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# Friends or Foes: The Impact of Political Ideology and Immigrant Friends on Anti-immigrant Sentiment

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*In recent years, an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment has been witnessed in the United States, particularly from politically conservative groups. According to intergroup contact theory, increased contact between in-group and out-group members, especially cross-group friendships, has been found to reduce intergroup prejudice. This study analyzed nationally representative U.S.-based data (n = 1,000) from the Transatlantic Trends Survey, 2013 to examine if having immigrant friends interacted with political ideology, such that having immigrant friends weakened the association between conservative ideology and anti-immigrant sentiment. Findings revealed that immigrant friends and political ideology each had a significant but opposite main effect on anti-immigrant sentiment, but that having immigrant friends did not moderate or buffer the effects of political ideology on anti-immigrant sentiment. Thus, aligning with a conservative political ideology is associated with anti-immigrant sentiment irrespective of having immigrant friends. Strategies to increase intergroup contact and promote cross-group friendships are included, and directions for future research are offered.*

*Key words: anti-immigrant sentiment, immigration, political ideology, contact theory*

Recognized as a nation of immigrants (Ditlmann, Purdie-Vaughns, & Eibach, 2011), the United States hosts a larger foreign-born population than any other nation (United Nations, 2011). Approximately one in eight people (43 million) in the country are immigrants (Motel & Patten, 2013). Despite being

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a nation built by immigrants, public attitudes toward most foreign-born groups (particularly those that are non-white) have fluctuated between lukewarm and negative throughout most of U.S. history (Byrne & Dixon, 2013; Kang, 2012). In recent decades, a growing wave of anti-immigrant sentiment has been seen in the U.S. (Becerra, 2012; Byrne & Dixon, 2013). Prolific stereotypes that cast immigrants in a destructive light (Johnson, 2004), negative media portrayals (Fryberg et al., 2011), unfavorable public opinion polls (Segovia & DeFever, 2010), and restrictive policies (Byrne & Dixon, 2013) are evidence of the growing hostility toward immigrants.

Paralleling this reality is an increase in perceived discrimination and hardship for many immigrants (Araujo & Borrell, 2006; Pulido, 2007). A recent poll by the Pew Research Center surveyed the largest foreign-born group in the U.S., finding that 70% of Latino immigrants feel that discrimination is a major problem preventing their success in the U.S. (Lopez, Morin, & Taylor, 2010). Perceived discrimination has a multitude of detrimental effects on immigrants' physical and mental well-being. It is linked with depression and anxiety (Araujo & Borrell, 2006; Lassetter & Callister, 2009; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Williams & Mohammed, 2009), as well as reduced social skills, academic competence, and self-esteem among children (Coll & Magnusson, 1997; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012).

The salience of anti-immigrant sentiment and its deleterious impact on immigrants warrants research aimed at better understanding strategies to prevent and mitigate negative sentiment toward immigrants in the U.S. Intergroup contact theory (ICT) is a prominent theoretical framework shedding light on factors that improve intergroup relations (Allport, 1954). The theory contends that greater interaction between members of an in-group (e.g., natives) and out-group (e.g., immigrants) attenuates prejudice, and that cross-group friendships are particularly influential (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). Drawing upon this contention, the present study examines the relationship between political ideology, having immigrant friends, and anti-immigrant sentiment among a nationally representative sample of Americans. Specifically, this study explores if having immigrant friends moderates the established link between political ideology and anti-immigrant

sentiment.

## Background

### *Anti-Immigrant Context*

A growing tide of decisively anti-immigrant sentiment has been witnessed in the U.S. in recent years (Becerra, 2012; Byrne & Dixon, 2013). This sentiment is driven by and witnessed in common threats perceived by natives to emanate from immigrants (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005). Being in competition with immigrants over resources is a persistent belief held by Americans, particularly in times of economic hardship (Esses, Brochu, & Dickson, 2012). Immigrants are often viewed as draining the welfare system and taking jobs from natives (Esses et al., 2012; Johnson, 2004). They are also portrayed as failing to assimilate to the American way of doing things and threatening America's national identity (Schildkraut, 2005). Furthermore, immigrants are sometimes depicted as criminals, drug traffickers, and terrorists who compromise nationals' safety and security (Johnson, 2004). These threatening perceptions of immigrants both generate and reflect the growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Esses, Hodson, & Dovidio, 2003; Schildkraut, 2005).

Reflective of anti-immigrant sentiment and the threats natives perceive immigrants pose, a number of hostile policies have been passed in recent years. In 1994, California passed Proposition 187 with the intent of restricting undocumented immigrants' access to public benefits, such as welfare services and education (Esses et al., 2012; Hovey, Rojas, Kain, & Magana, 2000). The law also mandated public employees, such as police officers, school teachers, and health care professionals, to report those they suspected to be in the country without authorization to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Diaz, Saenz, & Kwan, 2011; Hovey et al., 2000; Lee, Ottati, & Hussain, 2001).

In 2010, Arizona passed the infamous Senate Bill 1070 which, among other things, required undocumented immigrants to carry alien registration documents that noted their lack of legal status, as well as gave state law officers the authority to conduct warrantless arrests of anyone they

suspected to be undocumented (Morse, 2011). Furthermore, under the law, anyone who aided and abetted an undocumented immigrant could be fined and charged with a misdemeanor. Within months of this bill being passed, over 20 states introduced similar legislation, with Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah going on to pass such bills (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.; Morse, 2011). California's Proposition 227 and Arizona's Proposition 203 also highlighted the class of discriminatory legislation against immigrants. Both laws restricted bilingual education and enforced English-only and English immersion programs for immigrant children (Schildkraut, 2005; Stritikus & Garcia, 2005).

### *Conservatism and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment*

Formerly, anti-immigrant attitudes, rhetoric, and policies came from radical far-right ideologies; however, today, an anti-immigrant agenda is visible in mainstream politics (Byrne & Dixon, 2013). Anti-immigrant propaganda is often initiated and perpetuated by politically conservative groups (Byrne & Dixon, 2013) who tend toward an exclusionist stance regarding immigration (Massey & Pren, 2012). Anti-immigrant rhetoric has been repeatedly expressed in Republican candidates' political platforms and campaigns (Burns & Gimpel, 2000). A number of studies have supported the link between conservatism and anti-immigrant sentiment empirically; compared to liberals, those who have more conservative political ideologies are more likely to harbor disfavor for immigrants (Ha, 2008; Massey & Pren, 2012; Schildkraut, 2005).

### *Intergroup Contact Theory*

According to intergroup contact theory (ICT), an inverse relationship exists between intergroup contact and prejudice (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). As exchange and interaction between in- and out-group members increases, prejudice decreases (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). First conceptualized by Allport (1954), ICT emerged during the civil rights era at a time when the U.S. was desegregating (Deutsch & Collins, 1951; Wilner, Walkley, & Cook, 1955; Works, 1961). Allport (1954) originally stipulated that four conditions must be in place for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice, including: (a)

equal status between groups within the setting being studied; (b) shared goals; (c) intergroup cooperation; and (d) supportive authorities, customs, or laws. However, these conditions are no longer understood to be critical components of positive outcomes; instead, they are now seen as facilitators but not necessary conditions, of prejudice reduction (Pettigrew et al., 2011).

A substantial body of national and international empirical support for ICT exists. According to a meta-analysis conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006), over 500 studies from nearly 40 countries have tested the utility and application of the theory across a multitude of settings and populations. The inverse relationship between contact and prejudice has held across the vast majority of studies, which have used both affective (e.g., liking) and cognitive (e.g., stereotypes) indicators of prejudice (Pettigrew et al., 2011). While both yield negative associations with contact, affective indicators of prejudice tend to reduce more quickly (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The positive impact of intergroup contact also extends to other outcomes beyond prejudice reduction, such as a reduction in individual and collective threat perception, anxiety, and in-group identification, as well as increases in perspective taking, trust, and forgiveness (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Several of these factors have been identified as salient mediators of the contact-prejudice relationship, namely increased knowledge, reduced anxiety, and increased empathy, with the latter two affective factors being the strongest mediators (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

The positive benefits of contact have been found to extend beyond the specific out-group members implicated in the interaction and to generalize to the entire out-group (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). There is also evidence to suggest that contact has a secondary transfer effect; interaction with members of one out-group is associated with less prejudice not just for that out-group, but for other groups as well (Ha, 2008; Pettigrew, 2009). Moreover, it is not just first-hand intergroup contact that promotes a reduction in prejudice; vicarious contact (e.g., through media) and second-hand contact (e.g., an out-group friend of a friend) also have prejudice reducing effects, although perhaps weaker (Pettigrew, Wagner, Christ, &

Stellmacher, 2007; Turner, Hewstone, Voci, Paolini, & Christ, 2007; Wright, Aron, & Brody, 2008).

### *Immigrant Friends and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment*

The quality of intergroup contact serves as a strong moderator of the relationship between contact and prejudice (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Specifically, the closeness of relationships with out-group members is an important factor; cross-group friendships have a more impactful and longer-lasting prejudice-reducing effect than less intimate contact, such as that with a neighbor or coworker (Turner et al., 2007; Pettigrew, 1998). This may be the product of greater self-disclosure that occurs in the context of friendship, facilitating a sharper decline in prejudice (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Further, cross-group friendships may be more likely to embody the optimal conditions specified by Allport that yield a reduction in prejudice (i.e., shared goals, cooperation, and equal status) (Pettigrew et al., 2011).

A number of studies have examined the impact of contact and friendships with immigrants on prejudice, finding more contact to relate to greater favorability toward the population (Ceballos & Yakushko, 2014; González, Sirlopú, & Kessler, 2010; Pettigrew, 1997; Valentova & Berzosa, 2011). However, few studies have been conducted in the U.S. (Ceballos & Yakushko, 2014). To the authors' knowledge, no studies have examined the relationship between contact with immigrants and prejudice among a nationally representative sample of Americans.

### *Current Study*

Based on prior research that links anti-immigrant sentiment to political ideology and the empirically-validated theoretical propositions of ICT, the present study examines the impact of Americans' location on the liberal-conservative dimension and having immigrant friends on negative attitudes toward immigrants. We hypothesize that having a more conservative political ideology will be associated with greater anti-immigrant sentiment. Conversely, we expect that having immigrant friends will be associated with less anti-immigrant sentiment. Finally, we hypothesize that having immigrant friends will

moderate the relationship between political ideology and anti-immigrant sentiment, such that having immigrant friends will attenuate the direct correlation between conservative ideology and anti-immigrant sentiment.

## Method

### *Procedure*

This study analyzed nationally representative data from the Transatlantic Trends Survey, 2013 (Stelzenmueller, Eichenberg, Kennedy, & Isernia, 2013). Cross-sectional data were collected from the U.S., Turkey, and 11 European Union countries on public opinions related to a number of global concerns, including immigration ( $N = 13,049$ ). Multi-stage random (probability) sampling was used. Random digit dialing was employed to call landline and mobile phone numbers to recruit participants over the age of 18 years. The household member was selected at random using the closest birthday rule. In most countries, including the U.S., interviews were conducted in June of 2013 using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (Stelzenmueller et al., 2013). Due to the high rate of immigration to the U.S. and the country's recent spike in anti-immigrant sentiment and policies, only data from the U.S. were analyzed for the present study ( $n = 1,000$ ).

### *Sample*

Table 1 illustrates unweighted demographics related to the U.S. sample. Just over three quarters of U.S. respondents identified as White, with the remainder identifying as African American (13.3%), Hispanic (8.8%), Asian/Asian American (2.5%), and other (7.4%). A slight majority of respondents were female (52.2%), and the mean age was 55.4 years. Just over two-thirds of participants reported having a high school diploma (37.9%) or a college degree (36%). The vast majority (84.4%) of participants identified as religiously affiliated.

### *Measures*

The outcome measure for this study was an anti-immigrant sentiment scale. Table 2 displays the five items eliciting participants' attitudes toward immigrants that comprise the



scale. Response options for each item were dichotomized to represent favorable or unfavorable sentiment toward immigrants. Scores were summed (range = 0 to 5), with a higher score indicating more anti-immigrant sentiment. According to a factor analysis, the items explained 53.36% of the variance and loaded as one factor. Factor loadings for each item ranged from .48 to .64. The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Table 1. Unweighted Participant Demographics (n = 1,000)

	f	%	M	SD
Race / ethnicity				
White	748	76.8		
African American	130	13.3		
Hispanic	88	8.8		
Asian	24	2.5		
Other	72	7.4		
Female	522	52.2		
Age			55.4	18.1
Immigrant	74	7.4		
Immigrant parent(s)	78	7.9		
Level of education				
Elementary or less	11	1.2		
Some high school	73	7.7		
High school graduate	358	37.9		
College graduate	340	36		
Post-graduate degree	163	17.2		
Religiously affiliated	816	84.4		
Political ideology				
Extremely liberal	36	4		
Liberal	46	5.1		
Slightly liberal	155	17.1		
Moderate	266	29.3		
Slightly conservative	212	23.4		
Conservative	90	9.9		
Extremely conservative	102	11.2		
Immigrant friends	635	64.9		
Anti-immigrant sentiment (range: 0-5)			2.3	1.7

Note: Race/ethnicity percentages do not add up to 100, as Hispanic ethnicity was a separate item distinct from race.

Table 2. Anti-Immigrant Sentiment Scale Items

Item	Response Options	Alpha
"Generally speaking, how do you feel about the number of people living in the U.S. who were not born in the U.S.? Are there too many, a lot but not too many, or not many?"	0 = Not many/ A lot but not too many 1 = Too many	.711
"Can you tell me if you are worried or not worried about illegal immigration?"	0 = Not worried 1 = Worried	.707
"Could you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement? -Immigrants take jobs away from native-born Americans"	0 = Strongly disagree/ Disagree somewhat 1 = Agree strongly/ Agree somewhat	.738
"Could you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement? -Immigrants are a threat to our national culture"	0 = Strongly disagree/ Disagree somewhat 1 = Agree strongly/ Agree somewhat	.692
"Some people say that immigration is more of a problem for the U.S. Others see it as more of an opportunity for the U.S. Which comes closer to your point of view?"	0 = Immigration is an opportunity 1 = Immigration is a problem	.800

The predictor variables for the study consisted of location on the liberal–conservative dimension and immigrant friends. One item elicited participants' ideological orientation: "In politics, people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 1 to 7 where '1' means the extreme left and '7' means the extreme right?" (i.e., scale ranged from 1, extremely liberal/left, to 7, extremely conservative/right). The immigrant friends item ("Do you have any friends that were born in another country that now live in the U.S.?" ) was dichotomized, with 0 representing no immigrant friends and 1 representing a few or many immigrant friends.

A number of demographics were controlled for in the models. They included: gender (0 = male, 1 = female), age (continuous), race/ethnicity (Black, Hispanic, Asian, and "other" dummy coded, with White participants as the reference category), nativity (0 = native-born, 1 = foreign-born), parents' nativity (0 = native-born, 1 = foreign-born), level of education (1 = elementary or less to 5 = post-graduate degree), and religious affiliation (0 = not religious, 1 = religious). These variables were controlled for due to prior literature

suggesting they have a relationship with anti-immigrant sentiment (Berg, 2009; Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997; Fennelly & Federico, 2008; Hussey & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2011; McDaniel, Nooruddin, & Shortle, 2011).

### *Analysis*

The analyses were completed using Mplus's Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR) estimator, as it accounts for missing data; MLR assumes missing data are missing at random (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2006). To account for the probability sampling procedures, we used a weight command to adjust the standard errors and population parameters. The models' fit was assessed by examining the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). Generally, CFI and TLI values of 0.90 or higher indicate good model fit.

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine the moderator effect of the relationship between immigrant friends and political ideology on anti-immigrant sentiment. The first block in the model included the control variables. The second block added political ideology and immigrant friends. A main effect was deemed present when, after controlling for the control variables, political ideology and immigrant friends were significant predictors of anti-immigrant sentiment. In the third and final block, the interaction term political ideology  $\times$  immigrant friends was added to the model. The predictors and interaction term were mean-centered prior to completing the analysis. Following the guidelines of Cohen and Cohen (1983), a moderation effect would be deemed to exist if the following conditions were satisfied: (a) the coefficient for the interaction term was statistically significant; and (b) the interaction term significantly increased the amount of variance explained in the dependent variable.

### *Results*

As illustrated in Table 3, the analysis was performed in three steps. The first model (CFI = 1.0; TLI = 1.0) consisted of the demographic control variables and was significant, accounting for 16.5% of the variance in anti-immigrant sentiment ( $R^2 = .165$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The second model (CFI = 1.0; TLI = 1.0) was also significant and demonstrated the impact of political

ideology and immigrant friends on anti-immigrant sentiment. The model accounted for 19.6% of the variance in anti-immigrant sentiment ( $R^2 = .196$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A number of demographics were significant. Participants' ethnicity, African American ( $\beta = -.138$ ;  $SE = .031$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and Hispanic ( $\beta = -.211$ ;  $SE = .045$ ;  $p < .001$ ), as well as higher levels of education ( $\beta = -.139$ ;  $SE = .034$ ;  $p < .001$ ) were associated with lower levels of anti-immigrant sentiment. Approaching significance, having an immigrant parent was also related to less anti-immigrant sentiment ( $\beta = -.069$ ;  $SE = .036$ ;  $p = .059$ ). Oppositely, being religiously affiliated was associated with higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment ( $\beta = .173$ ;  $SE = .036$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Holding the demographics constant, both substantive predictors, political ideology ( $\beta = .143$ ;  $SE = .035$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and immigrant friends ( $\beta = -.106$ ;  $SE = .039$ ;  $p < .01$ ), were statistically significant predictors of anti-immigrant sentiment in the hypothesized direction.

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression: Correlates of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Female	-0.017	0.037	-0.006	0.036	-0.007	0.036
Age	0.037	0.037	0.018	0.037	0.020	0.036
African American	-0.127	0.033**	-0.138	0.031**	-0.137	0.031**
Asian	0.012	0.042	0.002	0.042	0.005	0.042
Hispanic	-0.203	0.046**	-0.211	0.045**	-0.212	0.046**
Other Race	-0.052	0.036	-0.057	0.037	-0.056	0.038
Foreign-born	-0.018	0.038	-0.030	0.039	-0.031	0.039
Foreign-born Parents	-0.094	0.036*	-0.069	0.036 $\pm$	-0.070	0.036 $\pm$
Education	-0.166	0.033**	-0.139	0.034**	-0.137	0.034**
Religiously Affiliated	0.193	0.037**	0.173	0.036**	0.173	0.035**
Political Ideology			0.143	0.035**	0.087	0.059
Immigrant Friends			-0.106	0.039*	-0.108	0.039*
Interaction Term					0.067	0.057
$R^2$	16.5**		19.6**		19.6**	

Note. \* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .001$ ,  $\pm$  = approaching significance

The analysis did not support a moderation effect of political ideology and immigrant friends on anti-immigrant

sentiment (see Table 3). The final model (CFI = 1.0; TLI = 1.0) assessing the moderation effect was significant ( $R^2 = .196$ ;  $p < .001$ ). However, the interaction term was not significant ( $\beta = .067$ ;  $SE = 0.057$ ;  $p = .239$ ), and there was no increase in the amount of variance accounted for by the model. In other words, immigrant friends did not buffer the effects of conservative political ideology on immigrant sentiment as predicted.

## Discussion

This study examined the direct and moderation effects of political ideology and immigrant friends on anti-immigrant sentiment. The primary research hypothesis was supported, as political ideology and immigrant friends had direct but opposite effects on anti-immigrant sentiment. Consistent with the literature, conservative political ideology was highly correlated with harboring anti-immigrant sentiment (Ceballos & Yakushko, 2014). This may be the case in part because conservatives view immigration, especially unauthorized immigration, as a matter of law and order, whereas liberals understand the issue from a civil rights and social inequality perspective (Hopkins, 2010). In addition, findings supported ICT's proposition that increased contact leads to more favorable intergroup attitudes. Having immigrant friends was inversely related to anti-immigrant sentiment, which suggests that greater exposure to immigrants may help reduce or prevent the formation of prejudicial attitudes. Contrary to the secondary hypothesis that having immigrant friends would moderate the relationship between political ideology, particularly conservatism, and anti-immigrant sentiment, no interaction effect was found between the two variables. This indicated that while having immigrant friends was associated with less anti-immigrant sentiment, the presence of immigrant friends does not enhance, buffer, or change the impact of Americans' political ideology on anti-immigrant sentiment formation.

In addition to the main findings, several demographic correlates of anti-immigrant sentiment were exposed. African Americans and Hispanics had lower levels of anti-immigrant sentiment compared to Whites. This may be the result of these groups being oppressed themselves or having greater contact

with immigrants (Fennelly & Federico, 2008; Pettigrew, 1998). Additionally, consistent with prior studies, education was inversely related to anti-immigrant sentiment (Citrin et al., 1997; Espenshade & Calhoun, 1993; McDaniel et al., 2011). As labor market competition theory asserts, this may be due to less educated individuals having job skills parallel to those of immigrants, leading to greater perceived competition (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Kunovich, 2013; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001).

Having immigrant parents approached significance and was related to less anti-immigrant sentiment. Having immigrant parents provides a direct link to the lived experiences of immigrants. It is common for parents to share stories about their country of origin and immigrant experience with children (Ayón & Quiroz, 2013). In addition, individuals with a history of immigration tend to live in immigrant enclaves; thus, exposure to other immigrants is increased (Negi, 2013; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012). Lastly, compared to those who reported no religious affiliation, those who were religious had less favorable attitudes toward immigrants. Similarly, the Pew Research Center indicated that nearly 50% of their sample, regardless of their religious affiliation, stated the deportation of immigrants was "a good thing" (Lipka, 2014). While many faith leaders across the country have organized to support immigrants (Lipka, 2014), this does not imply that individual parishioners/members are supportive of immigrants.

### *Implications*

With a mission of promoting social justice for oppressed and vulnerable populations, the field of social work has a duty to address discrimination faced by immigrants (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Due to evidence of an inverse relationship between contact and prejudice, social workers should advocate for efforts that increase natives' contact with immigrants (Pettigrew, 1998). Efforts to promote intergroup contact are particularly valuable given that positive outcomes have been found to extend to the entire out-group as well as other out-groups through secondary effects (Pettigrew, 2009). Interventions may focus on the relationship between two groups, but by engaging in such interventions,

individuals learn to be more accepting of other diverse groups beyond the target group. Such interventions could serve to promote high quality positive intergroup contact that brings about friendships.

Efforts to promote intergroup contact should begin early in one's development, as children experience a critical shift in the understanding of race and ethnicity between the ages of 7-12 (Hughes, 2003). Additionally, evidence suggest that children in immigrant families are aware of the impact of anti-immigrant legislation on their families, as they voice concern for their parents' safety, as well as have questions about immigration status and anti-immigrant behavior (Yoshikawa, 2012; Ayón & Becerra, 2013). Given the vast amount of time children and adolescents spend at school with peers, this may be the most effective site to promote intergroup interaction. Within the classroom, this may involve curricular changes that incorporate issues of diversity. Several programs have shown promise. Examples include the use of multicultural story-books (Wan, 2006), historical stories to teach about acceptance (Demircioglu, 2008), and "sharing songs" or engaging children in singing traditional songs from different cultures (Pascale, 2011). Additionally, diversity clubs on school campuses could provide a venue for high quality intergroup interaction that builds cross-group friendships. At the same time, interventions that target parents can engage parents in reflective dialogue about issues of diversity and how to talk to children about diversity, as well as promote self-awareness of parents' own biases and how these are transmitted to children.

At a community level, social workers can collaborate with immigrant advocates and community members to promote intergroup contact through direct and indirect methods. A direct approach, for example, would involve an intergroup dialogue process, which fosters greater understanding between group members through perspective sharing (Nagda & Maxwell, 2011). Indirect methods, such as the media, can also be used to share immigrants' stories and experiences with the general public.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

As a secondary data analysis, this study was limited in

several ways. First, socioeconomic status could not be included as a control as the variable was absent from the dataset. Additionally, the self-report nature of the study represents a potential bias, as findings reflect participants' subjective experiences and perceptions. Finally, findings are correlational and cross-sectional and reflective of one point in time. Accordingly, causality and the ordinal sequence of immigrant friends and anti-immigrant sentiment cannot be established by the present study. Yet, this study adds to the empirical base by being the first to explore the direct and interaction effects of political ideology and immigrant friends on anti-immigrant sentiment among a large nationally representative sample of Americans.

Future research is needed to continue to explore the factors that both hinder and promote anti-immigrant sentiment formation. Further research should examine the impact of exposure to and friendships with immigrants through longitudinal studies and randomized control trials (RCTs). This would allow causal conclusions to be drawn and the ordinal sequence of variables to be confirmed, strengthening the empirical support for such relationships. RCTs could also serve to test the effectiveness of school-based interventions of intergroup contact between natives and immigrants. Additionally, studies should measure not just the presence of intergroup contact and cross-group friendships, but the quantity and quality of such interactions and friendships in greater depth. By elucidating rich data on the characteristics of intergroup contact that promote the most anti-immigrant sentiment reduction, policies and programs will be empirically grounded to more effectively reduce anti-immigrant sentiment and discrimination faced by immigrants.

## Conclusion

Despite hosting more immigrants every year than any other nation, anti-immigrant sentiment is pervasive in the U.S. This study found that having more conservative political ideology increased Americans' harboring of negative sentiment toward immigrants. Conversely, consistent with ICT, having immigrant friends was associated with less anti-immigrant sentiment. This study informs targeted interventions aimed at curbing the formation of prejudice toward immigrants in the U.S. Efforts to promote exposure to immigrants may be



most effective with children and youth, as this age group may be most developmentally responsive to interventions involving meaningful intergroup contact. These efforts to abate the current wave of anti-immigrant sentiment, as well as impair future surges, are critical to the amelioration of discrimination for immigrant communities throughout the U.S.

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