Université de Montréal

Three Essays on Public Opinion during the Trump Presidency

Par
Marco Mendoza Aviña

Département de science politique
Faculté des arts et des sciences

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Three Essays on Public Opinion during the Trump Presidency

Présenté par
Marco Mendoza Aviña

A été évalué par un jury composé des personnes suivantes

Pierre Martin
Président-rapporteur

André Blais
Directeur de recherche

Vincent Arel-Bundock
Codirecteur

Frédérick Bastien
Membre du jury

Résumé

Ce mémoire par articles se penche sur l'opinion publique aux États-Unis entre 2017 et 2021. Trois enjeux sont considérés: les coupures d'impôts, l'immigration illégale et la pandémie de COVID-19. Le premier article présente une analyse du soutien public au *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* centrée sur l'intérêt personnel, la partisanerie et la sophistication politique. Le deuxième article utilise une expérience par sondage pour déterminer si le profil économique des immigrants sans-papiers influence l'appui à la régularisation de leur statut. Le dernier article propose un estimé de l'impact du coronavirus sur le choix de vote présidentiel en 2020.

Mots-clés: politique américaine, opinion publique, coupures d'impôts, immigration illégale, pandémie de COVID-19

Abstract

This article-based thesis focuses on public opinion in the United States between 2017 and 2021. Three issues are considered: tax cuts, illegal immigration, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The first paper presents an analysis of public support for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act centered on self-interest, partisanship, and political sophistication. The second paper uses a survey experiment to assess if undocumented immigrants' economic profiles influence support for legalization. The final paper puts forward an estimate of coronavirus' impact on presidential vote choice in 2020.

Keywords: American politics, public opinion, tax cuts, illegal immigration, COVID-19 pandemic

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Remerciements

Ce mémoire ne marque pas que la fin de ma maîtrise; il boucle aussi un passage de cinq ans au Département de science politique de l'Université de Montréal. Au début de ce parcours, l'éventail des possibilités que j'entrevoyais pour mon avenir était plutôt restreint. Je suis endetté envers celles et ceux m'ayant permis de l'élargir. Je ne pourrais être plus reconnaissant envers mes codirecteurs de recherche, André Blais et Vincent Arel-Bundock, sans qui ma trajectoire intellectuelle aurait été tout autre. Semra Sevi et Ruth Dassonneville méritent ma gratitude pour leur aide, soutien et encouragements. Frédérick Bastien et Pierre Martin ont très généreusement évalué ce mémoire. Je reconnais l'appui financier des organismes suivants: le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines; les Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture; le Centre pour l'étude de la citoyenneté démocratique; IVADO; et les Études supérieures et postdoctorales de l'Université de Montréal. Enfin, je remercie Rocio, Yolanda, Andreea, Daniela et Aurel de m'endurer depuis longtemps.

To Judy.

Introduction

La victoire de Donald Trump aux élections présidentielles de 2016 n'a pas seulement été surprenante; elle aura aussi forcé les politologues à remettre en question ce qu'ils pensaient savoir sur le système politique américain.[1]

Il ne faut pas voir le Trumpisme comme une fracture historique. Au contraire, 2016 paraît comme la culmination de plusieurs phénomènes présents depuis le début du projet démocratique américain.[2] On peut penser à l'esclavage; à la destinée manifeste et au colonialisme de peuplement; à l'autoritarisme suprématiste blanc des États du Sud pendant un siècle de lois Jim Crow; au refus des élites conservatrices de reconnaître les péchés originels de la nation; au combat continu pour les droits civiques; aux inégalités socioéconomiques et à la représentation inégale; au protectionnisme, à l'isolationnisme et au nationalisme; à la haine et à l'intolérance; à la misogynie; au fanatisme religieux; à la radicalisation du Parti républicain depuis la fin du XX^{e} siècle[3]; à l'érosion démocratique; au sensationnalisme médiatique; au relativisme.

Tout en reconnaissant que la période ayant commencé en 2016 n'est pas aberrante[4], il importe néanmoins de s'y attarder à part entière. C'est ce que j'ai tenté de faire pendant ma maîtrise en ayant recours à mon angle analytique de prédilection: l'opinion publique.

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[1] Avec le recul, il est facile de dire qu'on aurait dû s'attendre à cette issue mais, hélas!, je reconnais avoir été plus bouleversé que quiconque le soir du 8 novembre 2016.

[2] La plupart de ces phénomènes sont loin d'être uniques aux États-Unis.

[3] C'est ce qu'on appelle souvent la « polarisation partisane ».

[4] Le meilleur adjectif pour décrire les événements politiques survenus dans les dernières années est « surréel » (quoique « absurde » est un bon concurrent). J'aime m'adonner au cliché selon lequel nous vivons dans une simulation gribouillée par des scénaristes ayant recours à des intrigues de plus en plus saugrenues.

Pourquoi accorder autant d'importance à l'opinion publique? Ultimement, c'est sur le citoyen américain qu'incombe le 45e président.[5] Trump a été élu démocratiquement en 2016 et il est passé proche de remporter un second mandat en 2020; entre 2017 et 2021, son administration a souvent joui d'un taux d'approbation comparable à celui d'un président « typique » comme Barack Obama; bien que son parti ait perdu sa majorité à la Chambre des représentants en 2018, il conservera le Sénat de même qu'une majorité de postes élus au niveau des États.

Il faut s'arrêter sur l'opinion publique, soit. Ce mémoire répond à cet objectif en étudiant trois enjeux majeurs de la présidence Trump: les coupures d'impôts, l'immigration illégale et la pandémie de COVID-19. Ces sujets ont donné suite à une multitude de travaux en science politique et en sciences sociales plus généralement, de même qu'à des myriades de commentaires politiques et de reportages journalistiques.

Chaque chapitre de ce mémoire prend la forme d'un article. Le premier, « *Are Tax Cuts Supporters Self-Interested and/or Partisan?*[6] », démontre que les électeurs républicains et ceux non politiquement sophistiqués ont été les plus susceptibles de lier leur intérêt personnel à leurs préférences relatives au *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act*. Le deuxième article, « *Self-Made yet Illegal: Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Support for Legalization*[7] », suggère que les considérations économiques n'entrent pas en jeu pour ce qui est de l'immigration illégale. Le troisième article, « *Did Exposure to COVID-19 Affect Vote Choice in the 2020 Presidential Election?*[8] », soutient que la part du vote obtenue par Joe Biden en 2020 aurait été similaire si aucun Américain n'avait été en contact avec le coronavirus.

[5] J'assume pleinement le postulat sous-jacent de cet argument: l'électorat américain – dans son ensemble – manque de bon sens. *Sue me!*

[6] Je suis le premier auteur, et André Blais est le second auteur. Nous avons conjointement développé le devis de recherche, analysé les données et interprété les résultats. Je me suis chargé de la programmation statistique, de la revue de la littérature et de la rédaction du manuscrit. J'ai mené le processus de resoumission.

[7] Je suis l'unique auteur.

[8] Je suis le premier auteur, et Semra Sevi est la seconde auteure. Nous avons conjointement développé le devis de recherche et rédigé le manuscrit. Je me suis chargé de la programmation statistique, de l'analyse des données et de l'interprétation des résultats. J'ai mené le processus de resoumission.

1

Are Tax Cuts Supporters Self-Interested and/or Partisan?*

In late 2017, the first unified Republican government in a decade enacted the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which cut taxes for corporations and the wealthy. Why did so many citizens support a policy that primarily benefited people richer than them? The self-interest hypothesis holds that individuals act upon the position they occupy in the income distribution: richer (poorer) taxpayers should favor (oppose) regressive policy. However, partisan considerations do not necessarily align with material interests. This article assesses public support for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Using data from the 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Study as well as contemporaneous ANES and VOTER surveys to replicate our analyses, we show that self-interest and partisanship both come into play but that partisanship matters more. Personal financial considerations, while less influential than party identification, are relevant for two groups of individuals: Republicans and the politically unsophisticated.

*This paper is coauthored with André Blais and was published in *American Politics Research*. We wish to thank the journal's editor and two anonymous reviewers as well as Vincent Arel-Bundock and Semra Sevi for helpful comments and suggestions. A previous version of this paper was presented at the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship 2021 Graduate Student Conference—thank you to all participants. Replication materials are available upon request.

1.1 Introduction

In late 2017, the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act ignited concerns about economic and political inequality (Bartels 2017; Hacker and Pierson 2017). The law's main objective was to reduce the tax burdens of corporations and wealthy individuals (Gale et al. 2018). The ensuing "massive tax relief" (The White House, 2017) proved popular with the Republican base but not so much with the rest of the country (Newport 2019; Williamson 2018). Still, around 40 percent of voters favored a reform that primarily benefited the top 1 percent (Scott and Chang 2017). Why did so many taxpayers approve of a policy from which they stood very little to gain?

Despite rising levels of inequality – and public discontent with inequality – political support for redistributive policy remains stagnant (Bartels 2008; Erikson 2015; Scheve and Stasavage 2016). In the past two decades, citizens have tended to reject progressive taxation (Boudreau and MacKenzie 2018; Franko, Tolbert, and Witko 2013) and even embrace regressive tax reforms (Bartels 2005; Krupnikov et al. 2006; Lupia et al. 2007; Slemrod 2006). This is puzzling, as research on fiscal policy preferences shows widespread support for the principles of fairness and progressivity (Ballard-Rosa, Martin, and Scheve 2016; Stantcheva 2021), as well as for redistributive programs that target the middle class and particularly the poor (Piston 2018).

In this article, we elucidate public opinion about the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act by bridging self-interest and partisanship, two complementary sources of influence.[1] We show that personal financial considerations shape support for the tax cuts mostly among Republicans. Furthermore, a third factor, political sophistication, produces distinct patterns of heterogeneity. Our analyses leverage the 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Study and a policy-focused measure of public support for the

[1]While this paper focuses on two explanations (self-interest and partisanship) that have previously proven crucial to explaining preferences, we do not contend that only these factors are influential, or that only self-interest or only partisanship can shape citizens' views about taxation.

Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. We also replicate our results using alternative measures of approval from two separate electoral studies conducted after the 2018 midterm elections. This allows us to validate our hypotheses in more than one dataset and with conceptually different measures of public opinion, which ensures the robustness of our findings.

The rest of this research note is structured as follows. We first provide background on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and its distributional impact. We then present the literature on public preferences for tax policy, before developing hypotheses about self-interest and partisanship, as well as their interactions with political sophistication. We describe our dataset, present our model specifications, and report our results as well as our replication tests. We conclude by discussing the relevance of our findings.

1.2 The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

In December 2017, President Donald Trump signed into law the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). Arguably the biggest overhaul of the tax system since the Reagan presidency (Gale et al. 2018), the TCJA was passed by Congress without a single Democratic vote (The New York Times 2017), fulfilling the President's promise to give Americans a "big beautiful Christmas present in the form of a tremendous tax cut" (The White House 2017). The 2017 tax law was seen as Donald Trump's major legislative accomplishment, as well as his party's last-ditch attempt to enact major legislation to appease its base – and donors – ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

The TCJA repealed the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate penalty, scaled back the estate tax, eliminated federal deductions for state and local taxes, and lowered the corporate tax rate from 35 to 21 percent (Slemrod 2018). Most significantly, income tax rates were cut for all income groups, giving 80 percent of Americans an average tax cut of $2,800 in 2018 (Gale et al. 2018). These tax cuts disproportionately benefited the wealthy, however, with 65 percent of the total federal tax change going to the top 20 percent of taxpayers (Gale et al. 2018). By Gale

et al.'s (2018) estimations, taxpayers in the lowest quintile got an average tax cut of $60 in 2018; by comparison, the top 1 percent got $51,140, and the top 0.1 percent, $193,380. After-tax income increased by 0.4 percent for the lowest quintile, 1.6 percent for the middle quintile, and 2.9 percent for the top quintile. Five out of ten taxpayers in the bottom 20 percent got a tax cut, compared with nine out of ten of those in the top 1 percent. As a result, the U.S. deficit for the 2018-2027 period is projected to be $1.9 trillion larger than it would have been if the TCJA had not been enacted (Congressional Budget Office 2018, 5).[2]

In 2017, a majority of Americans thought corporate taxes should be raised rather than lowered, and only a small minority approved of tax cuts for wealthy taxpayers (Fingerhut 2017). As a result, the public response to the TCJA was negative. The bill was deemed to be regressive and fiscally unsound by academics, tax policy experts, and political commentators alike (Bartels 2017; Hacker and Pierson 2017; Scott and Chang 2017). Even though it initially received support from fewer than 40 percent of Americans, the TCJA proved popular with the Republican base and the party's donor class (Bartels 2017; Green and Deatherage 2018; Jacobson and Liu 2020). Nevertheless, the tax law's overall unpopularity likely contributed to Republicans' loss of the House of Representatives in the 2018 midterm elections (Newport 2019; Williamson 2018).

1.3 Explaining Tax Policy Preferences: Self-Interest versus Partisanship

According to the self-interest hypothesis, citizens' political preferences are determined by their economic standing (Chong, Citrin, and Conley 2001; Franko, Tolbert, and Witko 2013; Sears and Citrin 1982). Meltzer and Richard's (1981) rational theory of the size of government predicts that, as income inequality rises, the median voter will come to support

[2]We note that, by most estimates, the TCJA contributed to economic growth (Congressional Budget Office 2018; Gale et al. 2018; Slemrod 2018; Tax Foundation Staff 2017).

higher levels of taxation in order to increase revenue transfers from the top to the bottom half of the income distribution. Indeed, lower-income Americans often enact their self-interest by supporting redistributive proposals (Newman and Teten 2021). As to wealthy Americans, they often hold views on the economy, state regulations, taxes, inequality, and public spending that are more conservative than those of the general electorate (Cohn et al. 2019; Page, Bartels, and Seawright 2013). Research on policy responsiveness suggests that self-interest plays a key role in the policy process, which often sides with the political priorities of the wealthy (Bartels 2008; Branham, Soroka, and Wlezien 2017; Erikson 2015; Gilens and Page 2014).

Oftentimes, however, political predispositions can be more influential than self-interest. Partisan group loyalty molds political behavior and public opinion (Campbell et al. 1961; Zaller 1992). Party identification dictates policy preferences, especially for issues on which political elites are polarized (Barber and Pope 2019; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013). On such issues, self-interest can sometimes prove a weak or unreliable predictor of opinion (Lowery and Sigelman 1981; Sears and Funk 1990). The Bush tax cuts of the early 2000s are a case in point. In a study linking ignorance to public approval, Bartels (2005, 16) argues that "Americans supported tax cuts not because they were indifferent to economic inequality but because they largely failed to connect inequality and public policy." His analyses show that low- and middle-income taxpayers were more likely than the wealthy to support Bush's fiscal agenda. In the same vein, Slemrod (2006) finds that the poor were not less likely than the rich to support the estate tax repeal, suggesting that fiscal misinformation was at play. Reviews of these findings by Krupniknov et al. (2006) and Lupia et al. (2007) point toward a simpler explanation: voters adopted their parties' positions.[3]

Previous research suggests that fiscal preferences are often determined by political predispositions but that self-interest can sometimes prove

[3]While ideology might also explain tax preferences (Lupia et al. 2007), we limit our focus to party identification; causally, partisanship precedes—and indeed trumps—ideology (Barber and Pope 2019).

influential (Chong, Citrin, and Conley 2001; De Benedictis-Kessner and Hankinson 2019; Franko, Tolbert, and Witko 2013; Klar 2013). With respect to the TCJA, self-interest and partisanship could thus operate simultaneously. Self-interest should matter when "clear, substantial costs and benefits" are at stake (Sears and Funk 1990, 255). This is often the case for issues pertaining to economic policy (Anzia and Moe 2017; Chong, Citrin, and Conley 2001; De Benedictis-Kessner and Hankinson 2019; Franko, Tolbert, and Witko 2013; Sears and Citrin 1982). Differences of opinion between low- and high-income citizens should also arise in the context of inter-class conflict; indeed, attitudes toward the poor and the rich can cut across partisanship (Piston 2018).

We formulate a first set of hypotheses:

> **Hypothesis 1:** Self-interest shapes views about the TCJA: the rich support it more than the poor.

> **Hypothesis 2:** Partisanship shapes views about the TCJA: Republicans support them more than Democrats.

In the weeks leading up to the passage of the TCJA, the Republican Party and particularly President Trump framed the tax law as a "massive tax relief for American families," appealing explicitly to taxpayers' self-interest: "The typical family of four earning $75,000 will see an income tax cut of more than $2,000, slashing their tax bill in half. It's going to be a lot of money. You're going to have an extra $2,000" (The White House 2017). Moreover, a common argument in favor of the TCJA was that this bill would lead to economic growth, thus benefiting the American public by providing not only tax cuts but also new jobs and higher wages (Slemrod 2018, 73–74). It is thus clear that economic considerations shaped public views about this policy.

Of course, in addition to its explicit financial appeal, a defining characteristic of the TCJA was its overtly partisan nature. The bill did not receive a single Democratic vote in Congress and was only popular among Republican voters (Bartels 2017; Williamson 2018). For the most part, the set of policies included in the TCJA responded to partisan,

conservative preferences for a smaller government and a more regressive tax system (Fingerhut 2017). Republican members of Congress rallied around the TCJA hoping that, by delivering a policy win to their party's base, their reelection prospects in the 2018 midterm elections would improve (Green and Deatherage 2018). Unsurprisingly, partisan cues played a large role in shaping (and polarizing) public approval for the TCJA ((Hacker and Pierson 2017; Williamson 2018).

Republicans Are More Self-Interested

Considering how the Republican messaging on the TCJA leaned on taxpayers' self-interest, the prospect of a financial gain should have a stronger appeal among these partisans:

> **Hypothesis 3:** Self-interest shapes support for the TCJA more strongly among Republicans.

Three complimentary mechanisms should lead to a heterogeneous relationship. First, class cleavages in the Republican Party – but not the Democratic Party – sometimes result in intra-partisan differences in tax policy preferences that can be explained by income (Newman and Teten 2021, 248). Rich Republicans are more likely than their poorer co-partisans to have regressive views on taxation; for example, they disproportionately favor cutting taxes on the wealthy and corporations (Fingerhut 2017). The TCJA's explicit appeal to higher-income taxpayers may have proven less popular with the party's working-class segment.

A second reason for expecting self-interest to yield stronger effects among Republicans stems from competing identities inside their party (Chong, Citrin, and Conley 2001; Klar 2013). High-income Republicans should favor the TCJA more strongly than low-income Republicans, as the latter group of citizens might be "cross-pressured" by their self-interest and partisanship (De Benedictis-Kessner and Hankinson 2019). Rich Republicans should be among the strongest supporters of the Trump tax cuts because – at least in this policy debate – their partisan allegiances align with their self-interest. As for poor Republicans, their party's fiscal

agenda is at odds with their class interests: their level of support for the TCJA should be more tepid. Finally, if high-income Democrats were solely guided by self-interest, they would embrace the TCJA; but their party identification should bring them to oppose the TCJA as much as their low-income co-partisans.

A third reason why self-interest should differentially predict partisans' views about the TCJA is that Republicans and Democrats have different core values and beliefs. Republicans' worldview is centered on free enterprise and self-determination (Feldman 1988); their decision-making thus prioritizes personal gains, which in the case of the TCJA were roughly proportional to one's family's income. As for Democrats, their egalitarian attitudes should lead them to prefer progressive policy (i.e., redistribution) over regressive policy (e.g., tax cuts), regardless of which might personally benefit them the most. This is not to say that only self-interested individuals can support tax cuts, or that none of those opposing them are self-interested. For example, a low-income voter who favors redistribution is acting upon her own interest, as she would likely benefit from a more equalitarian economy.[4] Our argument is simply that, whereas high-income Republicans might favor the TCJA because this policy personally benefits them, high-income Democrats should not be moved by the prospect of a tax cut, because such a tax cut would lead to a more regressive tax system and a more unequal society, which goes against their ideology.

The Conditioning Role of Political Sophistication

Well-informed citizens have different opinions than the ill-informed (Althaus 1998; Converse 2006; Gilens 2001). Previous public opinion research has pointed to citizens' low levels of sophistication to explain public support for regressive tax policy (Bartels 2005; Piston 2018; Slemrod 2006). Yet, this line of research does not ask if some individuals might be more prone than others to act upon their self-interest.

[4]We thank Reviewer 1 for suggesting this example.

Citizens use information shortcuts rather than "encyclopedic" knowledge to form opinions on complex, technical issues (Lupia 1994). Party identification is likely the most powerful voter heuristic (Cohen 2003). Reliance on partisan cues may lead individuals to support policies that undermine their own financial interests (Boudreau and MacKenzie 2018). Conversely, those who lack such partisan shortcuts (i.e., those unaware of the parties' positions on a given issue) may turn to other easily available information to make up their mind.

Political sophistication should condition self-interest and partisanship in opposite ways. Since poorly sophisticated individuals exhibit little ideological constraint (Converse 2006), their decision-making does not follow a party line, allowing them to focus on financial considerations instead. This entails that the highly sophisticated are primarily guided by partisan considerations (Krupnikov et al. 2006; Lupia et al. 2007).

> **Hypothesis 4:** Self-interest shapes support for the TCJA more strongly among poorly sophisticated individuals.

> **Hypothesis 5:** Partisanship shapes support for the TCJA more strongly among highly sophisticated individuals.

1.4 Data, Measurements, and Method

We use data from the 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) Common Content, a nationally representative, large online survey conducted by YouGov.[5] The dataset includes 60,000 respondents who completed pre- and post-election questionnaires.[6]

In 2018, the CCES asked the following question about the TCJA:

> Would you support or oppose a tax bill that does all of the following? Cuts the Corporate Income Tax rate from 39 percent to 21 percent. Reduces the mortgage interest deduction from

[5] See: https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/

[6] All questions used here are from the pre-election wave. See Appendix A.1 for a summary statistics table.

> $1 million to $500,000. Caps the amount of state and local tax that can be deducted to $10,000 (previously there was no limit). Increases the standard deduction from $12,000 to $25,000. Cuts income tax rates for all income groups by 3 percent.

This policy-focused question provides respondents with an overview of the TCJA's main components without mentioning the law by name.[7] The dichotomous dependent variable indicates whether respondents gave a favorable opinion about the TCJA. Overall, 56 percent of respondents support the described tax bill.

We construct three explanatory variables: self-interest, partisanship, and political sophistication. Since financial benefits from the TCJA are proportional to taxpayers' income (Tax Foundation Staff 2017), our proxy for self-interest is the respondent's family income, a 16-level variable ranging from less than $10,000 (0) to more than $500,000 (1). For partisanship, we use the traditional sevenfold classification, coded 0 for a strong Democrat and 1 for a strong Republican. To measure political sophistication, we construct an index by averaging two distinct but complementary indicators: political knowledge and political interest.[8] Political knowledge scales based on answers to factual questions have been used robustly to measure political awareness (Zaller 1992). Yet, this measure alone fails to capture information about "specific policy-relevant facts" (Gilens 2001, 280). Thus, we account for political interest, which conveys "exposure to the information environment" (Jerit, Barabas, and Bolsen 2006, 269).[9]

[7] A majority of CCES respondents have a favorable opinion of the TCJA, whereas public opinion polls conducted in late 2017 showed a majority of Americans opposing the tax bill (Williamson 2018). This is due to three reasons: first, the question raises the prospect of a tax cut for all taxpayers; second, the TCJA became less unpopular between its adoption and the 2018 midterm elections (Jacobson and Liu 2020, 12); third, this question does not prime partisanship, thus inflating the share of Democrats who support a set of policies championed by Republicans.

[8] Cronbach's α: 0.83. See Appendix A.2 for the questions used.

[9] The findings are substantially the same regardless of how we construct the index: using only the factual knowledge scale or only the political interest indicator as the moderator yields similar interaction coefficients.

Empirical Strategy

To test our first two hypotheses, we simply regress (using OLS) respondents' support for the TCJA (T_i) on their family income (I_i) and party identification (P_i):

$$T_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 I_i + \alpha_2 P_i + \pi X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

X_i is a vector of covariates including age, gender, race, and education. The parameters of interest are α_1 (the effect of income while holding party identification constant) and α_2 (the effect of party identification while holding income constant). [10]

For our third hypothesis, we simply add the multiplicative interaction of income and party identification ($I_i P_i$) to the baseline model:

$$T_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 I_i + \beta_2 P_i + \beta_3 I_i P_i + \pi X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Here, the parameter of interest is the interaction coefficient, β_3. A positive sign would mean that the difference in support for the TCJA between low- and high-income respondents is more consistent among Republicans.[11]

Equation 3 incorporates respondents' political sophistication (S_i), as well as its interactions with income ($I_i S_i$) and party identification ($P_i S_i$):

$$T_i = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 I_i + \gamma_2 P_i + \gamma_3 S_i + \gamma_4 I_i S_i + \gamma_5 P_i S_i + \pi X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

[10] We choose to assess the simultaneous influences of self-interest and partisanship by including both variables in each model. Strictly speaking, this is a case-book example of post-treatment bias: income is a causal predecessor of party identification. In practice, however, the correlation between income and partisanship is weak ($r = 0.05$), and the coefficient associated with income is not substantially affected by the presence or absence of partisanship. The most exhaustive test of our hypotheses thus requires that each factor be ascertained while controlling the other. Our findings about self-interest should be viewed as conservative, as the income coefficients likely suffer from attenuation bias.

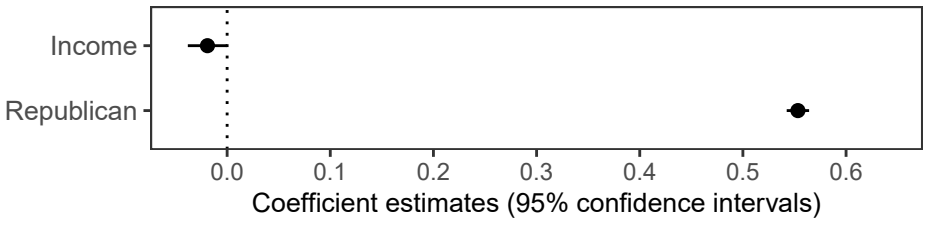
[11] The marginal effect of income is given by β_1 for strong Democrats, and by $\beta_1 + \beta_3$ for strong Republicans. The marginal effect of party identification is given by β_2 for the poorest respondents, and by $\beta_2 + \beta_3$ for the richest.

The parameters γ_1 and γ_2 correspond to the marginal effects of income and partisanship among the least sophisticated respondents. The expectation laid out by hypotheses 4 and 5 is that the two interaction coefficients will have opposite signs. A negative γ_4 would suggest that the difference in opinion between the rich and the poor is more consistent with the self-interest hypothesis among low-sophistication respondents. A positive γ_5 would confirm that the partisan gap in support for the tax cuts is wider among high-sophistication respondents.

1.5 Results[12]

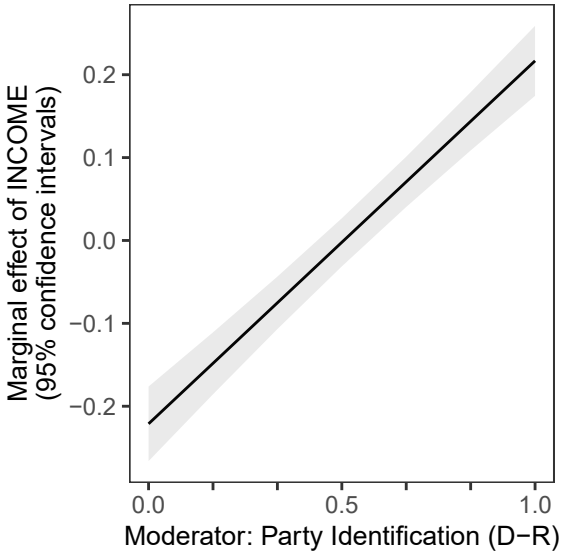
Figure 1.1 plots the first model's coefficients. This allows for the baseline comparison of self-interest and partisanship's effects on support for the TCJA. It is clear that in these additive models, party identification has more influence on opinion than self-interest, the effect of which is indistinguishable from 0. The difference of opinion between the poorest and richest respondents is negligible. As for party identification, its effect is quite large: the probability of supporting the tax cuts increases by 55 percentage points for a strong Republican relative to a strong Democrat.

Figure 1.1: Income, party identification, and support for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act



[12]For simplicity, the OLS estimations in this section correspond to linear probability models with heteroscedasticity-consistent standard errors. A regression table is presented in Appendix A.3. Alternative results using logistic regression are presented in Appendix A.4.

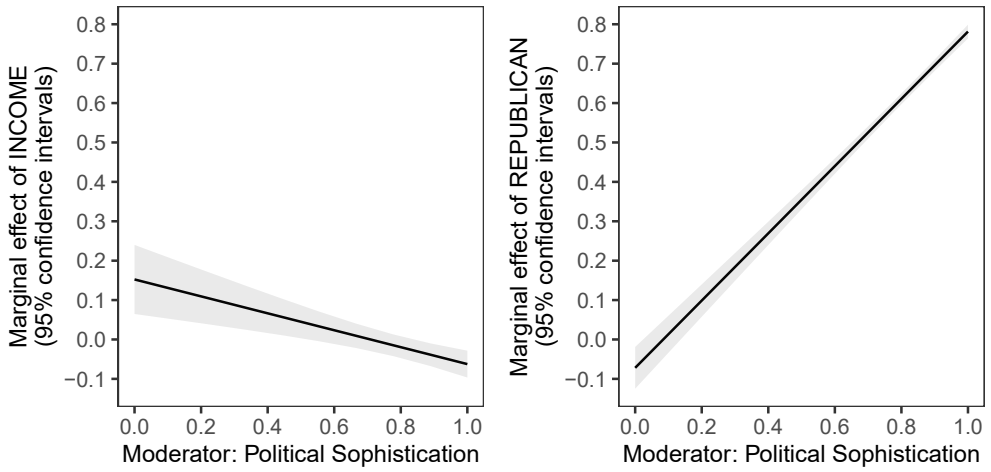
Figure 1.2: Interaction of income and party identification



These results conceal significant heterogeneity. Figure 1.2 plots the second model's interaction between self-interest and partisanship. The interaction coefficient is positive: as party identification increases from strong Democrat to strong Republican (horizontal axis), the marginal effect of income becomes larger and shifts from negative to positive (vertical axis). It seems that the difference in opinion between low- and high-income respondents is only consistent among Republicans (a similar dynamic between income and party identification is observed by Newman and Teten 2021). The average predicted probability of supporting the tax cuts is 100 percent when income is set at its highest value, and 79 percent when it is set at its lowest value. Intriguingly, among strong Democrats, the marginal effect of income is negative: the probability of supporting the tax cuts is greater for low- than for high-income respondents (39 compared to 17 percent).

Taking respondents' political sophistication into account allows us to draw a richer picture of this self-interest-partisanship dynamic. Figure 1.3 plots the two interactions specified in the third model. Political sophistication produces two opposite patterns of moderation.

Figure 1.3: Interactions of income, party identification, and political sophistication



The interaction between income and sophistication (left panel) is negative: as political sophistication increases (horizontal axis), the gap between the richest and poorest respondents shrinks (vertical axis). Indeed, among the least sophisticated respondents, the poorest are 15 percentage points less likely than the richest to support the TCJA; among the most sophisticated, the poor are no less likely than the rich to approve of the tax cuts.

The interaction between party identification and sophistication (right panel) is, as expected, positive: political sophistication (horizontal axis) widens the partisan gap in opinion (vertical axis). Looking at the least sophisticated respondents, strong Republicans are no more likely than strong Democrats to voice support for the tax cuts; among the most sophisticated, strong Republicans are 78 percentage points more likely than strong Democrats to support the TCJA.

In these analyses, we measure political sophistication using political knowledge and political interest. While this ensures that our moderator captures more than one dimension of citizens' political awareness (Zaller 1992), one limitation remains: this measure is focused on information about politics, whereas the policy debate we analyze is economic in

nature. Taxation-specific knowledge scales are absent from most electoral studies. If specific knowledge about tax policy and the TCJA had been measured, the role that political sophistication played in this policy debate would have more faithfully been captured in our analyses.

Does the Model Replicate?

While the dependent variable we analyze is a straightforward measure of support for (or opposition to) the TCJA, it is divorced from the political context surrounding the TCJA. The CCES question is overly technical, leaving little room for respondents to evaluate the tax law more broadly. Replicating our analyses on different data is necessary to guarantee that our findings are robust.

To achieve this, we examine two conceptually different dependent variables from two additional datasets: the 2018 Pilot Study from the American National Elections Studies (ANES) and the 2019 Views of the Electorate Research (VOTER) Survey. Like the CCES, these are online, nationally representative surveys fielded by YouGov following the 2018 midterm elections. The ANES survey comprises 2,500 respondents, and the VOTER survey has more than 6,000. Both surveys tap respondents' approval of the TCJA, although the VOTER question is the only one to mention the Republican president by name.[13] We code both continuous dependent variables to range from 0 to 1, where 1 means the respondent fully supports the TCJA:[14]

[13] Admittedly, this question heavily leans into respondents' party identification. We do not think that this is problematic, because the mention of President Trump is consistent with the overly partisan context under which the TCJA was passed. While it is obvious that partisanship will prove influential, if self-interest nevertheless plays a role in shaping opinion, the implication would be that both explanatory factors are important, even when one could be expected to dominate over the other.

[14] The ANES question provided a sevenfold scale ranging from "Disapprove a great deal" to "Approve a great deal." VOTER respondents were presented with four options ranging from "Strongly oppose" to "Strongly favor"; they could also answer "Don't know." We include these responses (15 percent of the sample) in our analyses by coding them as the variable's mid-point. Dropping these respondents does not change our results.

ANES: Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the 2017 tax cuts?

VOTER: Do you favor or oppose the tax plan that was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump?

Overall, 36 percent of ANES respondents and 40 percent of VOTER respondents hold a favorable view of the TCJA (the variables' means are 0.49 and 0.46 respectively). We code the same explanatory and control variables as we do for the CCES.[15]

Appendix A.7 presents the regression tables separately for each dataset. All in all, these results closely replicate those presented above. In the baseline models, income has a weak or negligible effect on support for the TCJA, whereas party identification yields very large effects. Here, too, partisanship moderates self-interest's effects on opinion, with high-income Republicans emerging as the strongest supporters of the tax cuts. Allowing both explanatory factors to vary based on political sophistication produces the same patterns of moderation as those observed before. The interactions of self-interest and sophistication are negative, whereas the interactions of partisanship and sophistication are positive. Among the most sophisticated respondents, income yields null effects; among the least sophisticated, income moderately increases approval. Inversely, party identification has dramatically large marginal effects when sophistication reaches its highest value but null or inconsistent effects when the moderator is set at its lowest value.

1.6 Discussion

This study sought to determine the influence of self-interest and partisanship on public opinion about the TCJA. We validate our

[15]Income and party identification, as well as all controls, are measured exactly the same in the surveys (see Appendix A.5). For the political sophistication indexes, the surveys include the same political interest indicator but different factual knowledge scales (see Appendix A.6 for the ANES and VOTER political knowledge questions). The internal consistency of both sophistication measures is similar to that of the CCES (Cronbach's α is 0.79 for ANES and 0.82 for VOTER).

theoretical expectations about the conditional importance of both factors, and we replicate our analyses on three independent electoral studies with conceptually different dependent variables. Despite differences in measurements and samples, we observe very similar results in the three surveys, which ensures our findings' robustness and external validity.

Our results tell a relatively simple story. First, party identification is the main factor driving opinion – Republicans support their party's tax agenda, which Democrats oppose. The sheer magnitude of this effect is striking. As for self-interest, its effects are limited in size and scope. The story becomes more intriguing when political sophistication enters the scene. Self-interest has a moderate effect among the least sophisticated respondents; it yields no influence whatsoever among the most sophisticated. Conversely, partisanship does not consistently shape the views of the least sophisticated respondents; it almost perfectly predicts the preferences of the most sophisticated. Put differently, party identification does not matter for the least informed citizens, who instead tend to rely (to an extent) on self-interest. Self-interest does not influence the most informed citizens, whose opinions about the TCJA simply reflect their partisanship. It would be surprising if these dynamics were specific to the policy debate at hand; most likely, they offer evidence for a novel self-interest-partisanship-sophistication model of public opinion.

Our findings about partisanship's role in shaping public support for the TCJA might seem unsurprising but they allow us to draw a novel conclusion about mass preferences for taxation more broadly. The prospect of personal financial benefits seems to only be important for Republicans, who are already predisposed to favor their party's tax law; a higher income yields additional support (i.e., a "bonus") among these individuals. In no case do personal financial considerations reverse opinion but they do seem to (slightly) "cross-pressure" Republican partisans (De Benedictis-Kessner and Hankinson 2019). Self-interest explains the difference between strong and overwhelming support among poor and rich Republicans; it does not really make a difference among Democrats. In short, Republicans are more likely not only to support their party's tax cuts but also to recognize and act

upon individual financial considerations. Partisan cleavages – at least where taxation is concerned – extend to self-interest, inasmuch as this framework only seems to be compatible with the (conservative) worldview of Republicans. Future research on self-interest would benefit from taking partisan heterogeneity into consideration.

One might hope that higher levels of knowledge, information, and awareness about public policy could translate into more consistent, rational opinions (Converse 2006). Following this intuition, political sophistication should strengthen, rather than weaken, the link between self-interest and public opinion (as argued by Piston 2018). But our data show that sophistication simply fuels partisanship. Our evidence confirms that well-informed citizens are for the most part well-behaved partisans (Lodge and Taber 2013; Zaller 1992).

Previous studies have tackled similar research questions as ours but without considering how political sophistication conditions self-interest. Fifteen years ago, Bartels (2005, 24) asserted that the popularity of the Bush tax cuts was "entirely attributable to simple ignorance." We reach a different verdict regarding the Trump tax cuts. Far from being "confused about what is in their own interests" (Bartels 2005, 26), ill-informed citizens display preferences that are (slightly) more consistent with self-interest than those of their well-informed peers. The former are unconstrained by partisan loyalty, whereas the latter simply line up behind their parties' policies. We are unable to determine which of these two groups of citizens is more "simple-minded" (Bartels 2005, 21, 28) than the other.

2

Self-Made yet Illegal: Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Support for Legalization[†]

There is a great amount of public concern and academic debate about the economic effects of immigration. In the U.S., undocumented immigrants contribute to public goods by participating in the labor force, paying taxes, and starting businesses. Yet, for public opinion, illegal status may trump human capital. I field a survey experiment to determine if support for legalization is higher for immigrants who are business owners rather than employees; I also test if varying skill levels matter. Respondents are asked to determine if a hypothetical undocumented immigrant (a blue- or white-collar, job creator or job taker) should be granted a path to citizenship. These treatments yield negligible effects: support for legalization is similarly high across experimental conditions and for both Democrats and Republicans. Economic considerations do not seem to shape policy preferences on illegal immigration.

[†]This is a working paper. The experimental design was approved by the ethics committee of l'Université de Montréal (#CERAH-2020-020D; see Appendix B.1). I thank Vincent Arel-Bundock and André Blais for funding this study and providing comments and suggestions at every stage of the project; thanks also to Ruth Dassonneville and Pierre Martin for their feedback on previous versions of this manuscript. This paper was presented at the NYU Center for Experimental Social Science 2021 Poster Session and at the Canadian Political Science Association 2021 Annual Meeting—thank you to all participants. Replication data will be made available upon publication.

2.1 Introduction

Influential theories in political economy contend that opposition to immigration in advanced democracies stems from economic concerns (Facchini and Mayda 2009; Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2007; Mayda 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). Indeed, a prominent body of experimental work in political science has shown that citizens have a clear preference for highly skilled immigrants, as they are more likely to pay high tax rates and less likely to become welfare recipients (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015). Nevertheless, this "skill premium" does not apply equally to all immigrants (Malhotra and Newman 2017; Newman and Malhotra 2019). Citizens attach less importance to the educational attainment and professional background of immigrants belonging to ethnic and racial minorities, as well as those unauthorized to live and work in the U.S. (España-Nájera and Vera 2019; Wright, Levy, and Citrin 2016). It seems that skin color and legal status trump human capital when it comes to immigration.

Much research on the economic determinants of anti-immigrant attitudes rests on the underlying assumption that immigration harms host countries' economies. Evidence suggests, on the contrary, that new immigrants have little to no impact on local wages and unemployment (Card 1990; Kerr and Kerr 2011). Recent research in historical political economy links mass migration to a wide range of positive, long-term outcomes for the U.S. economy (Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian 2020; Tabellini 2020). Moreover, immigrants tend to be highly entrepreneurial (Kerr 2018a, 2018b). They are more likely than native citizens to be self-employed and launch businesses, contributing to economic growth by fostering innovation and job creation (Azoulay et al. 2022; Kerr and Kerr 2020). As many as 97 percent of the members of the American Economic Association believe that "immigration generally has a net positive economic effect for the U.S. economy" (Geide-Stevenson and Parra-Perez 2021).

Relatively little work has been devoted by political scientists to the economic benefits of immigration.[1] This paper takes a step toward a better understanding of how such benefits relate to immigration attitudes. Specifically, I ask whether the economic contributions of a marginalized population—illegal immigrants[2]—can sway the mass public in favor of a path to citizenship, the liberal stance on a contentious policy debate. While doing so, I emphasize an intrinsic immigrant attribute—entrepreneurship—that has not been addressed by previous research on this matter. It is not uncommon for undocumented immigrants to launch businesses and even hire employees, which has wide-ranging implications for both politics and policy.

Using a pre-registered survey experiment, I ask a random sample of American respondents to determine if an undocumented immigrant currently residing in the U.S. should be allowed to remain in the country and given legal status. This vignette randomizes two key aspects of the immigrant's story: whether they are an employee or an employer; and whether they work in a low- or high-skill occupation. I find no evidence suggesting that citizens prefer job-creating to job-taking foreigners. My results also show that there is no skill premium for unauthorized immigrants. In conjunction with these null effects, I observe surprisingly high levels of support for legalization among most individuals, not only those predisposed to favor this policy position.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. I first provide background on immigrant entrepreneurship and its economic impacts. Next, I review the political economy literature on immigration attitudes, before developing hypotheses about business ownership and occupational skill levels. I then present my experimental design and report my results. I conclude by discussing possible explanations for the null effects and avenues for future research.

[1] See Liao et al. (2020) for a notable exception.

[2] Throughout this paper, I use the terms "illegal," "unauthorized," and "undocumented" interchangeably, as it has been proven that different terminology to describe immigrants does not affect policy preferences (Knoll, Redlawsk, and Sanborn 2011; Merolla, Ramakrishnan, and Haynes 2013).

2.2 Undocumented Job Creators

Immigration is often credited for American exceptionalism, as immigrants have contributed to U.S. growth, prosperity, and international dominance in culture, technology, and education. Kerr (2018a, 2018b) characterizes the U.S. as a powerful magnet for global talent, noting that immigrants account for large shares of American businesses, patent holders, academics, and Nobel prize winners.

The U.S. would be a poorer country with higher unemployment had fewer immigrants reached its soil throughout history. Immigrant inflows since the middle of the nineteenth century are associated with increases in wages and educational attainment among the overall population, as well as innovation, urbanization, and industrialization in the long run (Tabellini 2020). Despite these clear economic benefits, widespread nativism and xenophobia among the mass public have often triggered political backlashes and restrictive immigration policies (Sequeira, Nunn, and Qian 2020).

One of the most significant ways immigrants contribute to U.S. economy is through entrepreneurship. Immigrants tend to have an entrepreneurial spirit and high productivity, two attributes conducive to innovation (as measured by patent holdings—see Bernstein et al. 2018). They start businesses at higher rates than native citizens and, as a result, most governments offer incentives aimed at attracting entrepreneurial immigrants (Fairlie and Lofstrom 2015; Kerr and Kerr 2020). Azoulay et al. (2022) assess the economic impacts of immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.S. using a rich combination of data from the Census Survey of Business Owners, administrative records of firms, and the Fortune 500 raking of America's largest firms and their founders. They find that, compared to native-born individuals, immigrants are 35 percent more likely to hold patents and 80 percent more likely to start businesses of every size. On average, these businesses create 42 percent more jobs than those founded by native citizens while paying similar wages.

Nearly a quarter of the U.S. foreign-born population of 46 million is undocumented (Budiman 2020). Because U.S. law bars employers from

hiring individuals lacking work authorization, many undocumented immigrants (an estimated 10 percent) are self-employed (Roberts 2018; Salomon and Torrens 2017). Even though they are liable for deportation and are ineligible for government assistance programs, they can still own businesses, hire employees, and pay taxes (Mastman 2008). There is widespread unawareness about the economic contributions made by these immigrants, who are often portrayed as a strain on the job market and social safety net (The White House 2019). Following pledges made on the campaign trail, the Trump administration cut legal immigration in half, slashed refugee admissions, and ramped up deportations of undocumented immigrants (Anderson 2020; The New York Times 2016). These measures hurt immigrant-founded businesses, likely hampering the U.S. economy (Fabian 2018).

2.3 Immigration Attitudes and the Economy

An established theoretical tradition in political economy links immigration attitudes in Western democracies to native citizens' material self-interest (for a review, see Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). This line of research rests on the idea that immigrant inflows into industrialized economies create competition over limited resources between foreigners and natives. There are two main areas where such distributional conflicts might arise: the labor market and public finance.

First, the labor market competition hypothesis stipulates that native citizens working in low-skill occupations should oppose immigration, as newcomers increase labor supply and reduce wages in these industries (Mayda 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001). According to this line of research, immigrant inflows put pressure on the local job market, forcing natives to compete for employment opportunities against newcomers with the same professional qualifications as them (Scheve and Slaughter 2001). In advanced industrialized countries, unskilled immigration should thus be favored by highly qualified natives, but opposed by their poorly qualified peers (Mayda 2006). These cleavages exacerbate anti-

immigrant sentiments among native-born citizens working in shrinking sectors of Western economies (Dancygier and Donnelly 2013).

Second, research stemming from the tax burden hypothesis argues that opposition to immigration is driven by concerns pertaining to fiscal policy (Facchini and Mayda 2009; Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2007). According to this theory, unskilled immigration increases demand for public services (i.e., welfare), raising the fiscal burdens of native taxpayers. Consequently, the anticipation of post-tax income losses should decrease support for immigration (particularly unqualified immigration) among native-born citizens (particularly those earning high incomes). Anti-immigrant attitudes driven by tax- and spending-related concerns should be especially relevant in countries with wide social safety nets and large foreign-born populations, like the U.S.

Both of these theories have been tested systematically across Western countries. Using comparative electoral studies and survey experiments, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007, 2010, 2012) reject the contention that native citizens are more likely to oppose immigrants with the same qualifications as their own. Instead, citizens with higher education tend to be more supportive of all types of immigration, with *all* groups of citizens preferring high- to low-skilled immigration (see also Hainmueller, Hiscox, and Margalit 2015). These findings are taken to suggest that opposition to immigration is rooted in sociocultural factors captured by education, not self-interest. When asked to think about this topic, citizens place less weight on their personal economic circumstances than on their judgments and perceptions about how foreigners impact their country (Citrin et al. 1997).

Work centered on experimental methods has been able to simultaneously test two groups of factors—economic and cultural—in order to determine which better explains public opinion on immigration. For example, when manipulating the ethnicity and occupations of hypothetical immigrants, Harell et al., (2012), Iyengar et al. (2013), and Valentino et al. (2019) all find that individuals reward skills while (somewhat) overlooking race. In a seminal article, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2015) use a conjoint experiment to determine the influence

of nine immigrant attributes. Almost uniformly, American respondents prefer immigration candidates with advanced degrees, high-status professions, previous work experience, and plans for future employment.

While this body of work elucidates citizens' preferences to a large extent, it is focused on legal immigration.[3] As discussed previously, undocumented immigrants account for a relatively large proportion of the U.S. foreign-born population, and much of the contentiousness surrounding the immigration debate concerns this group specifically. It is thus important to determine if the conclusions derived from experiments featuring legal immigration candidates translate to unauthorized immigration. This is precisely the aim of Wright et al. (2016), whose study's main takeaway is that preferences about unauthorized immigrants can more faithfully be described as "categorical" rather than "attribute-based." The authors use a conjoint experiment in which respondents are asked to assess and choose between two illegal immigrants based on a series of randomly manipulated individual characteristics. When doing so, respondents behave in a matter that is consistent with Hainmueller and Hopkins' (2015) findings: they gravitate toward highly educated immigrants with professional experience. However, respondents are also given the choice to outright accept or reject *both* immigrants, and about 40 percent of them choose to take this option. This implies that, when it comes to illegal immigration, many citizens think in terms of moral principle first, paying little to no attention to the kind of information required for pragmatic decision-making. For them, legal status outweighs immigrants' personal merits.

2.4 Hypotheses

In the two previous sections, I stressed the political relevance of entrepreneurship in the undocumented immigrant community. I also presented the theoretical foundations and main conclusions of previous

[3] I note that Hainmueller and Hopkins' (2015) conjoint experiment includes an attribute for previous unauthorized entries into the U.S. This condition yields a negative effect on the probability of selecting an immigrant.

research at the nexus of political economy and immigration attitudes. In light of these previous findings, I formulate two hypotheses.

Firstly, given that entrepreneurship is commonplace among the undocumented immigrant population, it is crucial to determine if public opinion is responsive to this issue:

> **Hypothesis 1.** Support for legalization is higher for illegal immigrants who are business owners.

Considering the often-cited fear that foreigners might compete against natives for jobs, citizens should be particularly welcoming of business-owning immigrants, who are employers rather than employees. To the best of my knowledge, previous experiments based on randomized immigrant profiles do not account for entrepreneurship. Notably, in conjoint experiments, treatments for human capital tend to revolve around educational attainment, type of occupation, professional experience, employment plans, and language skills (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015; Wright, Levy, and Citrin 2016).

Secondly, perhaps the most important finding from past work on immigration attitudes relates to the consistent, widespread preference for qualified immigration among the mass public:

> **Hypothesis 2.** Support for legalization is higher for illegal immigrants who are highly skilled.

Considering the wealth of evidence to that effect, I expect citizens to prefer high- to low-skilled immigrants *ceteris paribus*. Admittedly, there are reasons to expect skill levels to instead have *no* effect. Namely, the skill premium uncovered in previous research might conceal respondents' biases against immigrants belonging to racial and ethnic minorities (Malhotra and Newman 2017; Newman and Malhotra 2019). Put differently, insofar as high educational achievement in many non-white countries is rather rare, many respondents express a preference for high-skilled foreigners not because they favor qualified immigration, but rather because they favor fewer immigrants overall. Concretely,

this suggests that citizens might not attach any importance to the skill qualifications of illegal immigrants, who are predominantly Hispanic (España-Nájera and Vera 2019).

That being said, previous research often finds skill premiums for presumably non-white immigrants. This includes Wright et al.'s (2016) conjoint experiment: respondents who choose between unauthorized immigrants express preferences consistent with a skill premium. In the next section, I present my empirical test for these hypotheses.

2.5 Research Design

To assess the causal effects of the aforementioned factors on public support for a path to citizenship, I conduct a pre-registered survey experiment with an online sample of 2,000 U.S. adults.[4]

In the survey, the following text introduces the experiment:

> We will now present an illegal immigrant currently living in the U.S. We would like you to tell us what you think should happen to that person.

The inclusion of the (potentially charged) term "illegal immigrant" is meant to prime respondents' attitudes about this topic before presenting them with the actual vignette.

In the vignette that they read, respondents are randomly assigned to one of four (2^2) experimental conditions along two dimensions: entrepreneurship (business owner versus employee) and occupational skill level (carpenter versus computer programmer). These experimental conditions are presented in Table 2.1. All versions of the vignette have the same beginning and end. The first sentence implies that the immigrant in question is a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient—the only category of unauthorized immigrants legally allowed to work

[4]The pre-analysis plan was submitted to the Open Science Framework on July 22, 2020 (see https://osf.io/2rdtc/ and Appendix B.2). Data collection took place between July 24 and August 9, 2020 via the Qualtrics platform. Respondents were recruited by research firm Dynata to fill quotas for age, gender, education, and Census region.

in the U.S. (Cortes Romero 2020).[5] The last sentence suggests that this immigrant would likely qualify for an eventual amnesty program, which would almost certainly require that applicants have no criminal history and no back taxes owed (Rampell 2013). For instance, the vignette for a low-skilled business owner reads as follows:

> Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a carpenter and the owner of a five-employee construction company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.

The mention of Mexico as the country of origin is meant to convey the immigrant's Hispanic ethnicity, as my goal is specifically to determine if economic factors shape opinions on non-white immigrants. Compared to white immigrants, Hispanic immigrants spark more negative attitudes (Ostfeld 2017) and are more severely judged for being in the country illegally (Hartman, Newman, and Scott Bell 2014).

Table 2.1: Treatments and experimental conditions

		Entrepreneurship	
		Employee	Business Owner
Occupational Skill	High-Skill	Felipe is a computer programmer and works for a technology company.	Felipe is a computer programmer and the owner of a five-employee technology company.
	Low-Skill	Felipe is a carpenter and works for a construction company.	Felipe is a carpenter and the owner of a five-employee construction company.

After the vignette, I measure the outcome of interest with the following question:

[5] DACA recipients are immigrants who arrived in the U.S. before the age of 16 (among many other selection criteria). Of the 649,000 program recipients in 2020, about 96 percent were Hispanic, and 80 percent were born in Mexico (Krogstad 2020).

> Should Felipe be allowed to remain in the U.S. and eventually qualify for citizenship? 0 means you oppose this a great deal, and 10 means you support this a great deal.

Here, the wording explicitly avoids the terms "path to citizenship" and "amnesty," as such terms could be perceived as partisan and have been proven to introduce significant framing effects on immigration policy preferences (Merolla, Ramakrishnan, and Haynes 2013).

2.6 Empirical Analysis

Before turning to the treatments' causal effects, it is useful to take a descriptive look at the experimental data. Surprisingly, respondents on average are highly in favor of a path to citizenship for the immigrant described in the vignette. The mean of the dependent variable is 7.37 on a scale ranging from 0 (oppose legalization a great deal) to 10 (support legalization a great deal). Incidentally, the proportion of respondents favoring legalization (78 percent[6]) is similar to that of Americans that support legal status for DACA recipients (74 percent—see Krogstad 2020).

Table 2.2 presents the means and standard deviations of the dependent variable and a set of individual characteristics, as well as the partisan and geographic distributions of respondents across the four experimental conditions. Two points are noteworthy. Firstly, the sample characteristics are fairly balanced across experimental conditions, with substantially the same proportion of partisans in each group.[7] Random assignment to experimental conditions was successful. Secondly, when looking at the average support for legalization in each group, it seems that the treatments had no discernible effect on the dependent variable. Support for a path to citizenship is substantially the same regardless of the condition to which respondents were assigned.

[6]Based on a dichotomous coding of the dependent variable.

[7]The share of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans in the overall sample matches that reported by Gallup (2021) for the American population in 2020.

Table 2.2: Sample characteristics by experimental condition

		Employee				Business Owner			
		Low-Skill (N=502)		High-Skill (N=504)		Low-Skill (N=498)		High-Skill (N=498)	
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Support for Legalization		**7.33**	**2.79**	**7.43**	**2.62**	**7.29**	**2.68**	**7.39**	**2.60**
Age		48.00	17.31	49.07	18.23	48.68	17.95	48.35	17.84
Gender (Woman=1)		0.49	0.50	0.49	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.50	0.50
Education (Years)		13.33	4.78	13.00	4.99	13.31	5.09	13.33	4.74
Income Group (0-10)		5.25	2.20	5.33	2.24	5.45	2.21	5.39	2.24
Party ID (0-1)		0.46	0.42	0.49	0.42	0.49	0.42	0.49	0.42
		N	Pct.	N	Pct.	N	Pct.	N	Pct.
Party ID (groups)	Democrats	183	36.5	174	34.5	169	33.9	172	34.5
	Independents	130	25.9	140	27.8	143	28.7	137	27.5
	Republicans	149	29.7	162	32.1	155	31.1	159	31.9
Urban Sector	Big City	120	23.9	128	25.4	116	23.3	117	23.5
	Suburb	193	38.4	182	36.1	206	41.4	180	36.1
	Small City	136	27.1	137	27.2	136	27.3	150	30.1
	Village	19	3.8	20	4.0	10	2.0	12	2.4
	Farm/Countryside	34	6.8	37	7.3	30	6.0	39	7.8
Census Region	Midwest	109	21.7	92	18.3	96	19.3	110	22.1
	Northeast	97	19.3	97	19.2	86	17.3	93	18.7
	South	186	37.1	178	35.3	206	41.4	182	36.5
	West	110	21.9	137	27.2	110	22.1	113	22.7

Table 2.3 presents the coefficient estimates of the experimental treatments along with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors. The baseline model in the first column regresses the dependent variable on both dichotomous treatment variables. [8]

The first treatment effect—entrepreneurship—is not only negligible but also inconsistent: respondents assigned to one of the two vignettes featuring a business-owning immigrant are *less* supportive of legalization than those assigned to an employee. Of course, this estimate is imprecise, but it goes to show that this treatment has essentially no effect on the outcome. As for the skill treatment, its estimate, while positive, is again not statistically significant: respondents assigned to a high-skill condition are on average more supportive of legalization, but only by a tenth of a point on a ten-point scale. This result challenges previous findings on the skill premium. The null effects are apparent in Figure 2.2, which plots the mean level of support for legalization by experimental condition. The confidence intervals for each point estimate are fairly narrow, suggesting that the negligible effects are precise (i.e., likely not due to a lack of statistical power). This figure also illustrates the right-skewed distribution of the dependent variable. The modal value is 10, the maximum level of the scale.

The second and third columns of Table 2.3 present covariate-adjusted regression estimates of the experimental treatment effects. Column 2 introduces two indicators of respondents' socioeconomic status: education and income.[9] While the main estimates remain substantially unaffected, two points are worthy of mention. On the

[8] More formally, this model is an OLS regression of the following form:

$$\text{Support for Legalization} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Business Owner} + \beta_2 \text{High-Skill} + \varepsilon,$$

where the parameters of interest are β_1 (the effect for a business owner relative to an employee) and β_2 (the effect for a high-skill individual relative to a low-skill one). β_0 gives the mean of the dependent variable when both treatment dummies are equal to zero (i.e., the mean for a low-skill employee).

[9] Education is the respondent's years of schooling, from 0 to 24+. Income is the respondent's perceived standing in the U.S. income distribution, as measured by the following question: "On this scale, 0 represents the lowest income group in the United States, and 10 represents the highest income group in the United States. What group does

Table 2.3: Economic attributes do not affect support for legalization

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(Intercept)	7.331***	7.129***	7.851***
	(0.106)	(0.249)	(0.250)
Business Owner (vs. Employee)	−0.044	−0.009	−0.026
	(0.120)	(0.124)	(0.123)
High-Skill (vs. Low-Skill)	0.099	0.093	0.109
	(0.120)	(0.124)	(0.123)
Education		−0.078	−0.075
		(0.286)	(0.290)
Income		0.598*	0.795**
		(0.289)	(0.286)
Party ID (D-I-R)			−1.690***
			(0.146)
Observations	2002	1793	1699
Adjusted R-squared	−0.001	0.001	0.073

Notes:
Coefficient estimates with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is support for legalization on a scale ranging from 0 (oppose a great deal) to 10 (support a great deal). The outcome has a mean of 7.36 and a standard deviation of 2.67. All regressors are standardized to range from 0 to 1.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

one hand, education has a negligible, negative effect on the dependent variable; this is inconsistent with previous research predicting a robust association between education and favorable attitudes toward immigration (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007, 2010). On the other hand, the coefficient for income is moderately positive: a movement from the lowest to the highest income group is associated with an increase of more than one half-point on the ten-point dependent variable. This is consistent with theoretical expectations: income should yield a positive effect *regardless*

your household belong to?" For ease of interpretation, both variables were rescaled to range between 0 and 1.

of the type of immigrant in question (Hainmueller, Hiscox, and Margalit 2015).[10]

Figure 2.1: Mean support for legalization by experimental condition (point estimates and 95% heteroskedasticity-consistent confidence intervals)

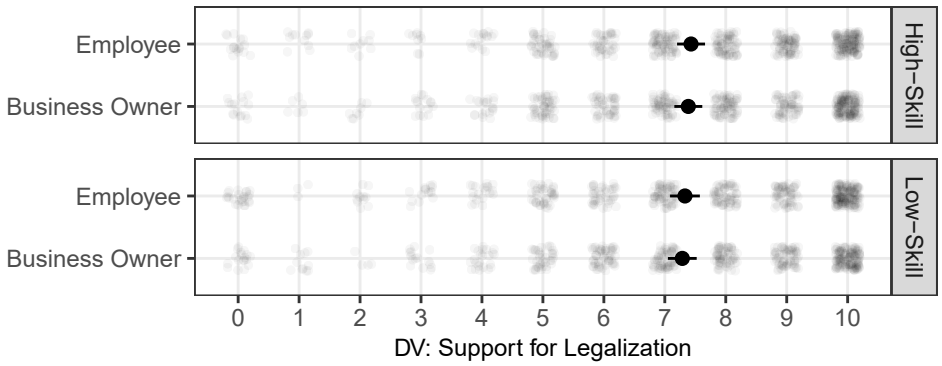
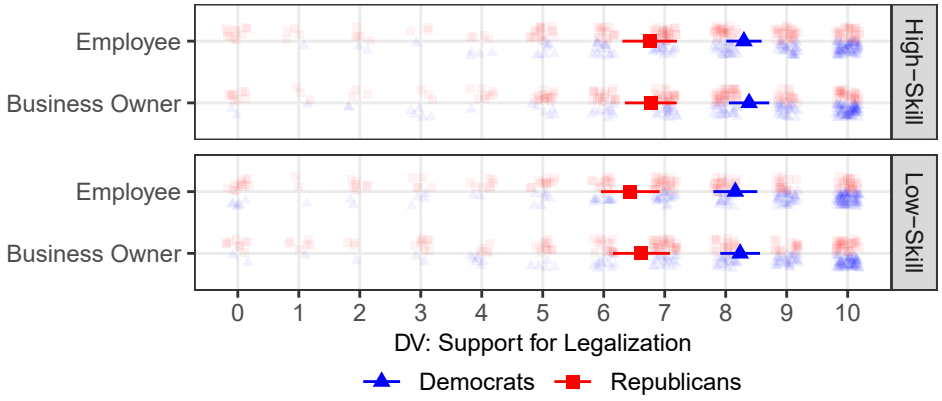


Figure 2.2: Mean support for legalization by experimental condition, Democrats versus Republicans (point estimates and 95% heteroskedasticity-consistent confidence intervals)



[10] I also estimate (non-pre-registered) multiplicative interactions between the treatment dummies and these covariates. The interaction coefficients are consistently null regardless of model specification (e.g., all interactions in a single model, an individual model per interaction, a separate model for each moderator, etc.): there does not seem to be any heterogeneity in the treatments' effects based on respondents' socioeconomic background.

Column 3 of Table 2.3 adds party identification to the covariate-adjusted model.[11] It comes as no surprise that this factor accounts for the largest movement on the dependent variable: Republicans' level of support for legalization is on average 1.69 points lower on a ten-point scale than that of Democrats. However, a closer inspection shows that the outcome variable has a mean of 6.65 among Republicans and 8.27 among Democrats. Republican-identifying respondents are quite supportive of legalization, a striking outcome considering the prevalence of animosity toward foreigners in the GOP under Donald Trump (Mutz 2018). Figure 2.2 plots the mean value of the dependent variable for Democrats and Republicans by experimental condition. It is apparent that partisanship produces additive rather than heterogeneous effects on the outcome of interest, as each group of partisans has roughly the same mean value across experimental conditions.[12]

2.7 Discussion

This study sought to ascertain the impact of immigrant entrepreneurship on public opinion about unauthorized immigration in the U.S. I designed and fielded an original survey experiment to test the effects of two randomly manipulated attributes on support for legalization. The first attribute represents an original contribution to this line of research, which to the best of my knowledge has not done any empirical tests on whether business ownership in immigrants can increase favorable attitudes among the public. In contrast, the second attribute is likely the most common factor included in previous experiments on immigration, which find that skill levels regularly shape citizens' preferences (albeit more strongly for some immigrants than for others). Contrary to theoretical

[11] Party identification is measured using the traditional threefold scale from the American National Elections Study. Democrats are coded 0, Independents 0.5, and Republicans 1.

[12] As a robustness test, I estimate (non-pre-registered) multiplicative interactions between the treatment dummies and party identification. The interaction coefficients are null, meaning that there is little to no heterogeneity in the treatments' effects based on respondents' partisan predispositions.

expectations, both treatments resulted in null effects, with respondents overall expressing favorable opinions about the fictional immigrant featured in the vignette experiment.

There are three possible reasons why the experimental treatments did not have any effect. The most obvious one is that both treatments were too weak. While the textual vignette clearly stated the immigrant's entrepreneurial and occupational background, the differences across conditions may not have been sufficiently pronounced. For instance, it would have been possible to accentuate the skill level distinction by including immigrants' education level along with their occupation (i.e., a "university-educated computer programmer" versus a "high school-educated carpenter"). Instead, all versions of the vignette featured roughly the same exemplary, hard-working individual with a clear set of skills—only small details about this immigrant's professional profile were manipulated. A case could be made that these small details were shrouded by other information about the immigrant's ethnic origin, tax history, and criminal record. Nevertheless, the vignette was 30 words long; this is not by any means a long text that respondents were not able to skim through. All information included in addition to the manipulated text was not extraneous because it was meant to contribute to the experiment's external validity.[13]

A more plausible explanation is that my vignettes were too positive, with all experimental conditions depicting a commendable illegal immigrant. A business owner employing five people produces greater economic benefits than a simple employee; yet, both contribute to society to a considerable extent. The same can be said of the comparison between a carpenter and a computer programmer: even though in theory the former should inspire less support than the latter, in practice

[13]Matters might have been made worse by the fact that immigration was not a contentious political issue at the time my survey was in the field—unlike 2016 and 2018, the 2020 electoral cycle was not dominated by immigration, but rather by police brutality and racial justice as well as COVID-19. That being said, the fact that respondents were not widely exposed to information about immigration prior to the experiment (i.e., the absence of "pretreatment events"—see Druckman and Leeper 2012) should be helpful in avoiding null effects.

both have worthy occupations enabling them to participate in the economy. In a related note, previous research shows that citizens are more welcoming of immigrants they perceive as having assimilated into American society by having adopted occupations typically associated with natives (Maxwell 2017; Ostfeld 2017). Moreover, the implication that the immigrant featured in the experiment was a DACA recipient might also have contributed to the overwhelmingly positive reactions I observe in my sample. Public opinion is particularly sympathetic toward those who were brought to the U.S. as children because people recognize that these individuals did not willingly violate a norm by deciding to immigrate illegally. Still, it remains noteworthy that such a high proportion of respondents expressed a favorable opinion, considering that the illegal status and non-white background of the immigrant were clearly stated.

Yet another reason for the null effects could simply be that economic considerations do not come into play with respect to preferences about illegal immigration. This is good news.[14] Citizens do not appear to have stringent selection criteria for undocumented immigrants, whom they seemingly want to keep in their country as long as they contribute to it. The fact that most respondents—including Republicans—were supportive of a path to citizenship for low-skilled, non-white immigrant workers is encouraging. There is mounting evidence that the public is not nearly as hostile to immigration as it is often assumed to be, and that anti-immigrant biases may be shrinking (Wright and Levy 2020). A burgeoning research agenda asks whether economic benefits stemming from immigration can reduce prejudice among the native-born population (Liao, Malhotra, and Newman 2020). It seems that they can. Amnesty programs open to all undocumented immigrants who meet basic criteria could potentially attract widespread support among

[14] An alternative explanation would be that this is in fact *bad* news, since evaluations of immigrants seem impervious to appeals to material interests and economic considerations. It might be that people are not persuadable because their biases and prejudice against undocumented immigrants are so strong. Still, the fact remains that most respondents expressed strong support for a path to citizenship *regardless* of my experimental manipulations.

the mass public, which is receptive to the idea that these individuals contribute to the quality of life. Communication strategies drawing on economic considerations might be effective for immigration advocacy groups and immigrant-friendly politicians.

More research is needed to better understand how the economic contributions of (unauthorized) immigrants sway public opinion. A first important extension to this paper would be to randomize immigration status. This would allow for the comparison between legal and illegal immigrants, and how factors pertaining to economic output shape support for each of these groups. Previous research predicts an important skill premium for legal immigrants, and my own findings suggest that skill plays no role for non-white illegal immigrants. The influence of legal status and various attributes related to race, ethnicity, and human capital could be tested simultaneously using a conjoint experimental design. Another significant contribution to this literature would be to carry out information and framing experiments about the benefits of immigration. Many citizens have misconceptions about the impacts immigrants have on their country's economy and society; correcting erroneous information might lead to changes in policy preferences.

3

Did Exposure to COVID-19 Affect Vote Choice in the 2020 Presidential Election?‡

Citizens evaluate elected officials based on their past performance. In the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election, the conventional wisdom in both media and academic discourse was that Donald Trump would have been a two-term president absent an unprecedented, global force majeure. *In this research note, we address a simple question: Did exposure to COVID-19 impact vote choice in the 2020 presidential election? Using data from the Cooperative Election Study, we find that Trump's vote share decreased because of COVID-19 exposure. However, there is no evidence suggesting that Joe Biden would have lost the election had no voter reported being exposed to coronavirus cases and deaths. These negligible effects are found at both the national and state levels, and are robust to an exhaustive set of confounders across model specifications.*

‡This paper is coauthored with Semra Sevi and was published in *Research & Politics*. We thank the journal's editors and anonymous reviewers, as well as André Blais, Vincent Arel-Bundock, and Ruth Dassonneville for their helpful comments and suggestions. This paper was presented at the Université de Montréal's Research Chair in Electoral Studies and Canada Research Chair in Electoral Democracy weekly seminar—thank you to all participants. Replication materials are available at https://osf.io/aexj4/.

3.1 Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) posed an unprecedented challenge to democracies worldwide. In response to the pandemic, governments implemented pivotal public health measures to slow the spread of the virus such as lockdowns, curfews, and mask mandates. In the US, then-President Donald Trump sought to downplay COVID-19 and its consequences, pushing for a rapid re-opening of the economy ahead of his re-election (Acosta 2020; Parker et al. 2020). Heading into November, the US was among the hardest-hit nations in the world, with more than 80,000 daily cases and close to a quarter of a million cumulative deaths (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center 2021).

In the aftermath of the election, media pundits, political operatives, and academics alike contended that Trump could have won re-election if his administration had responded to the pandemic more competently (Acosta 2020; Parker et al. 2020; Whiteley et al. 2020). Others argued that Joe Biden would likely have won regardless of COVID-19 (Masket 2021).

Ascertaining the electoral consequences of the pandemic is politically and theoretically important. In this research note, we estimate the effects that self-reported exposure to COVID-19 cases and deaths had on two-party vote choice during the 2020 presidential election. This allows us to speculate about whether Trump would have won re-election had there not been a pandemic. Using data from the 2020 Cooperative Election Study (CES), we find that COVID-19 increased electoral support for Joe Biden over Donald Trump. This likely only had a negligible effect on the election's outcome, however; in a simulated, no-pandemic scenario, each candidate's vote share remains essentially the same.

3.2 Crises and Retrospective Voting

The retrospective voting literature posits that voters evaluate their elected officials' performance, holding incumbents accountable at the ballot box (Ashworth 2012). Research on blind retrospection finds that governments

are punished not only for their policy decisions but also for 'acts of God' beyond their control, such as natural disasters (Achen and Bartels 2016; Heersink et al. 2020). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, approval ratings for incumbents worldwide have decreased in response to rising infection rates (Herrera et al. 2020) but increased as public health measures have been put in place (Bol et al. 2021).

Nevertheless, one should not expect sanitary crises to inevitably affect American elections. A century ago, the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic had a negligible effect on that year's midterm elections, despite the 600,000 deaths it caused among the then 100-million population (Abad and Maurer 2020; Achen and Bartels 2016). Thus, it is not clear that COVID-19 played a major role in Trump's re-election. Public reactions to national crises are increasingly shaped by citizens' partisan allegiances (Heersink et al. 2020). As such, the pandemic is unlikely to have changed Democrats' overwhelmingly negative, and Republicans' overwhelmingly positive, views of the president (Hart 2021). In the following section, we ascertain the impact that exposure to COVID-19 had on presidential vote choice.

3.3 COVID-19 and the 2020 Presidential Election

We leverage the prerelease of the 2020 CES, a two-wave, nationally representative stratified survey administered by YouGov (Schaffner, Ansolabehere, and Luks 2021).[1] Between September and October, 61,000 American adults were recruited for the preelection survey; more than 50,000 of these respondents also completed the post-election survey in November. These voluminous data allow us to estimate effect sizes precisely. We note that since the (weighted) state subsamples are representative of the state populations, we are also able to conduct state-level analyses.

Our outcome of interest is the presidential vote choice, measured with the self-declared, two-party vote in the post-election questionnaire (Biden = 1, Trump = 0). We draw all independent variables from the pre-

[1] See https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/.

election survey, which includes a set of questions asking respondents whether they or someone they know (family members, friends, and co-workers) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, and whether they know anyone who died from the virus.[2] We code three dummies indicating if respondents themselves were diagnosed ($\bar{x}_1 = 0.05$), if someone they know was diagnosed ($\bar{x}_2 = 0.51$), and if they know someone who died from the coronavirus ($\bar{x}_3 = 0.16$). Our models account for an exhaustive set of sociodemographic, socioeconomic, and political confounders.[3]

Table 3.1 presents our main results.[4] In column 1, we regress vote choice on our three COVID-19 dummies; this yields relatively large yet naive estimates, except for the variable measuring if respondents themselves contracted the virus—a null result. Columns 2 to 4 gradually introduce control variables; when doing so, the coefficients are reduced but more precisely estimated. Column 5 corresponds to our fully specified model, which includes sociodemographic characteristics, and pandemic-related and political covariates, as well as state-level fixed-effects. Knowing someone diagnosed with COVID-19 leads to a 1.4 percentage point increase in the probability of voting for Biden; knowing someone who died from the virus yields a two-percentage-point effect. As for the effect of having had the coronavirus, the coefficient is (intriguingly) negative, yet statistically and substantially insignificant.[5]

[2]It is possible that multiple respondents in our sample are reporting experiences involving the same individual who contracted the virus. This kind of interdependence in the data might introduce some bias. Our analyses do not directly account for such network effects, as we have no information on respondents' social networks.

[3]See Appendix C.1 for the full list of controls along with summary statistics.

[4]Following Angrist and Pischke (2008) and Gomila (2021), our main ordinary least squares (OLS) estimations correspond to linear probability models, as these allow for a straightforward interpretation of the relationship between COVID-19 exposure and two-party vote choice. We report logistic regression estimates in Appendix C.2.

[5]In Appendix C.4, we report separate results for Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Having contracted the virus yields null effects across the board. COVID-19 exposure has no effect whatsoever on Democrats' vote choice. Knowing someone diagnosed with the disease has a four-percentage-point effect among Independents but no effect among Republicans. Knowing someone who died increases the probability of voting for Biden by three percentage points among Independents, and four percentage points among Republicans.

Table 3.1: Exposure to COVID-19 and vote choice in the 2020 presidential election

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	−0.0255	−0.0332+	0.0126	−0.0013	−0.0009
	(0.0182)	(0.0171)	(0.0137)	(0.0107)	(0.0105)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	0.0838***	0.0783***	0.0298***	0.0133***	0.0140***
	(0.0081)	(0.0074)	(0.0062)	(0.0037)	(0.0037)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	0.1309***	0.0853***	0.0562***	0.0204***	0.0204***
	(0.0103)	(0.0096)	(0.0083)	(0.0052)	(0.0051)
Sociodemographic Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pandemic-related Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
State Fixed-Effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	37 626	37 626	37 626	37 626	37 626
Adjusted R-squared	0.023	0.187	0.442	0.795	0.795

Notes:
Regression estimates from linear probability models with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Biden (1) versus Trump (0) in the post-election self-declared vote. Sociodemographic controls include age, gender, education level, household income, and dummies for race, marital status, and residence area. Pandemic-related controls include respondents' general health assessment, whether their household income increased or decreased in 2020, and whether they think the nation's economy got better or worse in 2020. Political controls include Democrat-Republican party identification, conservative-liberal ideology, and Trump-Clinton vote choice in 2016.
+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Using estimates from column 5, we simulate a counterfactual scenario with no infections and no deaths by deriving the model's predicted values when the three COVID-19 dummies are set at zero versus their population means. Trump's predicted vote share under this no-pandemic scenario increases by only 1 percentage point. Put differently, Biden receives a slightly smaller vote share when no American is exposed to the disease.

In Appendix C.3, we report state-level results focusing on the four closest states in the 2020 presidential race, all won very narrowly by Biden: Georgia, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania.[6] Losing any three of these states would have cost Biden the election. First, we estimate our main model on a subsample of the aforementioned states. In our simulation, Biden gains less than a percentage point in these aggregated contests. Second, we interact the COVID-19 variables with state dummies to assess if coronavirus exposure had differential effects in these four battlegrounds. None of the interaction terms is significant ($p < 0.1$) in the right direction, and the main effects remain unchanged. Third, we run our model in each state separately.[7] Only in Georgia and Wisconsin does COVID-19 exposure yield precise effects ($p < 0.1$). Biden's margin of victory is overturned by our simulation in both states, resulting in a closer Electoral College but the same overall (hypothetical) election outcome.

3.4 Discussion

Following the 2020 presidential race, many pundits and academics were quick to claim that the pandemic might have altered the outcome of the election. While limited to a single instance of COVID-19's electoral impact (i.e. self-reported exposure to the virus), our findings do not support the claim that the pandemic cost Trump his re-election. There is no doubt that COVID-19 negatively affected Trump's electoral performance; yet our counterfactual analysis shows that the presidential two-party

[6] In Appendix C.5, we present state-level results for the next four closest contests: North Carolina, Nevada, Michigan, and Florida. Results are either null or negligible: none of these states flips in our no-pandemic simulation

[7] We acknowledge that these state-level results rely on small subsamples.

vote is virtually unchanged when no voter contracts the disease.[8] The null finding for those who were personally diagnosed is consistent with previous analyses having found that support for Trump increased in some of the areas that were hardest hit by COVID-19 (McMinn and Stein 2020). Our results are also consistent with the fact that Trump's approval ratings were remarkably stable throughout his presidency (FiveThirtyEight 2021). In early 2020, fewer than 45% of American adults approved of Trump's job as president. This percentage fluctuated somewhat over the year but remained in the mid-forties until January 2021. This suggests, as our results do, that the extraordinary circumstances that arose during that election year did little to change the electorate's crystalized—and overall unfavorable—views of the 45th president.

[8] Ahead of the election, Johnson et al. (2020) forecasted that COVID-19 fatalities would shift swing state electorates toward Democrats, as the elderly—who have high turnout rates and disproportionately vote for Republicans—would be more likely to die from the virus. Indeed, on election day, Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania were among the states with the most cumulative deaths—between 6000 and 9000 per state (Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center 2021). It is plausible that exposure to COVID-19 cases and deaths, combined with Trump's loss in support resulting directly from the virus' fatalities, flipped some or all of these states to Biden. Nevertheless, it is not possible to determine how many of those who died from COVID-19 would have turned out to vote for Trump.

Conclusion

Dans ce mémoire, j'ai présenté trois essais de recherche cherchant à élucider des questions empiriques pertinentes à la compréhension de la formation de l'opinion publique pendant une période mouvementée de l'histoire politique américaine récente: la présidence de Donald Trump. Sans surprise, le fil conducteur des articles est l'identification partisane, qui semble empreindre la plupart de mes résultats. Cela étant dit, un peu comme l'ère Trump – que je propose de dénommer « l'Âge orange[1] » – plusieurs de mes trouvailles sont étranges ou inattendues.

Pour ce qui est du premier article, j'espérais des résultats différents avant d'entamer ce projet. Une conception idéaliste du citoyen voudrait qu'il soit capable d'utiliser l'information dont il dispose pour prendre des décisions plus rationnelles; au fur et à mesure qu'il acquiert des connaissances, la qualité de ses décisions devrait s'accroître.[2] Un vaste ensemble de travaux en psychologie politique en dit autrement.[3] Les citoyens plus politiquement sophistiqués n'ont pas l'air préoccupés de leur intérêt personnel parce qu'ils sont d'abord et avant tout guidés par leurs allégeances idéologiques et partisanes. Quant aux citoyens peu politiquement sophistiqués, mes résultats suggèrent qu'ils sont plus portés à considérer d'autres éléments qu'une ligne de parti dans la formation de leurs opinions. Il semblerait que la politisation soit une

[1] Le terme « Âge d'or » porterait à confusion et s'avérerait trop osé pour un mémoire.

[2] Un axiome de cette école de pensée est qu'on peut déterminer quelles sont les « bonnes » opinions. Dans la plupart de cas, je suis convaincu que cela est possible.

[3] Il existe une littérature cherchant à déterminer si l'information change les opinions en comparant les préférences des individus aux deux bouts de l'échelle de sophistication politique (voir, par exemple, Althaus 1998; Bartels 1996). Je n'accepte pas le postulat selon lequel les citoyens mieux informés adoptent des positions de meilleure qualité.

mauvaise chose, dans la mesure où elle pousse à adopter aveuglément les positions de son groupe d'appartenance politique.

Le second article présente des effets nuls intéressants, car ils vont à l'encontre d'un résultat très répandu dans la littérature sur les attitudes envers l'immigration: le *skill premium*. En concevant mon devis de recherche, il me paraissait évident que les immigrants propriétaires d'entreprise allaient été favorisés par rapport aux employés, et qu'il y aurait des différences substantielles dues au niveau de compétences professionnelles. J'ai donc été très surpris de constater qu'aucun de ces deux traitements n'affecte l'évaluation des immigrants dans mon expérience. Pourquoi mes résultats ne corroborent-il pas le *skill premium*? Il faut savoir que les biais de publication sont un problème répandu en science politique (Gerber et Malhotra 2008; Malhotra 2021; Arel-Bundock et al. 2022). Ainsi, il n'est pas étonnant que les études publiées gravitent vers des trouvailles qu'il n'est pas toujours possible de répliquer.

Une limite du troisième article est que « [l'analyse] ne démontre pas que la pandémie dans son entièreté n'a pas affecté le résultat de l'élection ».[4] Certes, mes résultats concernent spécifiquement l'effet de l'exposition à la COVID-19 sur le choix de vote – comme le suggère le titre de cet article. Il faut néanmoins tenir compte des implications de cette trouvaille. Si le contact (direct ou indirect) avec la maladie n'est associé qu'à un changement somme toute minime du choix de vote, cela suggère que d'autres variables adjacentes devraient avoir une influence tout aussi modeste. Dans la même veine, il faut se rappeler que mon estimé (Mendoza Aviña et Sevi 2021) de l'impact électoral de la COVID-19 aux États-Unis n'en est qu'un parmi plusieurs autres ayant été publiés depuis le début de la pandémie (Baccini, Brodeur et Weymouth 2021; Byers et Shay 2022; Hart 2021; Shino et Smith 2021; Warshaw, Vavreck et Baxter-King 2020; Wu et Huber 2021; Yam et al. 2020). La distribution des effets rapportés est assez large.[5] Les indicateurs opérationnalisés varient entre les études, tout comme le niveau d'analyse (individuel ou agrégé) et la période de collecte des données (avant, pendant ou après l'élection).

[4]Merci à Pierre Martin pour cette formulation aussi concise.

[5]Hart (2021) et Yam et al. (2020) rapportent des effets positifs sur le soutien à Trump.

Dans leur ensemble, les trois articles qui composent ce mémoire couvrent une étendue importante. Chacun est centré sur un type de variable dépendante distincte: les préférences politiques; les évaluations d'individus; le choix de vote. La nature des facteurs explicatifs déployés est tout aussi diversifiée: les variables sociodémographiques; les prédispositions politiques; la politisation; le profil économique; les incidents auto-rapportés. Bien que j'utilise le sondage pour répondre à toutes mes questions de recherche, je collecte des données primaires dans un cas et je déploie des données secondaires issues d'études électorales dans les deux autres cas. J'ai pu développer ma boîte à outils méthodologique en réalisant ces trois projets, qui m'ont amené à utiliser le modèle de régression linéaire et l'expérience par sondage dans toute leur splendeur. Il faut aussi noter que, parmi les trois articles, deux sont déjà publiés dans des revues de science politique avec comité de lecture (Mendoza Aviña et Blais 2022; Mendoza Aviña et Sevi 2021); qui plus est, je suis le premier auteur ou l'auteur unique de tous les articles. Bref, le travail accompli est considérable, et sa portée est large. J'en suis fier.

Pour terminer, je dois reconnaître que le titre de ce mémoire révèle ma partialité: il sous-entend que la présidence de Donald Trump est chose du passé.[6] Or, au moment où j'écris ces lignes, Trump est le grand favori pour remporter l'investiture présidentielle républicaine de 2024. On peut s'attendre à ce qu'il se porte candidat, considérant qu'il jouit d'une avance écrasante dans les sondages de l'électorat républicain et d'un soutien institutionnel absolu.[7] Réussira-t-il à devenir le premier président américain depuis Grover Cleveland à reprendre les rênes de la Maison-Blanche après avoir perdu sa réélection, ou connaîtra-t-il le même destin que Teddy Roosevelt, qui avait échoué ce même pari? Je l'ignore.

[6] J'espère sincèrement que je vais finir par avoir raison.

[7] Il faut mentionner que plusieurs législatures républicaines à travers le pays se préparent à faire fi des résultats du scrutin présidentiel de 2024 dans leur État, dans l'éventualité où celui-ci serait défavorable au candidat républicain. Il ne faut pas non plus écarter la possibilité que le 119^{e} Congrès refuse de reconnaître le vainqueur légitime de l'élection. En effet, ses membres seront assermentés le 3 janvier 2025 et devront se réunir trois jours plus tard – le 6 janvier – pour faire le décompte des bulletins de vote du collège électoral et certifier le résultat de l'élection.

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Appendix A

Supporting Information for "Are Tax Cuts Supporters Self-Interested and/or Partisan?"

A.1 Summary Statistics

Table A.1: Summary statistics

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Min	Max	Median	Mean	SD
TCJA Opinion	2	1	0	1	0.50	0.58	0.49
Party Identification	7	4	0	1	0.42	0.47	0.37
Household Income	16	10	0	1	0.30	0.33	0.22
Political Sophistication	25	4	0	1	0.73	0.68	0.30
Political Knowledge	7	0	0	1	0.69	0.61	0.39
Political Interest	4	4	0	1	0.50	0.72	0.33
Education Level	6	0	0	1	0.30	0.47	0.31
Age (18-91)	78	0	0	1	0.60	0.61	0.23
Gender (Male=1)	2	0	0	1	0.00	0.49	0.50
Race (White=1)	2	0	0	1	0.50	0.70	0.46

A.2 Political Sophistication Index

Political Knowledge Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$):

1. Which party has a majority of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives? [Republicans; Democrats; Neither; Not sure]
2. Which party has a majority of seats in the U.S. Senate? [Republicans; Democrats; Neither; Not sure]
3. Which party has a majority of seats in your State Senate? [Republicans; Democrats; Neither; Not sure]
4. Which party has a majority of seats in your State Lower Chamber? [Republicans; Democrats; Neither; Not sure]

Political Interest:
Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs... [Most of the time; Some of the time; Only now and then; Hardly at all; Don't know]

A.3 Regression Results

Table A.2: Regression results

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Income	−0.019	−0.221	0.152
	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.045)
Republican	0.553	0.400	−0.072
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.027)
Income × Republican		0.438	
		(0.033)	
Income × Sophistication			−0.215
			(0.053)
Republican × Sophistication			0.853
			(0.032)
Political Sophistication			−0.481
			(0.026)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	51 751	51 751	50 485
Adjusted R-squared	0.178	0.184	0.221

Notes:
Regression estimates from linear probability models with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Support (1) or Oppose (0) the TCJA. Covariates include age, gender, race, and education. All variables range from 0 to 1.

A.4 Alternative Estimations

Table A.3: Results using logictic regression

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Income	−0.073	−1.058	0.831
	(0.049)	(0.073)	(0.122)
Republican	2.590	1.760	−0.558
	(0.030)	(0.053)	(0.079)
Income × Republican		2.445	
		(0.133)	
Income × Sophistication			−1.223
			(0.162)
Republican × Sophistication			4.490
			(0.107)
Political Sophistication			−2.202
			(0.076)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	51 751	51 751	50 485
AIC	60 592.0	60 221.7	56 354.0
BIC	60 654.0	60 292.6	56 442.3
Log.Lik.	−30 288.990	−30 102.862	−28 167.020
RMSE	1.08	1.07	1.05

Notes:
Logistic regression estimates with standard errors in parentheses. Covariates include age, gender, race, and education. All variables range from 0 to 1.

A.5 Summary Statistics, ANES and VOTER

Table A.4: Summary statistics, ANES

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Min	Max	Median	Mean	SD
TCJA Opinion	7	0	0	1	0.42	0.50	0.33
Party Identification	7	4	0	1	0.42	0.46	0.36
Household Income	16	13	0	1	0.23	0.31	0.23
Political Sophistication	34	7	0	1	0.61	0.59	0.31
Political Knowledge	9	0	0	1	0.44	0.44	0.36
Political Interest	4	7	0	1	0.50	0.71	0.34
Education Level	6	0	0	1	0.30	0.45	0.32
Age (18-91)	74	0	0	1	0.61	0.61	0.24
Gender (Male=1)	2	0	0	1	0.50	0.51	0.50
Race (White=1)	2	0	0	1	0.50	0.64	0.48

Table A.5: Summary statistics, VOTER

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Min	Max	Median	Mean	SD
TCJA Opinion	5	0	0	1	0.38	0.46	0.38
Party Identification	7	1	0	1	0.42	0.45	0.37
Household Income	16	13	0	1	0.30	0.35	0.23
Political Sophistication	31	2	0	1	0.77	0.72	0.27
Political Knowledge	8	0	0	1	0.64	0.66	0.32
Political Interest	4	2	0	1	0.83	0.76	0.30
Education Level	6	0	0	1	0.30	0.47	0.30
Age (18-94)	75	0	0	1	0.59	0.61	0.24
Gender (Male=1)	2	0	0	1	0.00	0.48	0.50
Race (White=1)	2	0	0	1	0.50	0.65	0.48

A.6 Political Knowledge Scales, ANES and VOTER

ANES (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$):

1. What job or political office is now held by John Roberts? [Open-ended]
2. What job or political office is now held by Angela Merkel? [Open-ended]
3. For how many years is a United States Senator elected – that is, how many years are there in one full term of office for a U.S. Senator? [Open-ended]
4. On which of the following does the U.S. federal government currently spend the least? [Foreign aid; Medicare; National defense; Social Security]

VOTER (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$):

1. For how many years is a United States Senator elected – that is, how many years are there in one full term of office for a U.S. Senator? [Open-ended]
2. Taking the November election results into account, which party will have the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives? [Republicans; Democrats; Don't know]
3. Taking the November election results into account, which party will have the most members in the U.S. Senate? [Republicans; Democrats; Don't know]
4. What job or political office does Theresa May currently hold? [U.S. representative; Secretary of Education; Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; President of Australia; Don't know]
5. What job or political office does Neil Gorsuch currently hold? [U.S. Senator; Governor; Supreme Court Justice; White House Chief of Staff; Don't know]
6. How many votes does it take for the U.S. Senate to override a presidential veto? [50; 51; 67; 100; Don't know]

7. According to the Constitution, which part of government has the power to declare war on another country? [The President; Congress; The Supreme Court; The Secretary of Defense; Don't know]

A.7 Regression Results, ANES and VOTER

Table A.6: Regression results, ANES

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Income	0.072	−0.161	0.166
	(0.029)	(0.041)	(0.058)
Republican	0.539	0.344	−0.126
	(0.017)	(0.030)	(0.038)
Income × Republican		0.540	
		(0.068)	
Income × Sophistication			−0.155
			(0.082)
Republican × Sophistication			1.036
			(0.054)
Political Sophistication			−0.495
			(0.040)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2109	2109	2028
Adjusted R-squared	0.355	0.373	0.477

Notes:
Regression estimates (using OLS) with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable ranges from 0 (Disapprove a great deal) to 1 (Approve a great deal). Covariates include age, gender, race, and education. All variables range from 0 to 1.

Table A.7: Regression results, VOTER

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Income	0.027	−0.161	0.149
	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.051)
Republican	0.709	0.546	0.038
	(0.010)	(0.019)	(0.030)
Income × Republican		0.440	
		(0.044)	
Income × Sophistication			−0.127
			(0.063)
Republican × Sophistication			0.909
			(0.038)
Political Sophistication			−0.414
			(0.029)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	5816	5816	5741
Adjusted R-squared	0.473	0.482	0.528

Notes:
Regression estimates (using OLS) with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable ranges from 0 (Strongly oppose) to 1 (Strongly support). Covariates include age, gender, race, and education. All variables range from 0 to 1.

Appendix B

Supporting Information for "Self-Made yet Illegal: Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Support for Legalization"

B.1 Institutional Review Board Approval

A copy of the ethics approval certificate is appended in page 81.

B.2 Pre-Analysis Plan

A copy of the pre-analysis plan is appended in page 83.

Université de Montréal

Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et humanités (CERAH)

3 mars 2020

Objet: Approbation éthique – « How to Tax Multinational Corporations: The Citizens' Views »

M. Vincent Arel-Bundock, M. Marco Mendoza & M. André Blais,

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et humanités (CERAH) a étudié le projet de recherche susmentionné et a délivré le certificat d'éthique demandé suite à la satisfaction des exigences précédemment émises. Vous trouverez ci-joint une copie numérisée de votre certificat; copie également envoyée au Bureau Recherche-Développement-Valorisation.

Notez qu'il y apparaît une mention relative à un suivi annuel et que le certificat comporte une date de fin de validité. En effet, afin de répondre aux exigences éthiques en vigueur au Canada et à l'Université de Montréal, nous devons exercer un suivi annuel auprès des chercheurs et étudiants-chercheurs.

De manière à rendre ce processus le plus simple possible, nous avons élaboré un court questionnaire qui vous permettra à la fois de satisfaire aux exigences du suivi et de nous faire part de vos commentaires et de vos besoins en matière d'éthique en cours de recherche. Ce questionnaire de suivi devra être rempli annuellement jusqu'à la fin du projet et pourra nous être retourné par courriel. La validité de l'approbation éthique est conditionnelle à ce suivi. Sur réception du dernier rapport de suivi en fin de projet, votre dossier sera clos.

Il est entendu que cela ne modifie en rien l'obligation pour le chercheur, tel qu'indiqué sur le certificat d'éthique, de signaler au CERAH tout incident grave dès qu'il survient ou de lui faire part de tout changement anticipé au protocole de recherche.

Nous vous prions d'agréer l'expression de nos sentiments les meilleurs.

Mariana Nunez, présidente
Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et humanités (CERAH)
Université de Montréal

c. c. Gestion des certificats, BRDV

p. j. Certificat #CERAH-2020-020-D

adresse postale
C.P. 6128, succ. Centre-ville
Montréal QC H3C 3J7

adresse civique
3333, Queen Mary
Local 220-6
Montréal QC H3V 1A2

Téléphone : 514-343-5925
cerah@umontreal.ca
www.umontreal.ca

Université de Montréal

N° de certificat
CERAH-2020-020-D

Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et humanités (CERAH)

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et humanités (CERAH), selon les procédures en vigueur, en vertu des documents qui lui ont été fournis, a examiné le projet de recherche suivant et conclu qu'il respecte les règles d'éthique énoncées dans la Politique sur la recherche avec des êtres humains *de l'Université de Montréal.*

Projet	
Titre du projet	**How to Tax Multinational Corporations: The Citizens' Views**
Chercheurs requérants	**Vincent Arel-Bundock**, professeur agrégé, FAS - Département de science politique **André Blais**, professeur titulaire, FAS - Département de science politique **Marco Mendoza**, Étudiant, FAS - Département de science politique

Financement	
Organisme	Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada
Programme	Insight Grants
Titre de l'octroi si différent	
Numéro d'octroi	435-2019-0434
Chercheur principal	
No de compte	

MODALITÉS D'APPLICATION
Tout changement anticipé au protocole de recherche doit être communiqué au Comité qui en évaluera l'impact au chapitre de l'éthique. Toute interruption prématurée du projet ou tout incident grave doit être immédiatement signalé au Comité. Selon les règles universitaires en vigueur, un suivi annuel est minimalement exigé pour maintenir la validité de la présente approbation éthique, et ce, jusqu'à la fin du projet. Le questionnaire de suivi est disponible sur la page web du Comité.

Mariana Nunez, présidente
Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et humanités (CERAH)
Université de Montréal

3 mars 2020
Date de délivrance

1er avril 2021
Date de fin de validité

1er avril 2021
Date du prochain suivi

Pre-Registration Report: Unauthorized Immigrants, Business Ownership, and Support for Legalization

Marco Mendoza Aviña

July 22, 2020

1. Survey Data

An online survey will be fielded in the United States via the Qualtrics platform. Data collection will be done by market research firm Dynata. Only adult participants will be recruited. The sample will comprise 2,000 respondents representative of the national population. The survey questionnaire is in the Appendix.

2. Research Question and Hypotheses

The main research question is whether collective policy preferences on unauthorized immigration (i.e., deportation versus legalization) are influenced by immigrants' business ownership and occupational skill levels.

Using a survey-embedded randomized controlled trial, I will assess whether:

(1) Support for legalization is higher for business-owning immigrants than for employees;
(2) Support for legalization is higher for highly skilled than for low-skilled immigrants.

3. Experimental Manipulation

In the survey, I introduce the treatments as follows:

> *We will now present an unauthorized immigrant currently living in the U.S. We would like you to tell us what you think should happen to that person.*

Then, respondents read the vignette. They are randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions:

1. *Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a carpenter and works for a construction company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.*
2. *Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a computer programmer and works for a technology company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.*
3. *Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a carpenter and the owner of a five-employee construction company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.*
4. *Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a computer programmer and the owner of a five-employee technology company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.*

4. Outcome Variable

After the vignette, respondents are asked the following question:

> *Should Felipe be allowed to remain in the U.S. and eventually qualify for citizenship?*
> *0 means you oppose this a great deal, and 10 means you support this a great deal.*

To answer, they use a slider ranging from 0 (oppose a great deal) to 10 (support a great deal).

This will serve as the dependent variable for the statistical analyses.

5. Estimands

All analyses use the dependent variable described above. I report heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors for all estimates.

Average Treatment Effects

The main quantities of interest are the following two average treatment effects (ATEs):

(1) Business owner relative to employee;
(2) High occupational skill level relative to low skill.

I estimate a linear regression model with two dichotomous variables. The first is equal to 1 if the respondent was assigned to conditions 3 or 4 (business owner), and 0 for conditions 1 or 2 (employee). The second dummy is equal to 1 if the respondent was assigned to conditions 2 or 4 (highly skilled), and 0 for conditions 1 or 3 (low-skilled). This will produce the two ATEs. This information will allow me to test the null hypotheses that (1) business ownership does not increase support for legalization and (2) high occupational skill levels do not increase support for legalization.

Secondary Analyses

1. Respondents' Occupational Skill Levels. I estimate a linear regression adjustment of the two ATEs with two coviates: education and income, which I use as a proxies for respondents' occupational skill levels. Education is measured by the number of years of schooling, a variable ranging from 1 to 24+. Income is measured by the perceived position in the income distribution, a 10-point scale where 0 means the respondent thinks her household belongs in the lowest income group, and 10, in the highest.

2. Party Identification. I estimate a linear regression adjustment of the two ATEs with respondents' party identification as a covariate. This variable is equal to 1 for self-identified Republicans, 0 for independents, and -1 for Democrats. As a robustness check, I also use three dummies with an omitted reference.

Appendix: Full Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. The study is directed by Professor Vincent Arel-Bundock (University of Montreal). By clicking on "**Continue to Survey**" at the bottom of this page, you indicate your consent to participate in this study.

1. Research objectives

The goal of this study is to understand citizens views on the economy and taxation.

2. Research participation

You must be 18 years old to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to stop answering questions at any time. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.

3. Risks and inconveniences

There are no personal risks to participate in this study.

4. Advantages and benefits

There is no particular benefit from participating in this study. You will help us to better understand citizens views on the economy and taxation.

5. Confidentiality

All personal information collected about you will be kept confidential. You have landed on this page because Dynata sent you a link to our survey. As such, the only information we will have on you is a numeric code. We will not know your name or any personal information.

6. Voluntary Participation and Right of Withdrawal

Your participation in this project is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

7. Dissemination of results

The results of this study will be presented at conferences and published in scientific journals.

8. Contact

For any questions related to the study, or to withdraw from the research, please contact Vincent Arel-Bundock at 514-343-6111 ext 47619 or by email at vincent.arel-bundock@umontreal.ca

For any concerns about your rights or the responsibilities of researchers regarding your participation in this project, you can contact the Ethics Committee for Research in Arts and Humanities (CERAH).

Email : cerah@umontreal.ca
Website : http://recherche.umontreal.ca/participants

Any complaint relating to your participation in this research can be addressed to the Ombudsman of the University of Montreal by calling the telephone number 514-343-2100, from 9AM to 5PM or by email at ombudsman@umontreal.ca (the Ombudsman accepts collect calls).

By clicking on the "**Continue to Survey**" button below, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

What is your year of birth?

[*Dropdown list: 1910 to 2010*]

What is your gender

- *Female[1]
- *Male
- Other

How do you feel about the following countries? Move the sliders to any number from 0 to 10. 0 means a very NEGATIVE feeling and 10 means a very POSITIVE feeling.

[*Five Sliders from 0 to 10; start position at 5*]

- *Brazil
- *China
- *France
- *Russia
- *United States

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a . . . ?

- *Democrat
- *Republican
- Independent
- Other
- Don't know

In which state do you currently live?

[*Dropdown list: 50 American States + Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico*]

What best describes the area where you live?

- A big city
- The suburbs or outskirts of a big city
- A town or a small city
- A village
- A farm or home in the countryside

[1]Items preceded by an asterix (*) are presented in randomized order.

We will now present an unauthorized immigrant currently living in the U.S. We would like you to tell us what you think should happen to that person.

[*One of the following four treatments is displayed at random*]

[*Treatment 1*]

Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a carpenter and works for a construction company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.

[*Treatment 2*]

Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a computer programmer and works for a technology company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.

[*Treatment 3*]

Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a carpenter and the owner of a five-employee construction company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.

Felipe Hernández arrived from Mexico as a child. Felipe is a computer programmer and the owner of a five-employee technology company. He pays his taxes and has no criminal record.

Should Felipe be allowed to remain in the U.S. and eventually qualify for citizenship? 0 means you oppose this a great deal, and 10 means you support this a great deal.

[*Slider 0 to 10; start position at 5*]

Appendix C

Supporting Information for "Did Exposure to COVID-19 Affect Vote Choice in the 2020 Presidential Election?"

C.1 Summary Statistics

Table C.1: Summary statistics

	Unique (#)	Min	Max	Median	Mean	SD
Vote choice (1 = Biden, 0 = Trump)	2	0	1	0.500	0.540	0.498
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	2	0	1	0.000	0.045	0.208
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	2	0	1	0.500	0.512	0.500
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	2	0	1	0.000	0.159	0.366
Age (18-95)	78	0	1	0.539	0.571	0.225
Gender (female = 1)	2	0	1	0.000	0.494	0.500
Education level	6	0	1	0.300	0.526	0.306
Household income	16	0	1	0.300	0.379	0.229
Race: White	2	0	1	0.500	0.721	0.448
Race: Black or African-American	2	0	1	0.000	0.125	0.331
Race: Hispanic or Latino	2	0	1	0.000	0.086	0.281
Race: Asian or Asian-American	2	0	1	0.000	0.036	0.187
Race: Native American	2	0	1	0.000	0.006	0.076
Race: Middle Eastern	2	0	1	0.000	0.001	0.029
Race: Two or more races	2	0	1	0.000	0.014	0.119
Race: Other	2	0	1	0.000	0.010	0.098
Marital Status: Married	2	0	1	0.500	0.513	0.500
Marital Status: Separated	2	0	1	0.000	0.015	0.122
Marital Status: Divorced	2	0	1	0.000	0.106	0.307
Marital Status: Widowed	2	0	1	0.000	0.058	0.234
Marital Status: Never married	2	0	1	0.000	0.261	0.439
Marital Status: Domestic/civil partnership	2	0	1	0.000	0.048	0.214
Residence Area: City	2	0	1	0.000	0.262	0.440
Residence Area: Suburb	2	0	1	0.000	0.400	0.490
Residence Area: Town	2	0	1	0.000	0.137	0.343
Residence Area: Rural area	2	0	1	0.000	0.199	0.399
Residence Area: Other	2	0	1	0.000	0.003	0.054
General health self-assessment	5	−1	1	−0.250	−0.171	0.491
Household income increased/decreased in 2020	5	−1	1	−0.250	0.030	0.454
Nation's economy got better/worse in 2020	5	−1	1	0.250	0.365	0.685
Party identification (Republican-Democrat)	7	−1	1	−0.167	0.066	0.791
Ideology (Conservative-Liberal)	5	−1	1	−0.250	−0.040	0.628
2016 Vote choice (Trump-Clinton)	3	−1	1	−0.500	0.033	0.916

C.2 Alternative Models

Table C.2: Main results using logistic regression

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	−0.105*	−0.162**	0.094	−0.089	−0.084
	(0.053)	(0.059)	(0.074)	(0.133)	(0.134)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	0.336***	0.370***	0.207***	0.276***	0.255***
	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.034)	(0.063)	(0.064)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	0.563***	0.449***	0.412***	0.434***	0.472***
	(0.035)	(0.038)	(0.048)	(0.086)	(0.088)
Sociodemographic Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pandemic-Related Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
State Fixed-Effects	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	37 626	37 626	37 626	37 626	37 626
AIC	46 625.4	40 045.9	28 027.6	9489.1	9455.4
BIC	46 659.5	40 250.7	28 258.1	9745.2	10 138.3
Log.Lik.	−23 308.695	−19 998.939	−13 986.818	−4714.568	−4647.708
F	251.701	219.665	319.247	242.450	87.512
RMSE	1.10	1.02	0.85	0.50	0.50

Notes:
Coefficient estimates from binomial logistic regressions with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Biden (1) versus Trump (0) in the post-election self-declared vote. Sociodemographic controls include age, gender, education level, household income, and dummies for race, marital status, and residence area. Pandemic-related controls include respondents' general health assessment, whether their household income increased or decreased in 2020, and whether they think the nation's economy got better or worse in 2020. Political controls include Democrat-Republican party identification, conservative-liberal ideology, and Trump-Clinton vote choice in 2016.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

C.3 State-Level Results

Table C.3: Exposure to COVID-19 and vote choice in the four closest battlegrounds: Aggregated states

	Four Closest States
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	0.004
	(0.022)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	0.009
	(0.009)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	0.030+
	(0.016)
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes
Pandemic-Related Controls	Yes
Political Controls	Yes
State Fixed-Effects	Yes
Observations	4968
Adjusted R-squared	0.810

Notes:
Regression estimates from linear probability models with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Biden (1) versus Trump (0) in the post-election self-declared vote. Sociodemographic controls include age, gender, education level, household income, and dummies for race, marital status, and residence area. Pandemic-related controls include respondents' general health assessment, whether their household income increased or decreased in 2020, and whether they think the nation's economy got better or worse in 2020. Political controls include Democrat-Republican party identification, conservative-liberal ideology, and Trump-Clinton vote choice in 2016.
+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table C.4: Exposure to COVID-19 and vote choice in in the four closest battlegrounds: Interactions

	State Interactions
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	−0.003 (0.012)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	0.014 (0.004)***
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	0.019 (0.005)***
Georgia	0.015 (0.015)
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 × Georgia	0.045 (0.038)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19 × Georgia	−0.020 (0.018)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19 × Georgia	0.028 (0.030)
Arizona	0.017 (0.013)
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 × Arizona	0.054 (0.068)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19 × Arizona	−0.001 (0.017)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19 × Arizona	0.004 (0.043)
Wisconsin	0.012 (0.015)
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 × Wisconsin	−0.065 (0.030)*
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19 × Wisconsin	0.007 (0.019)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19 × Wisconsin	0.046 (0.026)+
Pennsylvania	0.012 (0.011)
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 × Pennsylvania	−0.006 (0.025)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19 × Pennsylvania	−0.011 (0.015)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19 × Pennsylvania	−0.014 (0.021)
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes
Pandemic-Related Controls	Yes
Political Controls	Yes
State Fixed-Effects	No
Observations	37 626
Adjusted R-squared	0.795

Notes:
Regression estimates from linear probability models with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Biden (1) versus Trump (0) in the post-election self-declared vote. Sociodemographic controls include age, gender, education level, household income, and dummies for race, marital status, and residence area. Pandemic-related controls include respondents' general health assessment, whether their household income increased or decreased in 2020, and whether they think the nation's economy got better or worse in 2020. Political controls include Democrat-Republican party identification, conservative-liberal ideology, and Trump-Clinton vote choice in 2016.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table C.5: Exposure to COVID-19 and vote choice in the four closest battlegrounds: Individual states

	GA	AZ	WI	PA
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	0.015	0.046	−0.070*	−0.016
	(0.031)	(0.056)	(0.029)	(0.024)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	0.004	0.025	0.012	0.004
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.015)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	0.042+	0.022	0.061*	0.005
	(0.025)	(0.036)	(0.027)	(0.020)
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pandemic-Related Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1169	955	803	2041
Adjusted R-squared	0.834	0.815	0.811	0.805

Notes:
Regression estimates from linear probability models with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Biden (1) versus Trump (0) in the post-election self-declared vote. Sociodemographic controls include age, gender, education level, household income, and dummies for race, marital status, and residence area. Pandemic-related controls include respondents' general health assessment, whether their household income increased or decreased in 2020, and whether they think the nation's economy got better or worse in 2020. Political controls include Democrat-Republican party identification, conservative-liberal ideology, and Trump-Clinton vote choice in 2016.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

C.4 Conditional Effects

Table C.6: Exposure to COVID-19 and vote choice among the overall electorate, Democrats, Independents, and Republicans

	Overall	D	I	R
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	−0.001	−0.007	−0.025	0.015
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.028)	(0.017)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	0.014***	0.003	0.041***	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.005)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	0.020***	0.000	0.029*	0.040***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pandemic-Related Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Fixed-Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	37 626	16 162	11 179	10 285
Adjusted R-squared	0.795	0.283	0.707	0.277

Notes:
Regression estimates from linear probability models with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Biden (1) versus Trump (0) in the post-election self-declared vote. Sociodemographic controls include age, gender, education level, household income, and dummies for race, marital status, and residence area. Pandemic-related controls include respondents' general health assessment, whether their household income increased or decreased in 2020, and whether they think the nation's economy got better or worse in 2020. Political controls include Democrat-Republican party identification, conservative-liberal ideology, and Trump-Clinton vote choice in 2016. The first column corresponds to the fully specified model (Column 5 of Table 3.1).
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

C.5 Robustness Checks

Table C.7: Exposure to COVID-19 and vote choice in North Carolina, Nevada, Michigan, and Florida

	NC	NV	MI	FL
Has been diagnosed with COVID-19	−0.020	0.027	0.034	0.031
	(0.033)	(0.078)	(0.041)	(0.032)
Knows someone diagnosed with COVID-19	0.035*	0.019	0.009	0.008
	(0.016)	(0.031)	(0.019)	(0.013)
Knows someone who died from COVID-19	−0.017	0.024	0.028	0.031+
	(0.026)	(0.042)	(0.021)	(0.018)
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pandemic-Related Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1186	460	1287	2906
Adjusted R-squared	0.813	0.759	0.802	0.797

Notes:
Regression estimates from linear probability models with heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is Biden (1) versus Trump (0) in the post-election self-declared vote. Sociodemographic controls include age, gender, education level, household income, and dummies for race, marital status, and residence area. Pandemic-related controls include respondents' general health assessment, whether their household income increased or decreased in 2020, and whether they think the nation's economy got better or worse in 2020. Political controls include Democrat-Republican party identification, conservative-liberal ideology, and Trump-Clinton vote choice in 2016.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001