burglary or motor vehicle theft, where you see roughly 80% probably of those are reported. Sexual assault and rape it's closer to 30%, 35%, or less. So, you know, there's also issues of kinda stigma and perceived impediments.

M

Min Xie 21:44

Yeah, if you're really going to this is going to be helpful for your research. I think Eric and I's, our paper in the Annual Review of Criminology, we talked about those theoretical reasons why or why not people use the police or other services. That might be useful if you want to get an overall view of the theoretical approaches to this issue.



Jenn Tostlebe 22:03

I have to check that out because this is like this new found area that I think is really interesting for me. Alright, so kind of digging now more into the paper that we're talking about. Can you talk about why crime may go unreported, based off of community conditions, or specifically within immigration or immigrant neighborhoods?

E

Eric Baumer 22:26

I'm just going to say one thing about kind of what motivated this project. So lots of other people had studied immigration and crime, people we admire and respect a great deal. And there were a couple reviews of that research. And this kind of gets what I was saying earlier that those reviews essentially, you know, come to this conclusion that crime appears to be at least slightly lower in places with more immigrants. And yet, if you just watch a news, the sort of news feed, you don't really see that, and these continued references to the opposite. So you know, Min and I share a very deep interest in measurement and crime data fidelity. And so one thing that we wondered about was well, you know, possibly one could criticize much of the prior research that had showed less crime in immigrant areas because it's based on police data. And so if you think about it, if lots of crime goes unreported, and also there are reasons why people who live in different communities might be especially less likely to report it. And there's lots of anecdotal evidence about that, but not a lot of research. That led us to think well, let's explore this issue in a project. So that's kind of what brought us here, and then I'll pass it to Min to talk a little bit more about immigration and crime reporting specifically, but I just wanted to kind of provide that.



Jenn Tostlebe 23:57

Yeah, I think that's great. Cuz, yeah, in your paper, you do mention how it's like mostly anecdotal information that we know before your paper.



Eric Baumer 24:06

Yeah.



Min Xie 24:07

Yeah. As Eric said, what you often hear in media is, if crime happens immigrants are not going to report. And therefore, we were like let's look at this issue more theoretically. And then what's interesting, as you mentioned, we use multiple theoretical perspectives to look at this issue. We say wait a minute, it's actually, the story might be more complex. Right? So if you think about the like, if people don't have a trusting relationship with the police, and they may be less likely to call the police. So that's one reason immigrants may be less likely to call the police or areas with higher concentration of immigrants will not to call the police. But then there are also theories talking about how having a large size of immigrants may increase the social capital of the area's collective efficacy. And also, it might create some inner group relationships, making certain groups in that area will be more likely to call the police because now they perceive immigrants as a threat so that when they see more crime, they want to make sure the police will know about these crime patterns. And so as we laid out in the paper, you can sort of see one theory, like, all legal cynicism will suggest reduced level of reporting, but other patterns like collective efficacy, social capital, or social threat, all those theories might suggest that the reporting action may increase if you live in an area with a lot of immigrants. And so we couldn't really solve this issue by simply looking at theory, and therefore we decided it would be the best to test the theory by looking at the size of immigrants in that neighborhood, to see how's that going to be related to the reporting. And the same time we'll of course, then that will mean we wanted to tease out the relationship, how this relationship might be dependent on people's race/ethnicity. Right, being black, being white, being Latinos, being Asian, those things might be having a different relationship, in this relationship. And then we want to look at how the county, specifically of these neighborhoods in which you're located, if this county is an area that's relatively new to immigration, and then they may have a different relationship with the police than in an area where immigrants have been there for a long time. So like New York City, so you have a relatively better relationship than relationships, for example, in Georgia. And so these are different ways to figured out how the concentration of immigrants might be related to crime reporting. But that relationship might be dependent on people's race/ethnicity, or depending on the specific

social context of immigration. And that was the purpose, main purpose for our research.



Jenn Tostlebe 27:01

That's an awesome summary from what I gathered.



Min Xie 27:08

It was fun. I think when when Eric and I were making the table about the different theories, like what's the best way to explain to the reader, actually was very helpful for us, too, because you have so many, like, conflicting thoughts in your brain and trying to write it down. It was a very cool process.



Jenn Tostlebe 27:27

The table was very helpful. So you did an excellent job on that.



Eric Baumer 27:32

You know, like, I remember early on in this research, talking with some people about it, not criminologists by the way, and they're like, well, we all know that people who live in immigrant neighborhoods are less likely to report the police. But that's kind of what you know, Min and I believe, you know, science is important, right? You know, so actually looking at data, and there, there are several elements of our findings that I think are a little surprising. As we got into it, you know, there are all kinds of ways and Min described extraordinarily well, nuances that I hadn't thought of, you know, I think many people assume that it's going to be, that the logic would be less reporting in immigrant neighborhoods, but as Min pointed out, there are very strong arguments to be made in the opposite direction. We also developed as we kind of talked it through we thought, well, and also, it's nuanced in the sense that, you know, when we talk about immigrant neighborhoods, what do we really mean, and what, when we talk about that in a theoretical way, what we're talking about is a relatively large concentration, enough to where it would shape neighborhood dynamics. So that's a nonlinear kind of idea. And so we built that into the paper as well, which has really important implications for, you know, actually testing the idea with data.



Jose Sanchez 28:49

So I don't know if we've mentioned this already. But Jenn and I were both pretty much

unanimous, like this is a really good paper, like it is a really well written paper. So you've talked a little bit about the theories that you incorporated in the paper and Eric, you sort of started talking a little bit about the communities. But could you tell us a little bit more about the distinctions that you make between what a traditional and a non traditional immigrant destination is?

M

Min Xie 29:17

Sure, I can start. So US immigration history is interesting, right? Because we went through different time periods. And then if you think anything from the 19th century, the big migration of all the European immigrants coming into the US, so they went through the process of mostly having Western European and then you have the Eastern European coming in, there was this fight between are the Italian, are the Italians white or not? So there were these arguments, but then you go from the 1920s, all the way to the World War II, and then up to the 1960s. There was a time period basically, immigration significantly dropped, right, to the very low, like almost, I think it was, like 4% or so of immigrants living in the country during that time period. And then you have this immigration law in the 1965, where they allowed larger number of Latinos and Asians to now become immigrants to this country. And so what it means is that the racial ethnic composition of immigrants suddenly changed, right? And therefore, when we were starting to study our paper, you look at you start from the 90s, there was a 20 year period for immigrants to establish roots, particularly immigrants from Latin America, and then from Asia, to establish roots. And some of these areas, have for that, you know, time period have fairly large size of immigrants. And then they've been living there for a while they have established roots in those neighborhoods, they have social services to help them. So in other words, is this concept of traditional areas would be those areas that have, you know, have had a large, sizable immigrants. What do you mean by sizable? So we use the average percentage of immigrants in the country to decide that. So in other words, it has a history that people have lived in there for a long time, then therefore, their social capital, in theory should be stronger. And that would establish that those areas as an area that could have needed social network to facilitate the immigrants to live in those areas. But then think about what happens in the late 80s, when Ronald Reagan had the amnesty act where a lot of immigrants become legal. Then they suddenly, they could move. So the left California or a lot of those places moving to part of like southeast America and other you know, the Midwest or those places, they didn't have a large immigrant communities for them. And suddenly, you have a huge influx of immigrants. And those are newer areas. So they're not traditional in the sense that they don't have the history of immigrants. Therefore having a huge influx of immigrants, without a huge base for them, those are classified as non traditional areas. And for that reason, there has been a series of work, people trying to define, find the distinction between traditional and non traditional areas, and they tend to

find qualitative differences in terms of how these people have been received in the local communities. So that's conceptually, think about, it's mostly reflective of the migration patterns of immigrants originally in the coastal areas, and then they move inland to the different sections of the country and form the newer areas. Eric?

E

Eric Baumer 32:58

Yeah, no, that's great description. I was just fascinated some of the historical origins that I had forgotten about. The other, you know, the 90s really facilitated that there was a major economic boom, housing boom, you know, that turned South eventually. But you know, so you saw places like North Carolina and Georgia, Alabama, lots of the Southern and then interior Midwest, Iowa, emerges these places where previously immigrants hadn't lived in large numbers. And, and so you had large influxes there. It's really, this distinction is a very rough proxy. And we recognize this. As you know, as sort of relative capacity or preparedness for incorporation. So you know, the idea is, traditional destinations are places where it is assumed, but there's some evidence for this as well, where you know, relationships between police and citizens, for example, has had time to develop and rapport has developed, even so to the point where you also have greater diversity on police forces and things like that. Whereas newer places, you know, you just haven't had enough time for those things to become established. Not just with police and citizens, but within the community as well. So, you know, researchers like us have done this, in part, to distinguish between places where immigrants and immigration is established, and where kinds of resources and infrastructure and relationships about developed in traditional destinations where that's less so in new destinations. Ideally, we would measure that directly, you know, and we've done some of that in our work, you know, to the degree to which people from different groups are incorporated in the local economy, for example. It'd be even better to tap into probably perceptions among immigrants as to how well they're accepted in certain communities and the kinds of resources available to them.

J

Jose Sanchez 34:47

While, reading your paper, and Min you talked about this a little bit. I find it really fascinating how policies by administrations can really shake things up. You know, like, like if you asked my parents who their favorite US president is they'll tell you, it's Ronald Reagan. Because his policies have helped them become US citizens and a lot of my family that came from El Salvador during the civil war that was happening down there. It helped them become US citizens. And once that happened, it sort of, like, you know, taking the leash off a little bit, and they kind of started to move a lot more freely throughout the country. So now I have family in, like Chicago, where the first several years that they were here, they were all clustered in the Pico Union area of Los Angeles, where a lot of the

Central American immigrants sort of cluster. So yeah, so I think that's really interesting. How, like, these policies over time are sort of impacting what we're seeing now. And so I think that we really built up a good foundation on your paper. So I think it's finally time for you both to, you know, sort of hit us with the highlights of your findings of your paper.

M

Min Xie 36:07

Yeah, I think there's a graph we are very proud of. So showing you. The central idea is that you really need to look at the context in which these neighborhoods are located in. If you think about traditional areas and we see the reporting patterns are not that different from places with a lot of immigrants versus places with fewer immigrants. I mean, the only thing I noticed would be like, if you only look at Latinos seems like there is a little bit of reduction, for Black and white, you barely notice the change. But any of those differences, they didn't reach statistical significance. So you would characterize as there's not much of a big impact on concentration of immigrants, which is actually consistent with some findings of city level analysis, like people have done research in New York City, or other places, showing immigrant neighborhoods still have high rate of reporting, you know, relative to other places. But what's important for us, is you can see a very clear difference. Now, if you move to the counties where we correct classified as non traditional areas, newer areas, there, you observe that significant change in the reporting, which is a nonlinear effect, in terms of you have the percentage of immigrants reached a certain level, around 35% or so, you'll start to see a significant drop in the level of reporting. And that pattern was seen in all white, Black, and Latino groups. And which means this is a neighborhood wide phenomenon. And that makes it important for us to show that, because it's not just immigrants don't report or immigrant neighborhoods don't report to the police. It's more of a, Where do they live? What's their relationship with local police? I think that's the important story. Eric, do you have something to add?

E

Eric Baumer 38:01

Great summary, Min. No, I'll just restate what you said in a slightly different way, just to kind of reinforce it. And that is, you know, in the kinds of places where people I think, often imagine immigrants living in our country, you know, these are traditional destinations. Places like Miami, Chicago, LA, New York, etc. There's really not that much difference at all, in terms of rates reporting, as you go from neighborhoods with hardly any immigrants to neighborhoods with many, a large proportion. It's really in these new destinations where you find this very precipitous drop in rates reporting. So this is what you often hear about in news media outlets, and then lots of other sort of more observational type of studies. And it's a pretty substantial drop. I think the other thing is, it's, it's not just Latinos, it's whites, and it's the non-Latino whites and non-Latino blacks, but in essence, you know,

in these newer destinations within our country, rates of reporting for violence are very low. And that's something that I think we had to kind of tease that out in the data. That's a pretty prominent pattern in our study.



Jenn Tostlebe 39:05

Yeah, I feel like that has some pretty important implications, you know, the major finding, Eric, that you just said, you know, that in these newer immigrant areas, you know, there's a very drastic difference with reporting. And so can you kind of elaborate on like, specifically thinking about more the general public and maybe even policymakers, what these kinds of findings really have implications for.



Eric Baumer 39:34

Min, do you want to offer anything? And then I'm happy to.



Min Xie 39:37

I think, Eric and I, actually, we were talking, of course, we are trying to talk about policy implications. But I think we agree on one thing is, that is, any recommendations need to be based on data right? And so because our paper is not assessment of any specific policy, and therefore we should think a little bit like broader in the sense like, what kind of important message were trying to communicate to the general public or to the law enforcement agencies? I think the important message here is that the suspicion that there is a pattern of underreporting is real, but that's restricted to areas specifically in the non traditional areas. And we don't know why that's the case because we haven't tested specifically what caused those impacts. But we can sort of thinking this is an important message that the law enforcement agencies in those areas should be aware of. And therefore, they can look at the data and think about how this may apply to their jurisdictions. And is it something to say about their relationship between the law enforcement and communities? If that's true, how do they address that issue? So that will be specifically policy relevant. Or, then you know, they may find that their relationships much better than the average level. And that could be important too because as we know that all the jurisdictions in the country have taken very different approaches to immigration, right? Some would participate in the cooperation with federal agencies to do immigration enforcement, some really try not to do it because they want to maintain the relationship with local communities. So all these different varying policies, make their local patterns be similar to what we have found or very different to what we have found. So we think that's actually a good starting point for each agency to look at. And we found

the average and then think about, do they fit into this pattern? And if they do what they should do. So that's a good starter for a conversation, but not necessarily say, oh, you're doing this wrong, you're doing that wrong in terms of specific policy. That's my take on this issue.

E Eric Baumer 41:54

Yeah, I think that's great. We're interested in exploring this a little further in some of our current research and like one issue is delving a little deeper into what this might mean. Is it really a function of the kinds of local federal partnerships that are occurring in some of these places, but not all, right. And so if that's the case, you know, these patterns could be driven by, really concerns about immigration policy enforcement or they could be broader concerns about, you know, just perceptions of police, and what that might mean, based on what people experienced before they came to America, based on what they see in their local communities. Given that we see patterns like this across Latinos, non Latino whites, and no-Latino Blacks. Again, this is part speculation as well, I'm extrapolating a little bit, but it suggests something a little bit broader, than just the experiences that recent or, you know, even long standing immigrants have had and brought with them. What it tells us, I think, is that the, you know, the police need to be mindful of the kind of messaging and the kind of interactions that they're having. I don't think law enforcement officials would necessarily be surprised by these findings. But they ought to be concerned by them. You know, I think crime reporting isn't per se an indicator of cooperation with the police, but it's one dimension of that, right? And so I think police often would be interested in, in reversing this kind of pattern that we're showing here. We don't have good science about how to do that. You guys are probably a little too young to remember this, but I I tell my students all this. Reporting to the police increases in the 80s and the 90s, and we don't know why. But the nation did have this amazing campaign. You guys remember McGruff, the crime dog?



Jenn Tostlebe 43:45

Yeah.

J Jose Sanchez 43:46

Yeah, take a bite out of crime.

E Eric Baumer 43:48

Yeah. But it's part of a broader effort that the police have pretty consistently, but off and on, and it's certainly somewhat haphazard, across places. Engaging the community as a partner in resolving crime. And so you know, this kind of pattern suggests me that that's the kind of effort that's needed, you know. This isn't a them versus us kind of thing. But that, you know, there's some interactions and relationships that need to be developed in these places. Because ultimately, reporting a crime doesn't necessarily yield a positive outcome, but it certainly would put, you know, the police in a better position to help resolve issues and prevent future crime. So that's one thing I'd add.

J

Jose Sanchez 44:30

So the research side of it, and you sort of hinted a little bit about sort of where we should kind of start thinking about going next or or some of the things that we should be looking at. You've sort of mentioned to us that you're both working on some pretty cool sounding projects funded by the NSF (National Science Foundation) and the NIJ (National Institute of Justice). Could you tell us a little bit more about this new work that you're doing?

M

Min Xie 44:53

Yeah, sure. I think Eric was the lead for the NIJ project and we both also worked on a NSF grant proposal. And so the idea, like we said, in our paper, we're talking about the future directions. One thing we think is particularly important is, we really need to know information about these individuals' immigration status, and then NCVS (National Crime Victimization Survey) data starting to collect the information on citizenship. And so that becomes very important indicator. So now we can look at not only just the percentage of immigrants in the area, how's that gonna affect crime and reporting? But also look at the individual's citizenship status. How's that going to relate? That would allow us to look at native, so native borns, are their experiences with a crime and crime reporting very different from foreign born individuals? And so that's a very important question. And then Eric was the one suggested and we can look at the local area percentage of illegal immigrants, right, that's will tell us even more about the relationship between immigration and the crime. Because you know, like in surveys, it's impossible to ask people "are you illegal?" But we can get some information about their collective status. So areas, whether we have a lot of illegal immigrants living in those areas, and therefore we think these two projects adding together would really allow us to gain more understanding of the relationship between immigration and crime. Also, more directly answer a lot of critics questions about should we, even though we think immigration is good for the country, but should we be worrying about illegal immigration? So these are very big questions that we're hoping to use the data to address those issues.

E

Eric Baumer 46:47

Yeah, you know, we started working on this, what's now been a multiple year project. And it's sort of, at the early stages of the last election. And, you know, this is 2015, roughly. And, you know, I remember a conversation with Min about this. And, you know, we wondered what, this was a big issue in the last election, and there was a rhetoric, a lot of claims being made. We were familiar with the research in our field, but we wondered, what kind of contribution could we make? The two questions that we really initially interested in: One was, well, does degrees of reporting vary across neighborhoods, you know, according to immigration status, you know, and concentration of immigrants. And that's what we talked about today. The other one was, Well, okay, what if you used a data set other than the police-based data, that we think could be problematic? Would you still find this protective benefit, the lower levels of crime in immigrant neighborhoods? And so that was really those two questions. And we did find that. So we find using survey data, we find less crime in immigrant neighborhoods in another paper that we published. And so, kind of rewind to last year as the current election cycle starts to heat up. What we were hearing was a slight shift in rhetoric, not just about immigrants and about immigration and crime, but very precisely about undocumented, what current administration will call illegal immigrant, immigration, and how that affects native born, US born citizens. So we thought about how can we contribute further to this literature into the ideas and the conversation? So our NSF project, as Min mentioned, is focusing on how citizenship, individual citizenship, shapes victimization risk. And then our NIJ funded project is partnering with a group called Migration Policy Institute, which is a nonprofit in DC, and their specialization is to estimate the number of undocumented immigrants in local areas in the United States. So you can find them on the web, but they have estimates published for states, but we've partnered with them to generate estimates for US counties. And we're going to link that to the NCVS individual level data. And so we can answer questions such as, you know, if you're a US born citizen, again, this is the rhetoric that people are using, not our own. If you are a US born citizen and you live in an area with a large fraction of undocumented immigrants, are you at greater risk for victimization? Some claims are that yes, that's the case. We have theoretical reasons to highly doubt that, one of which is that most crime is in-group. That is, you know, most US born citizens are going to be victimized by a US born citizen. But we're interested in the empirical side of that. So that's what the NIJ project is focused on, partially. The other issue is with policy, same kind of rhetoric. Lots of the current US policies against immigration, as they unfold in local areas, is predicated on this idea that these policies will keep US born citizens safer and we're not aware of any empirical science to demonstrate that one way or another, and so we're exploring that very directly with the data that Min mentioned.



Jenn Tostlebe 50:05

These are huge questions and important ones. I'm really excited to see what you find from these. So these are just in the beginning stages, right? So it'll be a little bit before we see anything that comes out of them?



Eric Baumer 50:18

Yeah.



Min Xie 50:18

Right. The, you know, with the COVID. Yeah, we have a paper under review, but that has to go through the process and see what's going on. But majority, the big components of it would require access to restrictive data. And you know, how difficult it is now to get restrictive data. So we're in the process of trying, hoping we'll return to normal with the COVID going on. Yeah.



Eric Baumer 50:45

Yeah, there are a lot of moving parts to it. Nobody that we know of has analyzed, for example, just the county level data on undocumented immigration. So, you know, Min and I care a lot about data quality. And so we're getting to kind of assess what what the data might mean. We're also engaged in collecting data from this really wonderful website, if you're, if you're bored, Syracuse University hosts it. It's a data set called TRAC, T. R. A. C., and it's this repository of immigration enforcement activities. What they've done is submitted, I think, every day for the last many years, freedom of information requests to ICE for information about arrests, deportations, and whatnot. And so we're developing a large database on that. We're interested in exploring those patterns, too. I think that that's an untold story, where and who and what's being done there in terms of immigration enforcement. So yeah, we've been gathering a lot of data. So it may be a little while before papers emerge.



Jenn Tostlebe 51:49

I'm really looking forward to it. So keep me in the loop.



Jose Sanchez 51:54

Me too.



Jenn Tostlebe 51:55

All right. Well, I think that's about all we have time for. Do either of you have anything you would like to add before we close out the podcast?



Min Xie 52:03

I actually just have a question. I'm curious. So who are the intended audience of this? I'm so excited about students doing this kind of activities and at the same time, I'm wondering, like, do you think you're, how do you contribute to the dissemination of information? I mean it's one of the big questions. How do we talk to people who are not in our field?



Jenn Tostlebe 52:25

Yeah. And that's one of the goals that we have for this podcast is we're really hoping to cast this broader net. So kind of tying in with this conversation that we've had about a lot of information on crime being very political, and not necessarily grounded in scientific evidence. And so we're hoping that this doesn't just reach academics, that's obviously going to be one of the, you know, populations that's interested in this. But we're hoping to cast this broader net and get it out into more of the general public sphere as well.



Min Xie 52:57

Yeah, admire the work. I just think that's so good.



Jose Sanchez 53:01

Yeah. That's sort of the reason why we kind of stay away from the polynomial logistic regression type talks. So yeah, we hopefully this will get out to as many people as possible. And I'm hoping it's something that someone like my sister can understand, you know, not to knock my sister, she's a bright person. But you know, she doesn't really care for statistics. And, you know, sort of what I do, she just finds the end result fascinating.



Jenn Tostlebe 53:34

My parents really want to listen to this.



Eric Baumer 53:37

Well tell your parents or your sister, Jose. Tell them they can give us a call and we'll be happy to talk and talk and talk.



Jenn Tostlebe 53:45

Awesome.



Jose Sanchez 53:45

Sounds good. Well, thank you very much to you both. We really appreciate you taking the time out of your, what I can only imagine are super busy schedules, to speak with us.



Jenn Tostlebe 53:56

Yeah, thank you.



Jose Sanchez 53:57

And we've sort of talked a little bit about the projects that you're working on. But is there anything else that you'd like to plug, you know, maybe a paper that's coming out soon, or something in the near future that people should be on the lookout for?



Min Xie 54:13

Well, as I mentioned, we have a paper under review so we'll see about the immigration, but if we have any new update was definitely send you guys the link. That'd be awesome.



Eric Baumer 54:23

We encourage people to follow you guys.



Jenn Tostlebe 54:28

Thank you.



Min Xie 54:30

Oh, by the way, we are recruiting the 2021 cohort so if you know anybody. Don't just try, because I know Jose, you said you just stayed and only applied to one program, but we're recruiting new students. To send your friends to Maryland!



Jose Sanchez 54:49

So I did apply to several. Just one sociology program. So where can people find either of you have like Twitter or anything like that or just email, Google Scholar.



Min Xie 55:04

I'm on like LinkedIn, ResearchGate, but I'm not on Twitter. I'm not in social media. I know I'm so old fashioned.



Jenn Tostlebe 55:08

Surprisingly, a lot of our guests haven't had Twitter. So you are not the minority as far as our guests go.



Eric Baumer 55:18

Most of my colleagues do and I deal with it that way, through them. And so I hate to be the old person here, but I don't, it doesn't sound all that appealing to me. But email for sure. Our website.



Jose Sanchez 55:31

Okay, so you heard it here, everybody, just @ Eric's colleagues, and they'll pass it on.



Eric Baumer 55:36

Yeah, that's right.



Min Xie 55:40

Yeah, email would be the easiest way.



Jose Sanchez 55:43

Alright. Well, thank you both very much. Once again, we really do appreciate it. This was a lot of fun and very informative. And you know, what, I think is a very important topic.



Min Xie 55:55

Oh, thank you.



Eric Baumer 55:56

Thanks very much.



Jenn Tostlebe 55:57

Thank you!