

Between Trust and Fear: Latino Immigrants' Perceptions and Experiences with Police and Justice

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Introduction/ Background

- Latino immigrants' opinions of the police vary within the Latino community due to multiple factors beyond immigration status.
- These opinions are influenced by multiple factors, including prior experiences with crime and policing in immigrants' home countries, interactions with U.S. law enforcement, and social networks (Menjívar & Bejarano, 2004). This is referred to as the "bifocal lens."
- Roles et al. (2016) suggest that Hispanics generally hold less favorable views of the police than their White counterparts, yet those are still more favorable views than Black Americans. On the other hand, Davis and Hendricks (2007) found that immigrants hold more positive views of police effectiveness and perceived misconduct. They also reported that immigrants have greater satisfaction with both voluntary and involuntary encounters than native-born Americans, yet they are far less likely to seek police assistance.
- Prior research suggests there is a "racial continuum," or "racial hierarchy," in which Hispanic attitudes toward the police fall between those of other racial and ethnic groups (Roles et al., 2016).

Research Questions

- What are Latino immigrants' opinions and experiences of law enforcement in the United States?

Data

- Online convenience sample of Latinas and Latinos
- Connect by CloudResearch
- Sample size for DV1 = 29
- Sample size for DV2 = 27

Methods

Measures

- **Dependent variable 1:** What is your opinion of the police?
- **Dependent variable 2:** Please share with us your last experience with the police.

Analytical strategy

- Thematic analysis of the survey responses was conducted using the systematic method of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory with Taguette, a free and open-source qualitative research tool that allows users to import textual data, highlight and annotate, create a hierarchy of tags, and export results. Codes were created to provide insight into the phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Then, they were condensed into broader themes. Once open coding was complete, the next step was to make constant comparisons (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to determine whether relationships existed between categories or codes applied to the different responses (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Results

Opinions of Police

- **T1: Good & Bad Apples**
 - "I think it is not fair to put a blanket statement on all police. They are some good ones and they are some bad ones and sometimes it is circumstantial also. At the end of the day they are doing their job."
- **T2: Doing Their Job**
 - "They do their job , they follow orders. The problem are the commands sometimes they have to follow."

Results

T3: Police Culture & Corruption

- "...there are lots of bad cops out there. Since they all wear the same uniform, how can you tell the difference between a police officer and a bad cop? It is therefore safer to limit or eliminate contact."

Last Experience with Police

T4: Attitude of The Police

- "I was arrested for shoplifting and the police officer was extremely kind and respectful towards me."

T5: Type of Encounter

- "...I was pulled over by a cop about 10 years ago for inadvertently cutting off a bike rider while I was 8 month's pregnant, the cop was kind enough to let me go with a warning since I was in front of my house and desperately needing to use the restroom."

Discussion/Conclusion

Opinions of Police

- Latino immigrant views of the police are mixed. There is an understanding of the job/position, but they believe there is a problem with law enforcement generally.

Last Experience with Police

- Latino immigrants' prior experience with the police depended on how they were treated. The type of encounter mattered as how police approached individuals influenced their opinion of the experience.

Selected References

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