



Opinion Research
Strategic Communication

Building Support for Keeping Local Law Enforcement out of Deportation

Analysis of focus group research

December 2015

Introduction

Over the past few months, a conversation among presidential candidates and conservative media has blamed “sanctuary city” policies for high-profile cases of undocumented immigrants accused of murder and other crimes. To inform communications responding to these sorts of incidents, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center asked Belden Russonello Strategists to conduct focus group research. Our resulting project, reported here, develops messages and strategies for defending “community trust” policies that keep local law enforcement out of federal immigration enforcement and deportation.

We conducted eight focus groups in Chicago, Los Angeles, Alexandria, Virginia, and San Francisco in October and early November 2015. All participants in the discussions were voters with at least a high school education and were screened for their support of a path to legalization. Four “swing” discussions were held among those who leaned against community trust policies: three groups of whites and one among African-Americans. Four “core” groups were held among those who leaned in support of the policies: two groups of whites, one with Latinos and Latinas, and one with API voters. A table illustrating the composition of the groups is appended to the report.

Top Conclusions for Communications

The genesis of the research reported here was the July 2015 shooting death of a young woman at San Francisco's Pier 14, allegedly by a Mexican immigrant. We found that for most of the participants in our discussions, who were mostly moderate to liberal voters, the issue is not on the top of their minds, nor is the shooting a driving consideration when thinking about what policy about immigrants should be.

Two overarching message themes help connect with key audiences:

- **Social cost:** The rootedness of immigrants in our communities, including their family ties and the contributions they make through work, service, and paying taxes, and the consequences to our communities of mass deportation.
- **Community trust and safety:** The fact that local law enforcement involvement in deportation will lessen the safety of communities by making individuals who might be undocumented less willing to come forward if they are witnesses or victims of crime. This message is even stronger when delivered by police themselves, particularly for the more skeptical in the groups.

The goal of communications on detainer and notification policies in general should be to move the debate to these themes and away from talking about “criminals” and the criminal justice system. Advocates are on more favorable ground if the focus is on what immigrants mean to their communities and the cost of deportation to families and communities. To make this transition:

- Describe the policies in such a way that due process problems are front and center, for example holding people in jail past when they would be released, without judicial oversight.
- Make the point that minor or long ago infractions/offenses can trigger requests from ICE.

Confronting the most difficult situations:

In situations where elected officials are pushing to work with ICE **only after convictions for "serious" crimes**, the most fruitful approach is likely to be:

- A focus on due process, including a lack of judicial oversight and evidence of mistakes in other jurisdictions. Understanding that the policies impact immigrants who are seen as unthreatening and that the process may be applied unfairly opens the door to reconsideration of the whole concept of having local law enforcement work with ICE.

Additionally, and especially when **notification** is the main point of discussion in a particular community,

- The information that ICE is already getting the fingerprints of everyone arrested across the U.S. can help make the case that notification is redundant and unnecessary.

If a new tragic incident happens, stay on the big picture message.

These groups suggest that your target audiences are not paying close attention to the latest “outrages” in conservative media and are not likely to let a single or isolated incident change their minds. While most were aware of Donald Trump’s statements, his comments are seen as ridiculous at best and dangerous at worst. Except in the affected community, do not get too distracted by responding to such events and keep your message trained on why overall it is safer and fairer for our communities to keep local law enforcement out of deportation.

Your response should be to acknowledge that a horrible thing has occurred and that it is unconscionable to use this isolated, tragic incident to try to advance an agenda that aims to deport millions of hardworking immigrants in our communities.

Other attitudes

- Only some of the voters in the groups are conversant on the topic of “sanctuary cities,” and the term is seen as neither positive nor negative. They also do not understand what the term “community trust” intends to convey, nor do they recognize, unless it is explained to them, that the community trust policies are designed to generate feelings of trust among immigrant communities and local police.
- The voters see immigration enforcement chiefly as the job of the federal government, and the relationship of local law enforcement to ICE is known only to a small number of the participants. However, when first presented with a description of the demands of the federal authorities that local law enforcement assist in deportation, the demands without context seem reasonable to many of those in our groups. This approval initially expressed in our groups begins to change when they learn more facts and notification and detainers.
- While isolated incidents are unlikely to change these voters' minds, the case of an immigrant who has committed a violent or “serious” crime does raise serious challenges. In general, communications should aim to raise concerns about the policy overall by being clear that detainer and notification policies can affect broad categories of immigrants beyond those who have committed such “serious” crimes. It will be less helpful to engage deeply in the case of an individual whose offense was violent; where you have to communicate in such a case a focus on due process is likely to be most helpful.

Policy specifics

- The voters believe that the federal government should take responsibility for immigration enforcement, and that seeking out undocumented immigrants for deportation should not be a priority for local police. It is ICE's job, we are told, and local police have plenty of other issues demanding their time and resources.
- Notification demands begin to seem less reasonable to the voters, and more burdensome, when they learn that fingerprints are already in the federal agents' possession.
- The voters do not want local law enforcement to keep holding immigrants past their release date to make up for disorganization at ICE. Doing so strikes many people as burdensome on local police and a violation of appropriate due process.

The values that drive the views

Both sides of this debate can call on core values to help make their case.

- The focus group participants were all supporters of immigration reform such as a path to citizenship – and they do not support rounding up or deporting all immigrants who came to the U.S. without permission or overstayed their visas. To the contrary, values that they call upon in support of sanctuary cities and allowing undocumented immigrants to remain include community, fairness and sympathy for the immigrants themselves. Many of the participants in the research see undocumented and documented immigrants as part of their communities, the American experience, and the U.S. economy. They do not question the benefits of (most) immigrants remaining here.
- The opposition can appeal to voters' concerns about protecting themselves and their families from crime (the value of safety), and a belief that there should be predictable consequences for committing crimes or for coming to the U.S. without permission (another aspect of fairness), leading to support for collaboration with ICE. Your position is strengthened when discussion is focused on flawed immigration policy that hurts individuals and families who are community members, parents, workers and taxpayers and that policies involving local law enforcement in deportations undermines community trust and safety. It is weakened when serious criminal offenses are part of the conversation.

Full Recommendations

ICE v. local enforcement

1. **Describe your desired policy as local law enforcement “staying out of deportation,” and the undesirable alternative as “helping ICE with deportation.”** This reflects the voters’ views that the federal government should be chiefly responsible for immigration enforcement and their goal of making chasing undocumented immigrants a low priority, without using loaded or vague terminology such as “sanctuary cities” and “community trust.”
2. **Stress the point that local law enforcement should not be doing ICE's job or detaining immigrants while waiting for ICE to show up.**

Due process and crime

3. **Move the debate out of the “criminal” context as much as possible.** Explain that an ICE request could be triggered by any number of conditions, including an arrest rather than a conviction, thus someone could have been mistakenly arrested and then released. Or use the example of an ICE request based on a minor crime from many years ago. As much as possible, allow your audience to come up with their own examples of what a “minor” crime is, as it varies from person to person and the voters in our groups were largely willing to accept expeditious deportation for undocumented immigrants who have committed serious crimes. Starting with these types of situations makes it possible to have a conversation about the broader policy whereas if you start with more serious or threatening criminal situations the door to further discussion closes.
4. **Highlight due process concerns, especially around detainees.** Explaining that ICE wants local jails to hold people past when they would be released – without judicial oversight – is also helpful in raising concerns about working with ICE on deportation. While the focus group participants did not rate an explicit “due process” argument as highly important, they did find the lack of such process as unfair, and many found it upsetting. In communities where the whole conversation is about those with serious convictions, this may be the most effective approach.
5. **To push back on notification, inform your audience that fingerprints of everyone arrested are automatically sent to ICE.** This suggests to your audience that since the enforcement agency already has information about individuals who have been arrested, it should not need to ask local law enforcement for additional notification.
6. **Explain that those with legal permission to be in the U.S., such as green card holders, can be affected.**

Community and family connections

7. **Emphasize immigrants' integration into and contributions to their communities as reasons to oppose mass deportation.** Talking about family connections and the fact that immigrants work, pay taxes, worship, and serve in our communities reminds the voters that many immigrants are contributing to, not taking from, American society. Using examples of those with U.S. citizen children can also evoke sympathy.
8. **Point out the need to allow undocumented immigrants to earn citizenship, without putting too much emphasis on the need for federal action.** No one believes Congress will act any time soon on CIR. However, suggesting that undocumented immigrants should be able to earn citizenship references a widely held view about what *ought* to be done.

Less important arguments

9. **Avoid making problems in the criminal justice system a main reason for supporting community trust policies.** While many recognize racial problems in the criminal justice system, the focus groups suggest you cannot rely on concern about these problems to persuade the voters that the police should stay out of immigration issues.
10. **Do not rely on pivoting to the “root causes” of violence.** Many of the voters believe something needs to be done about crime or gun violence in general and see these issues as highly salient, and at the same time believe that those who have committed crimes should be deported. They do not see it as either/or, and will not change their minds about deportation based on their feelings about these other issues.
11. **Do not expect the possibility of redemption to be enough to overcome concerns about recidivism.** While examples of people who have turned their lives around can be powerful (deported for a long-ago crime though they have since become contributing members of society), that possibility is not something the voters are willing to count on for someone who committed a more recent crime – especially if violence or serious crime is referenced.

Messengers

12. **Blunt opposition from the other side by having police officers out front with the argument that not asking about immigration status makes the community safer.** Teachers, social workers and others who are in the community are also strong messengers for these audiences, while anyone perceived as “political” is less so. Some say immigrants themselves should be part of the conversation as well.

Recommended Message Language

Main message themes:

- **Social cost:** Immigrants are deeply rooted in American families and communities. They are mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, and they work, serve, and pay taxes in our communities. Having police help ICE carry out mass deportation will cause much suffering as families are torn apart.
- **Community trust and safety:** Our communities are safer without police acting as deportation agents. If communities trust that their local police department isn't a pipeline to deportation, they are more likely to trust and cooperate with local law enforcement, and be more willing to share information and come forward when they witness crimes or are victims of crime.
- **Secondary part of this message:** Local law enforcement officers should not get involved with helping ICE deport immigrants. Immigration is the responsibility of the federal government.

Explaining the policy:

- ICE's requests for local communities to hold immigrants without a warrant violate our values of fairness and due process, and do not make us safer. These requests for deportation can be triggered by minor crimes, mistaken arrest, or long ago convictions after which an individual has served time and become a contributing member of society.

To address notification, include:

- Police already provide ICE with the fingerprints of everyone arrested; additional notification should not be necessary if ICE is doing its job. {then go back to main message}

To transition from a high-profile incident, preface the message with:

- It is irresponsible for anti-immigrant groups to exploit this tragedy to try to build public support for mass deportation of millions of people who are working and contributing to our communities. {then go back to main message}

For a city that is only discussing working with ICE on serious crimes, make due process the main message:

- ICE's requests for local communities to hold immigrants without a warrant violate our values of fairness and due process and do not make us safer. ICE "detainers" are not based on a legal standard of probable cause and have no oversight from a judge. Even U.S. citizens and victims of crimes have been wrongfully held under these detention requests and cities are right to refuse to participate in this unconstitutional process.

Summary of Dos and Don'ts

	Do	Do Not
Overall	Say “local law enforcement should stay out of deportation” and “should not be doing ICE’s job.”	Do not say local law enforcement should “not cooperate” with ICE. Do not spend effort replacing the term “sanctuary cities” with “community trust.”
	Talk about immigrants’ family ties and contributions: “work, serve, and pay taxes in our communities”; point out the damage to community ties from “mass deportation.”	Do not rely on a call to federal action as a solution to failures of the immigration system.
	Say communities will be safer if people do not have to fear they will be deported if they come forward when they are witnesses to or are victims of crime.	Do not expect calls to solve “root causes” of violence to change minds.
	Point out that public safety resources may be better used elsewhere.	Do not expect the financial cost alone to be convincing.
	Reference the possibility that working with ICE on deportation could “lead to racial profiling and detaining anyone who might look like an immigrant to a local police officer.”	Do not rely on linking the plight of immigrants to mass incarceration and other problems that voters do not think will be solved by keeping local law enforcement out of immigration.
	Have police officers and other community workers out front.	Do not use politicians as main messengers.
Specifics of policies	Start with detainees: “Our communities should not do ICE’s job by holding in jail someone who would normally be released.”	Do not lead with notification in communities where detainees are an issue.
	Explain that a person targeted may have been mistakenly arrested or have “served their time.”	Do not focus your policy communications on violent or other “serious” crimes.
	Suggest that someone could be deported for “a minor crime from years ago” even if they have since become contributing members of society.	Do not expect the <i>possibility</i> of redemption to sway these audiences for cases of those whose crimes were recent.
	Point out that ICE also targets those who have a green card or other legal status.	
	Use multiple sympathetic examples or allow individuals to come up with their own examples of minor crimes.	Do not rely too much on any single individual story.
	Show due process problems by pointing out that ICE detainer requests have “no oversight from a judge.”	Do not focus on lacking a (court-provided) lawyer in immigration proceedings.
	To address notification, point out that ICE already has fingerprints and information about who is in custody and say local law enforcement should not have to do ICE’s job.	

Findings

1. Most voters in the research assume immigration is a federal responsibility – though they believe the federal government may not be fulfilling it.

When asked in general about immigration, some of the participants in the focus groups – all of whom were screened to prefer some form of legalization over deporting undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. -- mention politicians failing to act to improve a system they believe needs to be changed. They say the federal government is, and should be, responsible for immigration, though many in the groups believe it is failing its responsibilities on this front. On the other hand, a few also say that local or state governments play a role or should help with enforcement.

“ The federal government is avoiding its responsibility, I think, in not dealing with the immigration issue. As Congress is not dealing with many, many issues like transportation. – *White “core” woman, Virginia*

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A number of the participants also mention Donald Trump’s commentary or ideas on immigration as the immigration issue most in the news. Most distance themselves from what they see as his over-the-top rhetoric and implausible ideas, but a few say he has a point in his complaints about the lack of enforcement of immigration law, even if he expresses it poorly.

2. “Sanctuary cities” is neither a positive term nor a trigger for outrage among this group.

In Chicago, Alexandria, and Los Angeles, some in the groups had heard the term “sanctuary cities” and some had not, while in San Francisco nearly everyone was familiar with the term and the policy in general terms. The term suggests that undocumented immigrants will be able to seek out these self-designated cities and be safe from deportation. Most participants have at least somewhat mixed feelings about the sanctuary policy, suggesting that while they understand the desire to protect undocumented immigrants from harassment, it is a way of avoiding the rule of law, or that it might not be desirable to be a place that attracts more than its share of undocumented immigrants. However, among these moderate to more liberal-leaning audiences, none are outraged or angry about the term or what it represents.

“ Sanctuary brings to mind safety. Somewhere where you aren’t afraid of every shadow in the dark. – *Latino “core” voter, Los Angeles*

I don't know that I would want to be considered a sanctuary city, though. I don't know if you'd want to have more than your share of immigrants because... It's better if they're spread out. – *White “core” woman, Virginia*

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Talking about “community trust” is not necessarily a preferable alternative, as it is not clear to many what it means. Some are not sure who is supposed to be trusted, or trusting, and many see it as more related to how neighbors treat each other, rather than to the appropriate role of the police, even when told that it is intended to mean the same thing as sanctuary cities

3. Having local law enforcement work with ICE seems reasonable to many at first.

The voters in our discussions generally do not want to have police in the community actively looking for undocumented but law abiding community members, either because of the potential for racial profiling or because they do not see it as a good use of public safety resources. And a few are skeptical of ICE and immigration enforcement in general, and carry that skepticism over to the idea of local law enforcement working with ICE on deportation in other contexts.

However, participants' attitudes are more complicated when it comes to local law enforcement cooperating with ICE if they interact with someone for other reasons and then realize she or he is undocumented. Most are supportive of working with ICE to deport those who have committed “serious” crimes and some are initially comfortable with turning individuals over to ICE for less serious violations as well.

“ We didn’t want the police directly asking them for their status, but if they commit a crime, or like the police would normally do their job, then their status is important. – African-American “swing” voter, Virginia

You get a guy that’s here illegally and kills your family in a manslaughter because he’s drunk driving; I’m guessing somebody would want them out of here, right? – Latino “core” voter, Los Angeles

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4. Explaining detainers and notification can raise some concerns about what ICE wants.

The details of notification and detainer requests are generally not familiar to the participants, even those in San Francisco. Explaining detainers, by telling the participants that ICE wants local jails to continue to hold people who would otherwise be released, raises concerns on two fronts. Some object on financial grounds, because they do not want to see the local community’s tax dollars pay for continued detention for these individuals. Some say the jails are already overcrowded and it is not reasonable to expect local communities to pick up the tab if ICE cannot arrive on time. At the same time, however, a few counter this by raising what they imagine to be logistical challenges of ICE being able to get to anyplace across the country quickly.

Others have concerns on a civil rights or civil liberties grounds, as they do not believe the government should be able to hold people in jail for days or weeks without charging them or

initiating some kind of legal process. They say that if ICE wants these people, they should come get them on time. Adding the information that there is no requirement of probable cause and no judicial oversight of the ICE detainers helps make the civil liberties case even more strongly.

It is also possible to raise concerns about the ICE process in general, particularly the idea of holding onto people for years in immigration detention. However, this can also backfire, as one “solution” that some offer is to deport them more quickly.

“ So you’re in jail for two weeks. You serve your time and then ICE can’t get to you for another six weeks. You have to know why you’re still there for however undisclosed amount of time, knowing that you’re just facing doom. “I’m getting sent back to my country.” That’s horrible. – *White “swing” man, Los Angeles*

If they’re just sitting there, and the bill is just constantly, constantly, constantly, constantly going up, then ICE needs to get something going.
– *African-American “swing” voter, Virginia*

I feel that if ICE is enlisting the help of local authorities, then local authorities - their efforts and resources can be drained. Doing them a favor in a sense, so everything has to be very specific and minimal in terms of the amount of effort that’s going to be put into community on a local level. I feel strongly that local officials are there to make sure people are safe and things are going smoothly. – *API “core” man, San Francisco*

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It is a little harder to raise objections to requests to notify ICE when someone is going to be released, as most say it seems reasonable to keep ICE informed. However, letting the respondents know that ICE already has the fingerprints of anyone in jail can turn the tables a little. After hearing about the fingerprints, some say that after giving over the fingerprint information, the locals should not have to continue to stay involved in ICE’s job by giving notification.

“ The local police and local authorities, it’s not their job to be tracking... it’s their job to arrest criminals. To stop crime in the street. It’s not their job to worry about whether the, you know, if they’re here legally or illegally. ICE should already know. If they send [ICE] their fingerprints and they have it somewhere that they’re here illegally, and [ICE] wants to do whatever is the next step, then they should do it.
– *White “core” man, Chicago*

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5. Broadening the scope from “criminals” changes some minds.

When these voters hear that local law enforcement could be turning people over to ICE regardless of why they are arrested, the outcome of a case or how long ago it happened, and

that it could even happen in a case of mistaken arrest, many participants begin to object. These points help move the conversation from one about deporting so-called "criminals" to one about deporting immigrants in general. They themselves come up with situations, such as a broken taillight, that they think could lead to arrest but do not believe should make immigrants subject to deportation.

In Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, we offered examples of immigrants who may be caught up in this system, to try to identify what might be most sympathetic (these examples are appended to the report). None of the situations is universally sympathetic, but in general, there is more forgiveness for a crime the longer ago it was and the less possibility that its commission hurt others (for example, a DUI is less sympathetic than driving without a license because driving drunk could hurt people). Individuals are more sympathetic if they have a green card or other legal status, or if they have U.S. citizen children.

“ And like you said, a broken taillight... I don't think that's a legitimate reason to turn someone over to ICE to have them deported. Jaywalking; similar.
– *White “swing” man, Los Angeles*

Say you find a young lady who you want to work as a nanny, but she is undocumented. She's been working with the child for five plus years, and all of a sudden they start checking. She runs into the police somehow. She gets pulled over. She's undocumented. Now they want to deport her. I wouldn't want to tell if she had been raising my kid. I would probably want to keep her in the family. I think that's one example. – *African-American “swing” voter, Virginia*

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6. The San Francisco case is not a major influence on the views of these core and swing types of voters – even in that city.

While most of the San Francisco participants were aware, a number of the voters in our other discussions, particularly in Virginia and Chicago, had not heard anything about the undocumented immigrant accused of killing a woman in San Francisco last summer. And for those who had heard about it, it was still generally not a major driver of their opinions. They tend to describe it as a tragedy, but not one that should influence how we handle immigration. In particular, when they heard he had already been deported multiple times, a number suggest that deporting him again would not have solved any problems. At the same time, a few who favored turning immigrants over for deportation did see this story as an extra data point in their favor, but it was generally one factor among many, not a driver by itself.

“ I mean, for me, a bad guy's a bad guy's a bad guy. So like, whether he's a citizen of the United States or whether he's an illegal immigrant... A citizen of the United States is just

as capable of doing that exact same thing. So I think immigration takes a back seat there. – *White “core” man, Chicago*

This crime that you’re talking about is a real needle in a haystack. It’s not like this is a common crime; that’s why we know about it. – *White “swing” man, Los Angeles*

Just address it as a murder case. – *White “swing” voter, San Francisco*

He’s clearly someone who doesn’t know how to be a citizen in this community and he should’ve been deported and kept there. Like how did he come back?” – *API “core” voter, San Francisco*

It’s a perfect example of why you shouldn’t let them go. – *White “swing” woman, Chicago*

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Comments by presidential contender Donald Trump, on the other hand, were more top of mind for those in these groups. They tend to see his commentary as inflammatory and his ideas as unrealistic, though a few among the white women in Chicago and the African American group in Virginia agree with some of what he has to say. Among those who disagree with him, a few are really bothered by the role he is playing in scapegoating communities of immigrants, but others dismiss him as an entertainer rather than a serious political figure.

7. Two persuasive messages focus on the costs of deporting people who are part of our communities and keeping our communities safer.

Of the messages we tested in the groups, two stood out as having the best potential for engaging the audiences you need to reach.

- **The social cost of deportation:** For voters in the “core,” the strongest messages evoke empathy for immigrants and the problems with deportation generally. For example, these voters respond emotionally to the message below, which describes immigrants as integrated into American society and the contributions they make to it, and paints a picture of the suffering caused by deportation.

Immigrants are deeply rooted in American families and communities. They are mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, and they work, serve, and pay taxes in our communities. Having police seek out those with immigration violations for mass deportation will cause much suffering as families are torn apart. When a child loses a parent to deportation, the child, family, and society all suffer, with some children ending up in foster care.

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This is what America’s about. If you disagree with this, you disagree with America.
– *White “core” man, Chicago*

Immigrants are such an important part of American communities. They are the hardest working people around, they do jobs no one wants to do, and contribute hugely to the economy. – *White “swing” man, San Francisco*

I live in a very diverse neighborhood. I don't know immigration status for everybody, but I imagine it's all over the board. I've lived there now for 16 years and there are non-native English speaking families who've been there longer than me. They're there, their kids play soccer with my kid. They've grown up through school together. They're part of our community. I think going in and seeking people out just because of that breaks up a community. – *White “core” woman, Virginia*

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This message also resonates to some extent with the harder-to-reach audiences, and makes for them the strongest case against deporting undocumented immigrants in general. It is important to note, however, that this message requires having *already communicated* that the ICE policies pick up people who have done little other than come to the U.S. without permission. In the context of someone who committed a serious crime, talking about separation from his or her family is much more problematic, as the voters are less sympathetic and point out that being sent to jail also causes a separation. We have seen in previous research that participants may say it is sometimes better for children if a criminal parent is removed from their lives.

- **Community safety:** For those in the “swing” groups who are inclined to be accepting of people being deported just for being undocumented, the best way to blunt their opposition to community trust policies continues to be the long-standing approach of making the case that communities are safer if people can approach the police without fearing deportation.

Overall, our communities are safer when local police do not act as immigration agents. If communities trust that their local police department isn't a pipeline to deportation, they are more likely to trust and cooperate with local law enforcement – be more willing to share information and come forward when they witness crimes or are victims of crime. For this reason, hundreds of police chiefs across the country have supported these policies for their communities.

Having police chiefs and police officers carry this message strengthens it substantially for this group.

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They're doing their part to make the community safer in a way. If they feel like they're just not going to be like the rest and...just be kicked out in a second if they come forward. I definitely understand. – *White “swing” woman, Chicago*

Communities would feel safer if they weren't worried about deportation if they did something wrong. – API “core” woman, San Francisco

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8. Due process, use of resources, and racial profiling can be helpful messages.

The messages below, while not generating as much emotional connection as the ones above, can also be helpful in generating support for keeping local law enforcement out of immigration.

- **Due process:** Highlighting the lack of “due process” and not having “oversight from a judge” can be helpful in raising concerns about detainers. Showing that citizens have been wrongly detained is also useful because it illustrates that the process is flawed. And for a few, highlighting the Constitutional problems is also compelling. However, this does not end up being the driving concern for most. And trying to do all of these at once, as in the message below, is too much for some in the groups, who get confused by all of the points being made together.

Cities are right not to cooperate with immigration requests that lack due process. ICE “detainers” are not based on a legal standard of probable cause and have no oversight from a judge. Even U.S. citizens and victims of crimes have been wrongfully held under these detention requests. This places everyone at risk of being held by police, even when they have done nothing wrong, and courts have found that they violate the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

““ These people shouldn't be held wrongfully under these detentions because there's no oversight from a judge. And I also underlined “based on the legal standard of probable cause.” I mean we are the people. This is what we live by every day. We have a Constitution. We have our rights. – Latino “core” voter, Los Angeles

Without due process we're closer to a totalitarian state.” – White “swing” voter, San Francisco

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- **Resources:** Focusing on keeping public safety resources focused on crime can be a helpful theme for talking with those who do not see deportation as a high priority. However, a focus on resources does not turn around those who are more skeptical of community trust policies or willing to deport individuals for being undocumented, because they are willing to spend the money on something they think is right.

Community trust policies keep public safety resources focused where they should be – on solving crimes – instead entangling them in immigration enforcement. Immigration is the federal government's responsibility and they should fulfill it, not push enforcement down to the cities.

“ I just think it’s unfortunate that the government should spend so much resources and time to get rid of people that are already here. – *White “core” man, Chicago*

The cost is what people have a problem with – cost of deporting, or holding them in prison for longer. People are starving here. It’s a ridiculous amount of cost.

– *White “swing” man, San Francisco*

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Many in the groups expressed a displeasure that ICE was not competent enough to track the immigrants it wants to deport, and participants resented the imposition on local police to do ICE's job. Voters are comfortable with local police departments "coordinating" with ICE, which they understand as sharing information. However, they do not want local police to have the responsibility to correct ICE's missteps or lack of organization, such as detaining someone until ICE can come and get them.

- **Racial profiling:** Some voters, particularly in the “core” groups, see a potential for racial profiling if local law enforcement works with ICE, which can help motivate their support for community trust policies. They can imagine that the rules will not be enforced equally. However, it is a somewhat harder case to make for this situation than for an Arizona-style law where police are instructed to seek out those who may be here without documentation.

Entangling local police with immigration enforcement can easily lead to racial profiling and detaining anyone who might "look like an illegal immigrant" to a local police officer. Having a community trust policy protects our diverse communities from discrimination and mistreatment.

“ I think police officers would not be fair. I think there will be a lot of racial profiling. They will be willing to throw someone in jail because they think they look like they’re an immigrant, or they think they may commit a crime, because they’re undocumented aliens. – *African-American “swing” voter*

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9. Other themes are less helpful in making the case.

Another set of statements was seen as less relevant, or having less powerful reasons for police to avoid working with ICE on deportation. Though for the most part the participants did not disagree with them, they were less useful than the statements above.

- **Path to status:** Pointing out the need for federal immigration reform is less helpful because although few disagree, few also have any faith that the federal government can get its act together to do it.

Our immigration system is not going to be fixed by getting local police officers involved with immigration enforcement. We need common-sense policies at the national level that will provide a path for immigrants who contribute to our communities to earn legal status and citizenship.

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It sounds great, but if you live in Peter Pan’s world. Theoretically great, but could it happen? Not in my lifetime. – *White “swing” man, Los Angeles*

”

- **Root causes:** A message asking government to address root causes runs into the same problem as the message above, namely skepticism that current politicians will take any action on issues that the voters care about. And while these problems may be highly salient for some in the groups, even more important than the immigration issues, they do not see this as an either/or choice where working on gun violence would mean not taking action to deport immigrants who committed crimes. However, the racial profiling or “scapegoating” aspects of this message resonate with some, particularly in the group of African Americans.

Officials should examine and address the root causes of violence in our communities. We should demand that our government work on real solutions that address substance abuse, gun violence, and other causes of violence, not allow politicians to scapegoat whole communities of people for crimes committed by a few.

“

It just seems to be tossing it back on the federal government. Gun violence, substance abuse, politicians, scapegoating. – *White “swing” man, Los Angeles*

Sounds too idealistic. It would be great if as a community we could invest in resolving issues of gun violence and whatnot but that’s not the reality, and the reality is we do have laws and regulations about immigration and immigration status, and that did not speak to the issue of what we should and should not be doing regarding undocumented immigrants. – *API “core” man, San Francisco*

”

- **Criminal justice system:** A few voters in the groups bring up issues in the criminal justice system, such as police violence against African Americans, as a way of explaining why they do not trust police to enforce immigration laws. However, others, especially members of the white groups, do not perceive much relationship between these issues. And trying to describe community trust policies as a way to improve criminal justice policies and improve relationships with the community falls flat even for those who are inclined to see a connection. These voters see community trust policies as only addressing a small sliver of the issues in the criminal justice system. Raising Michael Brown or mass incarceration just points out that the problems are deeper than can be

addressed by a policy of not working with ICE. At the same time, however, although police violence and over-incarceration may not change many minds on the issue of working with ICE on deportation, acknowledging these issues may help you build relationships and networks with leaders of communities of color.

At a time when criminal justice reform, biased policing, and epidemic rates of mass incarceration are at the forefront of the national agenda, turning local law enforcement into immigration agents only exacerbates the problems. Systems that criminalize Black communities, people of color, and immigrants are integrally related. Community trust policies are a step toward improving relationships between the police and the community.

“ The police brutality still shows its face from time to time. Especially on the East Coast like we were all discussing earlier, communities of color, black communities were historically impoverished and they tend to be pushed on that. – *Latino “core” voter, Los Angeles*

Tried to roll everything into this scenario. I mean, it’s a real stretch. – *White “core” man, Chicago* ”

- **Redemption:** Most of the groups labeled the statement below as the weakest message, though as with the message above, some in the African American group agreed with it.

Participants in the groups generally agree that some people do turn their lives around, and examples of individuals who have gone through drug treatment or begun contributing to society after crimes in their past can be compelling. But as an argument about people who *might* turn their lives around in the future, the prospect of redemption is less compelling among these groups as a reason to avoid deporting those who have committed recent crimes.

Just because a person has a past conviction or an immigration violation does not necessarily make them a threat to the community. Many people with prior convictions have turned their lives around, and automatically deporting any immigrant with a record is wrong.

“ But just because they might turn their life around is not a good reason to have this sanctuary. – *White “core” man, Chicago*

I think the problem with this one for me is thinking about how many times do you let something go and then something bad goes wrong, like this guy in San Francisco.
– *White “core” woman, Virginia* ”

10. Possibility of recidivism can be a big driver on the other side.

In these groups, doubts about community trust policies fall into two main themes: the possibility of allowing violent criminals to re-offend; and the idea that even imperfect laws need to be enforced. These themes show up in the most persuasive of the messages we tested from the opposition to community trust policies.

- **Repeat offenders:** The idea that law enforcement should help ICE deport people who are likely to reoffend or commit violent or “serious” crimes, is powerful for many, even those who are sympathetic to community trust policies. The statement below was the top-rated opposition statement in each of the groups where it was presented.

None of us want somebody released back into the community who's going to continue to reoffend with violent crimes or serious crimes. We want to be able to use all the tools available to us to deal with that.

“ Protect the community from the violent crime repeater and giving fairness to the other ones that don't commit that violent of a crime. – *Latino “core” voter, Los Angeles* ”

- **Enforce the law:** The message we tested evoking respect for law speaks powerfully to those who are more skeptical of community trust policies. It also reaches some who are conflicted about the issue and say that even if they do not like the law as it currently exists, the solution is to change it, not for cities to opt out of enforcing it.

We are a nation of laws. Illegal immigrants broke the law by coming here and should be deported. Local government as well as the federal authorities should have a responsibility to help enforce our immigration laws.

“ The fairness, I think too, goes back to U.S. citizens. It's fair to us that everybody follows the same rules. – *White “swing” woman, Chicago* ”

Messages that suggest undocumented immigrants are more likely than others to be criminals or dangerous are less persuasive in these groups.

Appendix A: Composition Table of Respondents

	Total	Alexandria, VA		Chicago, IL		Los Angeles, CA		San Francisco, CA	
		White women	African American men and women	White women	White men	Latinos & Latinas	White men	Asian/Pacific Islander	White men and women
Total	71	9	10	9	9	9	8	8	9
Men	35	0	4	0	9	5	8	4	5
Women	36	9	6	9	0	4	0	4	4
Hispanic	9	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
African-American	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
API	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0
White	44	9	0	9	9	0	8	0	9
Democrat	50	8	8	6	6	6	5	7	4
Republican	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Independent	20	1	2	3	3	2	3	1	5
Very liberal	12	3	0	0	3	0	0	1	5
Somewhat liberal	31	6	3	3	2	2	6	5	4
Middle of the road	23	0	6	4	3	6	2	2	0
Smwt. conservative	4	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Very conservative	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
High school grad	5	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0
Junior college	5	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0
Tech/vocational college	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Some college	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
4-year college grad	36	5	5	6	6	2	4	4	4
Post-grad work	4	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
Post-grad degree	15	4	1	1	2	0	1	3	3
24-30	17	2	4	2	2	2	1	2	2
31-40	19	3	2	2	3	1	3	2	3
41-50	15	1	1	4	2	4	1	1	1
51-65	14	3	3	0	0	1	3	2	2
66-70	6	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	1

Appendix B: Examples Presented in Discussions

Chicago and Los Angeles

- A 45-year-old man with a green card who was convicted of drug possession many years ago and successfully completed a drug program.
- An undocumented mother of U.S. citizen children who returned to this country after being deported and was picked up for driving without a license.
- An undocumented parent of two U.S. citizen children who had a DUI conviction 5 years ago, finished the required class, paid the fine, and has had no other record.
- An undocumented survivor of domestic violence who called police for help, but was arrested because her abuser hit himself before police arrived and said she did it.

San Francisco

- A 40-year-old undocumented man who had convictions for robbery and kidnapping 20 years ago. He served his time in prison, and now has a family, a job, and mentors at-risk youth.
- An undocumented survivor of domestic violence who called police for help, but was arrested because her abuser hit himself before police arrived and said she did it. She herself had past conviction for assault years ago when she defended herself during a previous incident of abuse.
- A man with a green card who had multiple drug felony convictions 5 years ago.