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TRENDS IN ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: A PRODUCT OF GOVERNMENT
EFFICIENCY OR ECONOMIC DECLINE?

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Abstract

Immigration has become a hot topic over the years. Current events show that the immigration debate is not an issue that will die any time soon. Recent literature covers a vast array of themes when it comes to illegal immigration. Researchers generally agree that economic indicators deter illegal immigration more than government enforcement measures. However, there have been no studies or literature using statistical techniques to compare the influence of these two factors. The goal of this thesis is to fill in the comparative gap. Data involved in this project covers the period of 1994-2008. The independent variable of this study is the inflow of illegal immigrants into the U.S. per year. The four independent variables analyzed are government apprehension rates of aliens, Border Patrol employment numbers, U.S. percent change in GDP, and the U.S. unemployment rate of foreign-born persons. All are per annum as well. Through the statistical analysis of these variables, it was found that the only significant factor was the unemployment rate of foreign-born persons.

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INTRODUCTION

Immigration is not a new phenomenon in the United States. America is a country built upon immigrants. In 1970, the immigrant population was 9.6 million and coming into the 2000s, the population was well over 30 million (Passel 1, 2005). Within the immigrant population, is a group who reside in the country undocumented. It has become increasingly more difficult to reside in the United States for immigrants. Working permits, visas, and citizenship are not as easy to obtain as they once were due to the overwhelming numbers of immigrants coming into the country. The public has become more aware of its new neighbors and the consequences and problems they may bring. Thus, the terms illegal immigrant and alien have become part of our lexicon. After September 11th, escalation at the border has grown. The 2,100 mile long border between Mexico and the United States has become a focus of enforcement and legislation. What used to be an open border became a barrier full of hassles. Increased security measures make it take hours for trucks, cars, and people to cross the border.

Since the rise of industrialization in the late 19th century, the economy has had a great influence on the lives of Americans and foreigners abroad. The economy directs wages, jobs, and ultimately even politics. The economy is especially pertinent now as the status of the American economy has reached a critical stage. The United States' economy is in poor health and it shows. Slow growth and the lack of jobs have affected everyone from Middle America to CEOs of Fortune 500 companies around the world. Americans are distraught and overwhelmed with an unresponsive economy and a government unsure how to react. Even before the recession began, immigration had planted seeds of discord. Issues of job availability and government funding began to be attributed to documented and illegal immigration. These issues are amplified in

America's current state of affairs. Despite legal obstacles and economic downturns, immigrants continue to come to America. The question is how many.

Throughout the literature, it is known that the immigrant population is increasing. More immigrants are arriving than dying or leaving. However, within the last couple of years, the amount of illegal immigrants arriving per year is actually decreasing. This information may not have reached most of the general populace, but researchers have discovered the trend. Disputes arise among researchers as to why this trend is occurring. Yet, two factors always appear: government enforcement and the economy. This is where my research begins. Are economic factors or government efforts responsible for the trends in illegal immigration? Which proves to be more of a deterrent? Should the American government switch their emphasis on physical enforcement to something more long lasting? Are legislators ignoring reform to appease employers? With my data and analysis I plan to prove that economic factors are responsible for the trends in illegal immigration. In terms of U.S. policy, this would be controversial and add to the research which pushes for immigration policy reform. The literature review will add to the background and further explain the importance of the project.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Trends

Beginning in the mid 1990s, immigration began to increase rapidly, with the peak occurring in 2000. In 2004, the annual inflow of migrants was 24% lower than in 2000 (Passel i, 2005). The inflow does not have a direct relationship with passage of time. This contradicts the commonly perceived notion of a steadily increasing inflow of migrants over the years. The peak and the drop off most noticeably coincide with economic conditions (Passel ii, 2005). During the economic boom of the 1990s, immigration increased rapidly. With the small recession in 2001, immigration decreased and slowly increased post recovery. However, the report does not address the specific factors behind the trends, minus a few macroeconomic indicators.

The most commonly used measure of migration into the United States is the foreign born population. This is misleading concerning the flow of migrants into the country. One must take into account death and emigration. Immigration flows are a vital tool in accessing public policy at the federal, state, and local levels. There is no one source of data that accurately measures these flows. Most measures are at the administrative level or outside legal channels (as in recent years). Different sources provide different numbers, but similar patterns. During the period of 1992 to 2004, the share of illegal immigrants entering the country increased, while legal immigrants decreased (Passel iii, 2005).

In terms of Mexican migrants, inflow and outflow closely correlates with U.S. employment rates (Passel 11, 2005). Immigration is also influenced more by U.S. economic indicators than their Mexican counterparts. Macroeconomic indicators are the easiest measure to

identify, but they are not the only ones. Government enforcement policies and family networks also contribute (Passel 11, 2005). Passel and Suro do not examine either of their effects. In “Rise Peak and Decline”, the authors use the 2000 Census, American Community Surveys, 2000-2004, and the Current Population Survey, 1994-2004. As demographers they then perform their own statistical analysis to determine the estimated inflow and outflow of illegal immigrants. The government often uses Passel as a reference in their official reports. Upon discovering this in my research, I had no qualms about utilizing his data or expanding upon his ideas.

Camarota and Jensenius’ analysis finds that only illegal (and not legal) immigration numbers have decreased (Camarota 1, July 2009). Within the last two years, the number of new illegal immigrants arriving has decreased by one-third compared to earlier in the decade. The number returning home has also doubled. The authors believe that since legal immigration has not decreased, government enforcement must play a role. Also, the decline in the illegal immigration population began before there was a rise in unemployment (Camarota 1, July 2009). The authors suggest that enforcement is probably the reason, but do not provide evidence to support their claim. After the summer of 2008, unemployment continued to play a major role in the declining population (Camarota 8, July 2009). A significant increase in immigration was noted during the summer of 2007 while Congress was debating amnesty for illegal immigrants.

Gathering data on annual inflows and outflows of migrants is difficult. The Current Population Survey (most often used) asks in what the year the migrant arrived. If asked in 2008, the persons who arrived from 2006 to 2008 were coded as one response (Camarota 10, July

2009). Both the DHS and the Pew Research Center have different growth numbers, further complicating the validity of the data.

With the current recession, both legal and illegal immigrants have been hit hard. Camarota's second article states that the new trend is that foreign born unemployment rates are higher than native born, which has not been the case (1, May 2009). "Among immigrants who arrived 2006 or later, unemployment is 13.3 percent" (Camarota 1, May 2009). The authors wonder if it makes sense to allow so many immigrants to work in the U.S. if the unemployment figures remain so high. The data for the article comes in quarterly results from the Current Population Survey. In general, native born workers with high levels of education tend to have lower rates of unemployment than foreign born workers with the same levels of education. The authors state that there is no discernable reason for this. However, illegal immigrants are factored into the unemployment rate for foreign born persons. This leads to the hypothesis that employers may not hire illegal immigrants because they are a legal and economic liability for them.

On the other hand, foreign born workers with lower levels of education have lower levels of unemployment than their native counterparts (Camarota 3, May 2009). This is due to the fact that this group usually consists of illegal immigrants, whose numbers are declining (Camarota 7, May 2009). From the first quarter of 2007 to the third, unemployment for immigrants went from 4.1 to 9.7 percent. This is quite a shift. From 1994 until 2000, immigrants had statistically lower unemployment rates. Beginning in 2001 until 2007, the trend was towards convergence (Camarota 9, May 2009). It is strange that Camarota and Jensionsius do not include employers as

a factor for an increasing unemployment rate, but rather just exclusively examine numbers. I found the article to be very rich in raw data, but not too far reaching in terms of ideas.

II. Opinion Surveys

Over the years, the United States government has emphasized the importance of enforcement along its border in controlling illegal immigration. However, between 1993 and 2008, the number of Border Agents and undocumented people in the country doubled (Parks 2, 2009). It would seem that the inverse should occur. The authors argue that detention rates reflect the concentration of agents geographically rather than their actual success. From surveys taken in Oaxaca, Mexico, the authors try to reconfirm findings that say government enforcement does not deter illegal immigrants from crossing the border (Parks 4, 2009). Economic and social factors are more of a reason for illegal immigration (Parks 5, 2009). In recent years, border enforcement initiatives have shifted from physical obstacles to high tech measures (Parks 5, 2009). Many scholars agree that apprehension numbers are a poor measure of deterrence efforts (Parks 9, 2009). However, there are few other measures. This cannot go unnoticed in my research and is significant. Other scholars argue that increased enforcement may actually increase the amount of migration due to future fears of enforcement. Using multivariate regression analysis, the authors were able to reestablish the lack of connection between migration behavior and enforcement (Parks 14, 2009). Undocumented immigrants are most worried about the actual, physical trip across the border, rather than the government repercussions. The authors suggest creating policies that are responsive to market forces and interior enforcement such as in the workforce (Parks 28, 2009).

Much like the previous authors, Cornelius et al debunk the idea that enforcement is influential in trends in immigration. The authors surveyed 603 returned migrants and first time migrants on their opinions about government enforcement (Cornelius 139, 2007). If enforcement efforts do not work then state sovereignty is undermined. States impose immigration controls in order to control the labor supply and its quality (Cornelius 141, 2007). “Prevention through deterrence” was the doctrine used to justify increased border enforcement (Cornelius 142, 2007). If this were to succeed, one would assume migration would decrease if perceptions of risk increased, negative past experiences increased, and their information about enhanced border enforcement increased (Cornelius 143, 2007). Using a questionnaire with 143 items, the authors were able to determine a few things. Perceived difficulty in evading border enforcement does not deter possible migration (Cornelius 146, 2007). Statistically, those who know more about border enforcement are more likely to cross. Overall, economic and social incentives override the difficulties of border control (Cornelius 149, 2007).

In general, there is consensus among researchers that illegal immigration numbers are decreasing. The illegal population has been affected by the recession. Government efforts have been increased. Most say negative economic factors are the reason for deterrence. However, they cannot verifiably discount government enforcement either. The gap in the literature allows me to utilize the information provided and to make my own comparison.

HYPOTHESIS

While formulating my question and reviewing the literature, I compiled a hypothesis. In terms of illegal immigration trends, which factor proves to be a better deterrent? Without taking into account numbers and statistics, I thought about the human condition. People need money to survive. Illegal immigrants either come to the United States for economic opportunities or political freedom. They compare the conditions in their home country to those in the United States. More often than not, conditions are far better in America. If the process of immigration and settling is not beyond their means, the logical step would be immigration to the United States. When an illegal immigrant is caught, they are no worse off when they are deported to their home country. Usually, the immigrant returns to a status quo environment with the minimal sunken cost of travel. The person may as well try. However, a person would not risk the money or possible danger of immigration (transport, etc.) if the economy is unhealthy. If there is little chance of opportunity or economic return in the United States, the journey is not worth the trouble. Thus, I argue that economic conditions dominate any calculations over whether to migrate or not. A consequence of this is that government enforcement measures are unlikely to have much effect. This leads me to the following hypothesis. Economic indicators in the United States will prove to be a better deterrent for illegal immigration than government measures. In the next section, I introduce the data I will use to assess whether my hypothesis is empirically supported.

DATA, MEASUREMENT, AND COLLECTION METHOD

As a quantitative thesis project, data analysis is a large aspect of the paper. Quantitative data will be used to assess my hypothesis. The first aspect of my project will be data collection. The sources utilized will mostly be from government figures and immigration think-tanks. A mean, median, and mode are first provided for each variable to make comparison easy. After the data is compiled, a statistical regression using the data will be run using the STATA program. This will provide estimates that explain which independent variable is the better deterrent against illegal immigration, my dependent variable of interest. As mentioned, a comparison of government and economic factors has not been researched in a statistical fashion. Once analyzed, the results will allow me to arrive at a conclusion about the influence of these factors.

I. Independent Variables-Government and Economy

In terms of measures, there are two key factors: economic factors and government enforcement. Economic factors are measured by annual percent growth GDP and unemployment for foreign born persons. The definition of GDP is as follows:

The gross domestic product is the sum of the gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources. (Data Source: The World Bank).

Percent growth in GDP is measured quarterly and yearly. For the purpose of my research project, I will be collecting annual growth rates. This is due to the nature of my other data which is also measured per annum. The period from which the data is taken is 1994 to 2008. These are not arbitrary years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics begins its data on foreign-born unemployment in

1994. I ended the collection at 2008 because information is still being collected for the 2009 period. It would be too soon to assume accurate data for all my variables.

As mentioned, the second economic indicator is the unemployment rate. Specifically, the rate of foreign born persons sixteen and over is examined. I collected my numbers from the Migration Policy Institute and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. To specify further:

The foreign born are persons who reside in the United States but who were born outside the country or one of its outlying areas to parents who were not U.S. citizens. The foreign born include legally-admitted immigrants, refugees, temporary residents such as students and temporary workers, and undocumented immigrants. The survey data, however, do not separately identify the numbers of persons in these categories (BLS 2008).

Most know unemployment rates as numbers the government and media pump out quarterly as a measure of the health of the economy. The rate is defined as “Persons are classified as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. Persons who were not working and were waiting to be recalled to a job from which they had been temporarily laid off are also included as unemployed” (BLS). For the purpose of my research I steered away from those numbers. Potential immigrants may look at the general unemployment rate as applicable to them. It is a general measure as to the likeliness of obtaining a job when immigrating. However, immigrants do not have the same employment opportunities as native born persons. They must obtain work visas and perform numerous other tasks before being able to legally work in the United States. Given the choice of hiring a U.S. citizen, on the spot, or waiting for an immigrant to obtain the right papers, an employer would probably choose the former. Illegal immigrants encounter more obstacles

finding work. Thus, using the measure of foreign-born unemployment makes the data more appropriate given the dependent variable.

Government enforcement is measured by the number of Border Patrol agents in employment each year and apprehensions of illegal immigrants by Border Patrol and other government-related agencies per year. Before the Department of Homeland Security was created, Immigration and Naturalization Services was in control of Border Patrol and its agents. Now, immigration control is covered by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). “The strategy of the Border Patrol today, according to their own documents, is to stop terrorists attempting to cross between POEs [points of entry], to stop illegal entries through improved enforcement at the border, and to detect anyone smuggling drugs, humans and other contraband” (Payan 57, 2006). Border Patrol is to inspect and control the border for drugs, immigrants, weapons, other contraband, and terrorists. Such actions are meant to decrease the probability of successful illegal entry. The amount of Border Patrol agents employed each year is obtained through the Government Accounting Office. Agents are the policing force behind immigration and are responsible for the second government variable, apprehension numbers.

These apprehension numbers include deportation and detention of illegal immigrants at government facilities. In reality, it is the only accurate and documented measure of illegal immigrants found in the country. The numbers can not add to my dependent variable. Immigrants apprehended by CBP are new aliens crossing the border and illegal immigrants residing in the country. The illegal residents have spent an indeterminate amount of time in the United States, thus it is null for inflow per annum. Also, they do not account for the entire illegal

population who have not been apprehended and documented by the government. The data was collected from the Department of Homeland Security's 2008 Yearbook on Immigration Statistics.

II. Dependent Variable- Illegal Immigrants

The dependent variable is the number of illegal immigrants arriving per year. Many researchers call this inflow. Obtaining data for this number was extremely difficult. Illegal immigrants tend to be undocumented immigrants as well. They do not register themselves at ports of entry and for all extensive purposes, they do not exist on the United States Census. A good portion of the data is taken from the Current Population Survey. This is used by the federal government and researchers. Like the Census, it measures demographics. Unlike the Census, addresses and other personal information are not necessary. This encourages illegal immigrants to participate because the fear of government repercussion is low. Usually, people are called or surveyed and asked various questions like citizenship status, race, and education.

Most articles and publications tend to present generalized trends of illegal immigration. More often than not, the most common data trend is the total illegal immigrant population. Of course, population numbers increase over the years, it is simple addition. When researchers utilize inflow, more often than not, it is not measured by year, but by groups of years. Again, more trends appear in the research. The Pew Hispanic Center is an extremely well-researched think tank focused on immigration. Jeffrey Passel is their key demographer and I used his data to compile my list of annual inflow until 2004. After 2005, only trends and generalizations were

able to found. Numbers seemed to vary year by year, but trends were the same. I do not think it will affect my results due to the constant source.

RESULTS

I. Tables and Data

Table 1, Data Collection

Year	¹Number	²Apprehensions	³GDP%	⁴BP	⁵Unemployment
1994	536,000	1094719	4.1	4226	9.1
1995	536,000	1394554	2.5	4881	7.8
1996	539,000	1649986	3.7	5878	7.6
1997	539,000	1536520	4.5	6880	6.9
1998	705,000	1679439	4.4	7982	5.8
1999	705,000	1714035	4.8	8351	5.4
2000	729,000	1814729	4.1	9073	4.9
2001	740,000	1387486	1.1	9736	5.2
2002	604,000	1062279	1.8	9951	6.9
2003	576,000	1046422	2.5	10637	6.6
2004	562,000	1264232	3.6	10817	5.4
2005	~500,000	1291142	3.1	11264	4.6
2006	~500,000	1206457	2.7	12349	4.0
2007	~275,000	960756	2.1	14923	4.3
2008	~275,000	791568	0.4	17499	5.8
MEAN	554733.3	1326288	3.027	9629.8	6.02
MEDIAN	539000	1291142	3.1	9736	5.8
MODE	536000	#N/A	4.1	#N/A	6.9

Source: ¹Pew Hispanic Center and Center for Immigration Studies; ²2008 Yearbook on Immigration Statistics; ³U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis; ⁴GAO Analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection data; ⁵CPS and Bureau of Labor Statistics

After much time spent researching, I was able to obtain the numbers needed to run my statistical model. Table 1 displays all the data in a complete model. Column one is the number of illegal immigrants that arrive in the United States per year. Again, the numbers are estimates calculated by the Pew Research Center based on their analysis of the Current Population Survey.

Between 1994 and 1997, the number remains pretty stable. If the anomaly of 9.1% unemployment is taken out for 1994, unemployment rates remain stable as well. After 1997, the numbers begin to steadily rise. In terms of economy, the dot com boom was in full swing at this time.

After September 11th and the brief recession that followed, illegal immigrant inflow began to decrease again. Though it is not displayed here, with the possibility of legislation in the summer of 2007, illegal immigration had a very brief surge. However, as displayed with the numbers, increased vigilance due to the terrorist attacks and a declining economy have led to a general trend of decreased arrivals per year.

For apprehensions, the results can be interpreted as either surprising or expected. In terms of trends, the numbers are a tad scattered. There are brief periods of increased numbers located such as 1994 to 1996. Then the numbers bounce back from decreasing to increasing. It seems INS, ICE, and the Border Patrol would get on a roll with apprehensions and then hit a snag. Some would argue that the decreased number means the illegal population is decreasing so the amount of apprehensions is decreasing. Others argue the decrease in apprehensions implies decreased efficiency of the Border Patrol. Either way it is argued, the trend seems to follow a method of decreasing numbers. For the years after September 11th, I found it extremely interesting that numbers actually began to decrease. As it will mentioned later, Border Patrol numbers increased astronomically after the terroristic attacks. Almost a quarter of the agents apprehended more illegal aliens in 1994 than in 2008.

The percent change in GDP measures the growth of the overall economy. During the 1990s, the United States experienced steady growth and prosperity. Numbers hovered around an average of about 4%. The turnaround occurs in 2001, with a decrease in percent in growth. After the brief recession, the percent change increases, but never to the levels of the 1990s. Starting in 2008, the beginnings of the recession can be observed with hardly any percent change in GDP at all.

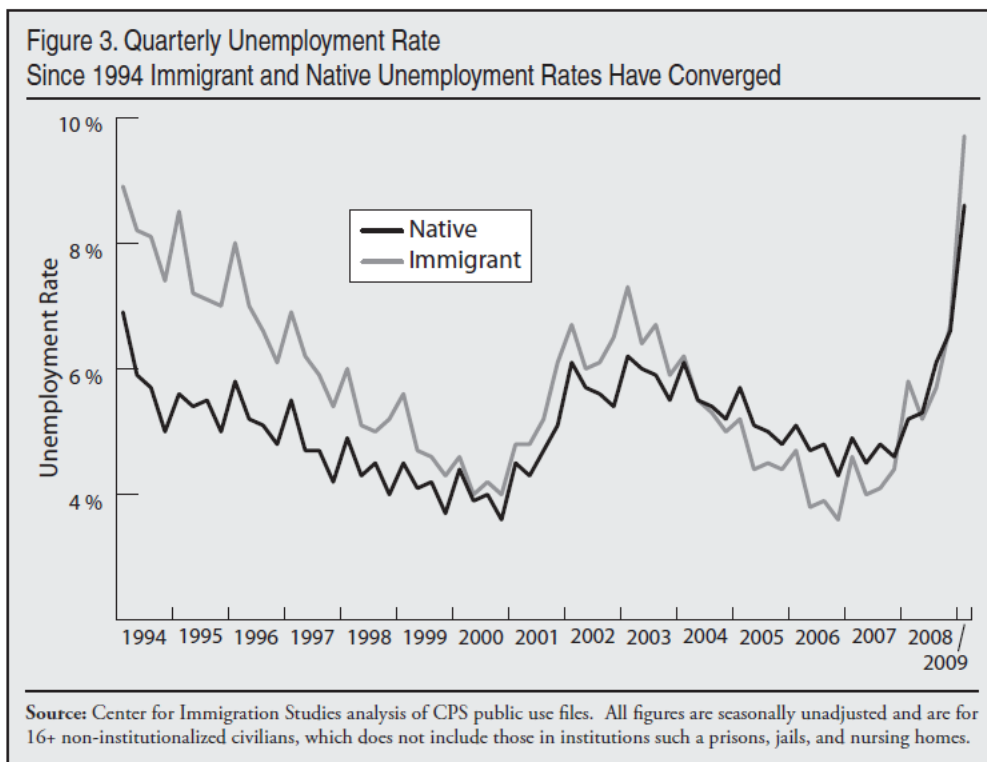
Border Patrol agents were already mentioned in discussion of apprehension. It can be observed that each year experiences an increase in the number of agents employed. As an enforcement measure, the government hires more and more agents each year. It would be logical to think that agents and apprehensions would be positively related while inflow would be negatively related. However, apprehensions did not follow that trend and inflow does not have a clear cut pattern. The numbers present a case of properly allocated funds in deterring illegal immigration. Could the government clean up its act or is it wasting its time?

The numbers for unemployment are also not as clean as Border Patrol. Until recently, the rates for natives and foreign born persons were significantly close. However, in the last year or so, foreign-born persons have been hit hard by the economy. The data for 2009 is available but not utilized in this model. Thankfully, due to the mix of increases and decreases, the regression model brings about a more coherent conclusion about the two independent variables.

For the sake of comparison, I decided to include a line graph from Camarota and Jensionsius' article on unemployment. Visually, the unemployment rates for foreign-born persons can be placed. Also, the similarities and differences between native-born and foreign-born

persons can be noted. Numbers were different in the early 1990s. The rate began to converge around 2000 to 2001. From 2005 to 2007, the unemployment rate for foreign-born persons was actually lower than natives. I still believe it was a wise decision to use the foreign-born unemployment rate because despite the similarities, there are still differences to be documented and analyzed.

Figure 1. Unemployment-CIS



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II. Statistical Analysis

In order to estimate the influence of the key factors, a computer program was utilized to run linear regression. The name of the program is STATA. Fifteen observations were used. The F-

statistic assesses whether all the model coefficients are zero. The equation for a F-ratio as follows (Schroeder 52):

$$(R^2/[1-R^2]) * (N-k-1/k) = F$$

N is the number of observations in the model, and k is the number of independent variables. If the F-ratio is greater than the critical F-statistic, the null hypothesis of that the regression coefficients taken in combination are equal to zero can be rejected. In this model it is significantly greater than zero. Thus, we can conclude that the model is useful to explain variance in the dependent variable. Examination of the p-value demonstrates this. R-squared assesses how well the model explains variance in the dependent variable. The following output is an adjustment of R-Squared that is adjusted for the number of independent variables in the model. Finally, root mean-squared error (MSE) measures the standard deviation of the error term.

Table 2. Overall Model Fit

Number of obstacles=15
F(4, 10)= 3.34
Prob> F= 0.0556
R-squared= 0.5718
Adj R-squared= 0.4005
Root MSE= 1.1e+5

In Table 3, the main results are displayed. The coefficient for each variable is shown in the second column. In the statistical model, it is assumed the dependent variable is a function of the independent variables. Below the table is the regression equation using the coefficients. Thus, for

every unit increase with GDP, the number of illegal immigrants arriving decreased 16,039.6. With every additional Border Patrol agent, the number of immigrants decreased by 55.6. When the unemployment rate increased by one unit, illegal immigrants decreased by 99,304.2. Finally, with every addition of a year, immigrants decreased by 2,779.5. The standard errors measure how sensitive the estimates of the parameter of the model are to changes in observations. The larger the standard error is, the more sensitive the estimate is (Schroeder 43, 1986). The t-statistic measures whether the coefficient differs significantly from zero. Most important is the $P > |t|$ value. It clearly shows the significance of the independent variable in relation to the dependent variable. With a $P > |t|$ value less than 0.05 (the alpha value), the unemployment rate is the only significant factor of the model (STATA UCLA). Strangely enough, growth in GDP really has no effect on the inflow of illegal immigrants. Apprehension numbers were not included because they correlate with the dependent variable almost perfectly. Thus, apprehensions and inflow are basically the same measure.

The significance of the unemployment rate is further verified by the 95% confidence interval. With two negative values within the interval, both slopes are significant in the regression model. Achen states, "There is less than a 5% chance that the null hypothesis of no effect could have generated either coefficient" (42, 1982). The alternate hypothesis is used for significance. All the other variables include zero in their intervals and are thus insignificant. Thus, my hypothesis finds support. Even when I account for increased government enforcement measures, the foreign-born unemployment rate is the only significant determinant of illegal immigration.

Table 3. Regression Results Inflow Number per Year

Variable	coef.	std. error	t	p> t	95% conf. interval	
$\Delta\%GDP$	-16039.6	32463.1	-0.49	0.632	-88371.8	56292.6
BPagents	-55.6	53.6	-1.04	0.324	-175.1	63.8
UErate	-93304.2	37842.6	-2.47	0.033	-177622.8	-8985.6
year	-2779.47	36452.1	-0.08	0.941	-83999.9	78441
constant	7251307	7.25E+07	0.1	0.922	-1.54E+08	1.69E+08

Regression equation: Inflow= 7251307 -16039.6GDP-55.6BP-93304.2UR+ Error

CONCLUSION

I. Summary

This study seems to suggest that economic indicators, specifically unemployment rates, have a more significant effect on illegal immigration rates than current government measures. The limited time period of fifteen years and amount of variables do not provide for a conclusive determination of the exact relationship between illegal immigration and different indicators. From the given data, it is clear that the unemployment rate of foreign-born persons does influence the propensity of people to immigrate illegally into the United States. The percent change in GDP, or growth, surprisingly is not significant in this study. Research shows that trends in illegal immigration follow economic conditions. Statistically, unemployment rates seem to be the smoking gun for the American economy. The two government measures of Border Patrol agents and apprehension rates proved to be not significant against deterring illegal immigration. Apprehension numbers were in fact too closely correlated to be included in the statistical model. The overall trends and collection of the numbers still add valuable insight into the project. This insignificance statistically does not imply the methods do not work. However, the unemployment rate is a better indicator of illegal immigration trends.

There could be many reasons for deterrence by unemployment rate. Individuals could look at their home country's economic condition and those of the United States and assess the risks and benefits. If the home country is in bad shape economically, more often than not, the benefits outweigh the risks. Legal immigration into the United States is not an easy task. Green cards, visas, and citizenship are things a lot of immigrants find difficult to obtain. It is a risk to

immigrate illegally into the United States. An individual must consider the dangers of transport, settling, and obtaining a job. If unemployment rates for foreign-born persons are increasing, the risks begin to outweigh the benefits. They must also consider the added factor of employer liability. Some employers gamble with the possibility of repercussions of hiring illegal immigrants for the tradeoff of cheap labor. A good portion of employers do not take this gamble. If apprehended by the government, illegal immigrants usually return to their home country to a status quo. They must only absorb the sunken costs of transport and possibly settling. The surveys from the literature review echoes the same reasoning. There is no fear of the government in the sense of detention or deportation. The fear is the lack or loss of income. Thus, employment conditions need to justify the cost of immigration. It is a logical decision on the part of the illegal immigrant and is further justified by the statistical evidence.

II. Recommendations

Without causing too much of a stir, some recommendations could be made for the case of illegal immigration. As mentioned, government measures are not something to be ignored. Without policing, like in all social arenas, immigration would go beyond the span of control. However, the government could focus more research on the effects of the economy on the immigrant population (legal and illegal). As a country, the United States is already waging war in the Middle East and terrorism. Resources are tight and the unhealthy economy does not help.

The Obama Administration is attempting to move forward on immigration reform. Senators Chuck Schumer and Lindsey Graham are putting together an immigration bill that would alter the political and social climate. The bill calls for a biometric national identity card and a pathway

to citizenship for the estimated illegal immigrants in the United States (Meckler, 2010). The Wall Street Journal article explains the controversy behind the national identity card. Opponents say it is an invasion of privacy and pushes the Big Brother aspect too far. The mandatory card would be given to all U.S. citizens and legal immigrants as a method to obtain work. Politically, this solves the problem of employers hiring illegal workers. Employment seems to be the driving force for many illegal immigrants. As a political reform, it changes the economic atmosphere for illegal immigrants and uses it a deterrent. It is a government measure as well as an economic one.

Illegal immigrants, however, are not victims of the Schumer and Graham bill. The bill is seeking to give citizenship to the illegal immigrants currently residing in the United States (Meckler, 2010). They would have to register and wait in line, as well as pay taxes and a fine. For those who have not arrived in the United States, the bill would ease restrictions on the guest worker program so immigrants could live in the country legally. In terms of using brain over brawn, it seems like the ideal legislation reform. Still, Congress and the President just recently passed a very controversial healthcare bill. “Obamacare” could prove to be the straw that breaks the camel’s back for immigration reform. President Obama has gone on record and said he is committed to immigration reform, but will not pass the bill unless there is GOP support (Preston, 2010). With the reconciliation vote to pass the healthcare bill in March 2010, the Congress and President Obama completely sidestepped the Republican minority. Republican leaders had said before the healthcare overhaul that they would not go forth with immigration reform this year if the healthcare bill was passed in this manner (Preston, 2010). It seems the administration was on a good path towards reform, rather than enforcement. Hopefully, it will not give up the fight.

III. Future Research

In order to examine the further effect of economic and government factors on illegal immigration trends, future research should focus more variables and a more broad time-based analysis. Another possibility for research would be cross-country analysis. I restrained myself to illegal immigration in the United States, but it is not only an American phenomenon. Many regions, like the European Union, experience illegal immigration and it would be interesting to see the comparison to American illegal immigration. Due to time constraints and lack of access to certain government documents, my research lacks variation in variables of deterrence. This also coincides with my fifteen year time period. If researchers could have access to a Library of Congress, where raw Census and Current Population Survey data can be collected, their spectrum of results would be more far-reaching than mine. If a researcher could compile a historical dataset on the number of illegal immigrants arriving per year, it would be a great benefit to the field. No one seems to agree on a method of gathering demographics on illegal immigrants and documenting it. One or two set of data to reference and use could unify the field. Researchers could do a study on the effects of the legal immigration process as a deterrent. Working or becoming a citizen in the United States is a difficult task. Which is a heftier blow to illegal immigration, unemployment or immigration reform? The current administration seems to want to explore this idea. Lastly, I found the two surveys by Cornelius and Parks et al on Mexican migrants extremely interesting and helpful. However, those surveys and most surveys I encountered were regional. If research could be done on the state or country level in relation to opinion, I believe it would add a more general outlook to the demographics of deterrence.

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