

See No Spanish:  
Implicit Cues, Personal Experience, and  
Attitudes toward Immigration

Daniel J. Hopkins\*  
Van C. Tran†  
Abigail Fisher Williamson‡

Harvard University§

May 1st, 2009

---

\*Post-Doctoral Fellow, Institute for Quantitative Social Science, Harvard University

†Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, Harvard University

‡Ph.D. Candidate, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

§This paper was presented at the Georgetown American Politics seminar (March 13 2009), the Eastern Sociological Society (March 21 2009), the Harvard University Migration and Immigrant Incorporation Workshop (March 31 2009), the Midwest Political Science Association's annual meeting (April 4 2009), the Yale University American Politics Seminar (April 15 2009), and the Harvard Political Psychology and Behavior Workshop (May 1 2009). The authors received institutional support from Harvard University's Center for American Political Studies, Hauser Center for Non-Profit Organizations, and Saguaro Seminar for Civic Engagement; the MIT Department of Political Science; the Yale University Center for the Study of American Politics; and the Zeit Foundation. Data were collected partially through Time-sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences. The project was reviewed by Institutional Review Boards at Yale (711003296) and Harvard (F15546-101 and F16792-101). The authors gratefully acknowledge assistance or advice from Matt Barreto, Adam Berinsky, Colin Brown, Nicole Deterding, Gregory Huber, Gabriel Lenz, Arthur Lupia, Diana Mutz, Deborah Schildkraut, Ismail White, and participants at the seminars named above.

## **Abstract**

Are Americans' responses to immigration cues similar to their responses to racial cues? This paper explores how implicit and explicit cues influence immigration attitudes. To explain explicit cues' varying impacts, it conceives of the implicit/explicit distinction using continuous variables. The paper hypothesizes that the effect of cues will be moderated by personal experience with immigrants. It tests these claims using four survey experiments with more than 2,500 respondents. Seeing Spanish text acts as a potent implicit cue. Even brief exposures to written Spanish can undermine support for immigration among key subgroups, including Democratic voters and those who hear Spanish frequently. Yet explicit anti-immigration appeals backfire, particularly among those who frequently interact with Latino immigrants. Thus the distinction between implicit and explicit attitudes proves critical in understanding attitudes on immigration. Casual contact with immigrants can increase the effect of cues, suggesting that they are most influential when they resonate with personal experience.

## Introduction

“Roll up your sleeves,” the speaker told a rally in the spring of 2007. “I want to inoculate each of you against politically correct paralysis. It’s okay to say ‘illegal alien,’ like you say ‘bank robber’.” The speaker was a national leader of the Minuteman Project, an anti-immigration group, speaking at a rally against undocumented immigration in New Bedford, Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> Like many of the speakers, he seemed to believe that the impact of his appeals hinged on whether they were perceived as racist.

This paper tests that intuition systematically by exploring the impact of various cues on Americans’ attitudes toward immigration. Theoretically, Section 1 develops hypotheses by coupling research on immigration attitudes with the more developed research on framing and Americans’ racial attitudes. The paper pays special attention to the distinction between implicit and explicit cues. Underpinning prominent studies of non-Hispanic whites’ racial attitudes is the notion that appeals with explicit racial content trigger anti-racist norms, and so can backfire politically (Huber and Lapinski 2006; Mendelberg 2001; but see Hutchings, Walton and Benjamin 2008; White 2007). By contrast, certain implicit cues can affect attitudes by activating people’s racial predispositions but leaving them unaware of the cues’ underlying racial content (Mendelberg 2008; White 2007; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Valentino, Hutchings and White 2002; Mendelberg 2001; Valentino 1999; but see Lapinski and Huber 2008; Huber and Lapinski 2006). Could the distinction between explicit and implicit cues matter for attitudes toward immigration as well?

Case study evidence from anti-immigrant rallies and other sources hints that Americans reject certain explicit anti-immigration appeals. Very consistently, people advocating anti-immigration views try to pre-empt the charge that they are racist. Still, scholars of public opinion have only begun testing the impact of immigration-related cues experimentally (e.g. Schildkraut, 2009*b*; Albertson and Gadarian, 2009; Barreto et al., 2008; Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008; Barreto, Merolla and Ramírez, 2007; Junn and Masuoka, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004), and have not reached a consensus. This recent work has also not addressed social norms or the

---

<sup>1</sup>To maintain scholarly objectivity, we alternate between the term “undocumented” and “illegal.”

implicit/explicit distinction. Perhaps Americans' rejection of explicit racial appeals is a result of the particular legacy of American race relations, and explicit anti-immigration appeals will not prompt similar reactions. Or perhaps Americans react to immigration cues as they sometimes do to racial cues, rejecting explicit appeals but responding to implicit cues.

To test these claims, this paper uses three online experiments with nationally representative samples and a follow-up experiment embedded in a Massachusetts exit poll. All were in the field in 2008. The results demonstrate that the distinction between implicit and explicit cues proves critical in understanding Americans' attitudes on immigration. Initial tests in Section 2 focus on a cue that is pervasive, politically contentious, and yet also implicit: the Spanish language. Certainly, the Spanish language qualifies as an implicit cue, as it primes immigration-related attitudes without openly acknowledging the reference to a prominent immigrant group. Even those exposed to a single sentence written in Spanish display more anti-immigration sentiment as a result.

This paper adds to our understanding of how such cues work by showing that they are moderated by respondents' day-to-day experiences with immigrants. The first experiment shows that seeing Spanish language text has a more negative impact on those who say that they regularly hear Spanish in their daily lives. To probe and extend these findings, we embedded a second Spanish language experiment in an exit poll conducted in two heavily immigrant communities. Doing so, we found that seeing written Spanish reduces support for immigration markedly among Democratic voters. Of Democratic voters, 28.6 percent who saw Spanish advocated decreasing immigration, as opposed to 21.4 percent of those who did not see Spanish ( $p < 0.03$ ). We suspect that ceiling effects prevent a similar treatment effect among Republican voters, who support decreased immigration 66.3 percent of the time without the Spanish cue (see also Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004).

In contrast, explicit appeals do not reduce support for immigration, as detailed in Section 3. Separate experiments show that respondents who report talking with Latino immigrants often are the strongest in rejecting certain explicit anti-immigration appeals. When people who frequently talk to Latinos are exposed to arguments for and against immigration, their reported

level of threat declines by 0.63 of a standard deviation relative to the control group ( $p = .01$ ). Confirming the applicability of theories of racial attitudes, we also show that education moderates the impact of these explicit appeals. At the same time, the experiments on explicit cues nuance past understandings by showing that not all explicit cues are equally effective in triggering anti-racist norms (see also Hutchings, Walton and Benjamin, 2008). Cues can be more or less explicit, a finding which moves us beyond the binary typology of explicit and implicit cues.

These findings cut against one common assumption about the origins of attitudes about politics. Prominent work has argued that personal experiences are secondary to cues from the media in shaping attitudes (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987) – and that personal experiences matter more for those not exposed to cues through the media (e.g. Mutz, 1992). But for the case of attitudes toward immigration, this paper reaches a different conclusion. Overall, implicit and explicit cues have more of an impact on those who encounter immigrants in their day-to-day lives. Theoretically, this finding implies that media effects and local experiences might be complementary. These results also strengthen the claim that cues operate on the subset of people who have pre-existing attitudes that can be made more accessible by cues (Chong and Druckman, 2007a).

Unlike cues in everyday life, the Spanish language manipulations in our experiments were quite subtle, and the use of Spanish was by researchers rather than politicians. These factors suggest that the effects of Spanish detailed here are potentially a lower bound, making the political implications of these findings all the more noteworthy. The 2008 Democratic presidential primary included the first-ever Spanish language debate. Both the primary and the general election campaigns featured considerable Spanish-language advertising as well (Barreto et al., 2008). This paper’s results suggest that politicians’ use of Spanish may heighten anti-immigration sentiment among certain key constituencies. Anti-immigration activists face their own strategic dilemma. Explicit appeals against immigration can *reduce* Americans’ willingness to voice anti-immigration views, so activists on that side of the debate might find themselves undermined by their own success. The very prominence of their views could make Americans

less likely to voice their support for anti-immigration positions. These and other implications of the results are explored in the concluding Section 4.

## 1 Theory: Implicit and Explicit Cues

Much of the scholarship on attitudes toward immigration has sought to uncover the extent to which immigration attitudes are rooted in economic versus cultural threats (e.g. Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter, 2007; Sides and Citrin, 2007; Schildkraut, 2005; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004; Barkan, 2003; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Citrin et al., 1997; Citrin, Reingold and Green, 1990; Higham, 1992). Some work has also investigated the impact of local contexts on attitudes toward immigration and immigrants (Wong and Drake, 2006; Oliver and Wong, 2003; Hood and Morris, 1998, 1997). More recently, researchers have begun to consider how specific cues influence attitudes toward immigration (e.g. Schildkraut, 2009*b*; Barreto et al., 2008; Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008; Junn and Masuoka, 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004). For the purposes of this paper, cues are defined as any signal that makes certain considerations more accessible in the minds of those exposed. Cues are often intentional appeals by political elites designed to influence public opinion. But not always: they can also be unintentional signals, such as the accent of a speaker or the use of the Spanish language.

Recent work has not reached any consensus on the impact of immigration-related cues. One experimental study concludes that explicitly identifying immigrants as members of an ethnic out-group induces anxiety and leads to more negative responses to immigration (Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008); a second shows that the impact of immigration-related rhetoric on information-seeking hinges on one's ethnic or racial sub-group (Albertson and Gadarian, 2009). Two other studies show that bilingual advertising can have a negative impact on the sponsoring candidate (Barreto, Merolla and Ramírez, 2007), especially among blacks (Barreto et al., 2008). However, a fifth experimental study finds mostly positive impacts when respondents see photos of Asian American or Latino families (Junn and Masuoka, 2007). Although inconclusive as a whole, these results suggest that the impact of immigration-related cues depends on their

specific content. At the same time, this work has not yet explored the influence of social norms.

To understand how immigration-related cues might work, we begin inductively, drawing clues about immigration attitudes from case studies as well as past research.<sup>2</sup> We then use research on racial priming and issue framing to develop specific hypotheses. One hypothesis holds that Americans respond differently to explicit versus implicit cues, since only explicit cues trigger concerns about being racist. Another hypothesis contends that the Spanish language might be one such implicit cue. Building on our conceptualization of implicit and explicit appeals as continuous variables, we also hypothesize that not all explicit cues will trigger anti-racist norms to the same degree. A final hypothesis contends that cues about immigration interact with respondents' personal experiences to trigger pro- or anti-immigration sentiment. Past research on Americans' immigration attitudes has typically emphasized either national or local explanations. But by linking cues in the broader information environment to people's day-to-day experiences, the theoretical approach developed here has the potential to unify those two explanatory approaches.

## 1.1 Anti-Racist Norms and Explicit Appeals

Anti-immigration advocates are clearly attentive to anti-racist norms and the perception that their appeals violate those norms. Field research conducted by the authors in communities with growing concentrations of immigrants demonstrates this phenomenon. In Elgin, Illinois, the leader of a new anti-illegal immigrant group carefully considered whether or not to highlight that many undocumented immigrants are Hispanic. He explained, "I thought long and hard about whether or not to use the 'H word.' Do we talk about Hispanic or don't we? And that's really where the numbers are, that's where the demographics are, but the label of racist is gonna come into play." Though he ultimately decided to refer to Hispanics in discussing illegal

---

<sup>2</sup>In drawing on case study evidence, we follow the injunction that "theory building should be grounded in credible intuitions" (Kalyvas, 2006). The field research referenced in this paper consisted of 320 in-depth interviews with community leaders and residents in five mid-sized U.S. cities with rapidly growing foreign-born populations: Elgin, Illinois; Lewiston, Maine; New Bedford, Massachusetts; Wausau, Wisconsin; and Yakima, Washington. (Author citation) describes the interview sample and methodology for all sites except New Bedford in further detail.

immigration, he continued to worry that connecting ethnicity to immigration would undermine his message: “[T]he whole multicultural mindset, we’re kind of going against that, and breaking up the happy home a little bit.”

To pre-empt the charge of racism, anti-immigration activists commonly make appeals to the country’s immigrant heritage or to their own connections to immigrant America. At a rally against undocumented immigration in New Bedford, Massachusetts, a candidate for Senate was careful to note that, “the contribution of our immigrants is immeasurable” before advocating stricter border control. One of the rally’s organizers explained the reason for such cautious speech: “I realize[d] there was going to be an effort to paint us as a right-wing hate group.” The rhetorical strategies of anti-immigration organizers strongly imply that they are aware of anti-racist norms, and that they work hard to avoid violating those norms. Anti-racist norms are so pervasive that some less educated Americans also watch their words carefully when discussing immigration. A young, unemployed mother in Lewiston, Maine worried that criticizing government aid to immigrants reflected poorly on her: “I just hate it ’cause I don’t want people to think I’m racist or anything like that, but I definitely, definitely feel as though they’re making a huge mistake by financially helping these people as much as they do.” Despite the prevalence of such concerns, past research on immigration attitudes has devoted little attention to the impact of these norms.

By contrast, research on racial attitudes has a developed framework for explaining the impact of anti-racist norms on racial appeals. Although controversial (e.g. Mendelberg, 2008; Lapinski and Huber, 2008), the distinction between explicit and implicit attitudes has structured several studies of racial attitudes (e.g. White, 2007; Huber and Lapinski, 2006; Valentino, Hutchings and White, 2002; Mendelberg, 2001; Valentino, 1999). One key claim of this approach is that for non-Hispanic whites, explicit racial appeals are recognized as violations of egalitarian norms and rejected (Huber and Lapinski 2006; Mendelberg 2001; but see White 2007; Hutchings, Walton and Benjamin 2008). Rejection could entail either a null effect or a contrast effect, where explicit appeals produce opinion shifts in the opposite direction. Given the description of anti-immigration appeals just above, we hypothesize that claims about explicit racial appeals

could apply to appeals about immigration as well.

Racial predispositions can still be activated within this theoretical framework. Since they are not overtly racial, implicit racial cues are thought by some scholars to prime racial considerations in Americans' minds. These implicit cues can be visual (Mendelberg, 2001; Valentino, 1999) or verbal (White, 2007; Hurwitz and Peffley, 2005) so long as their racial content is not openly acknowledged. Such cues are processed automatically by those exposed, bypassing respondents' anti-racist norms (Mendelberg, 2001).<sup>3</sup> If attitudes toward immigration are similar in structure to racial attitudes, they might be similarly susceptible to implicit cues.

Still, for cues of any kind to operate effectively, respondents must have available beliefs or considerations about the topic that can be made accessible by the cues (Chong and Druckman 2007*a,c*; but see Miller and Krosnick 2000). Race has been a central cleavage in American politics since at least the Civil Rights era, so the existence of such beliefs about race is highly plausible (e.g. Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Carmines and Stimson, 1989). Given the salience and politicization of race in American politics, racial attitudes might be uniquely susceptible to implicit cues. In the case of immigration, however, it is unclear that there are sufficient pre-existing considerations accessible in people's minds for cues to operate. Immigration may be a sufficiently novel issue that it lacks a set of symbols that are at once implicit and still widely processed as related to immigration.

We thus hypothesize that cues will influence only the subset of people who have pre-existing thoughts about immigration. Well-educated respondents are one such group, as they are more attentive to politics (Zaller, 1992) and more observant of egalitarian norms (Huber and Lapinski, 2006). Yet education is correlated with a variety of distinctive factors, including general political knowledge, attention to politics, and adherence to norms. To the extent that education moderates the impact of cues, it is hard to know exactly what we should conclude.

More clear-cut predictions come from a second moderator, one that has not been explored in past research: people's day-to-day experiences. Such experiences could be a source of pre-existing attitudes and thus a moderator of cues' impacts. Immigration in the U.S. is concentrated

---

<sup>3</sup>For more on the underlying psychological mechanisms, see Mendelberg (2008) and the research cited therein.

in specific geographic areas (Frey, 2006), meaning that native-born Americans vary markedly in the degree to which they encounter immigrants in day-to-day life. Fifteen percent of respondents to our first nationally representative survey lived in ZIP codes that were more than 20 percent foreign born, while 23 percent lived in ZIP codes that were less than 2 percent foreign born. The resulting differences in daily encounters, in turn, might influence who has pre-existing considerations about immigration. As Kinder (1998) notes, the news media “appears to be most effective in telling people what to think when the stories it presents reinforce and ratify the experience of ordinary life” (179; see also Gamson 1992). Because cues operate by making pre-existing considerations more accessible, we hypothesize that they will interact with respondents’ personal experiences. Those who encounter immigrants in their day-to-day lives are especially ripe to respond to cues. Far from being dueling sources of information, personal experience and cues might work together to shape attitudes.

## 1.2 Spanish and Implicit Cues

Another challenge that is not commonly acknowledged in studies of implicit racial cues is the fact that “implicit” is not a binary categorization. Messages can be more or less implicit, and thus more or less likely to trigger anti-racist norms. In the case of racial attitudes, some respondents might immediately recognize the racial content of phrases like “inner city criminals” or “urban youth.” At the same time, some explicit appeals might be sufficiently persuasive as to operate in spite of the perception that they violate norms. The anti-immigration organizers cited above clearly believe that at least some explicit appeals are effective.

Building on these intuitions, and drawing on recent work on the strength of frames (e.g. Chong and Druckman, 2007*b*), we re-conceptualize the implicit/explicit categorization as two cross-cutting, continuous variables. The first variable indicates the strength of the cue in bringing relevant considerations to the forefront. The second indicates the strength of the counter-vailing norms triggered by the cue. The reported attitude is the sum of these two variables with opposing signs. Such an approach captures the basic insight of the implicit/explicit dichotomy while allowing the content of the cue and the strength of the norm to matter as well. In this

view, implicit cues operate only through the first variable, since they trigger no norms. We can thus predict the direction in which they will shift attitudes. But explicit cues operate through both variables, meaning that they might vary in the direction of their impact as well as its strength. Some explicit cues might have no discernible impacts. Others might produce strong contrast effects, as those exposed signal their disagreement by adopting the opposing view. Still others might work as intended (Hutchings, Walton and Benjamin, 2008). This approach could explain why past studies of cues' impact on racial attitudes and attitudes toward immigration reach no consensus. It also allows us to incorporate attitudes toward immigration even though they might not be subject to the same strong anti-racist norms as attitudes toward African Americans.

This paper focuses on one cue, exposure to written Spanish, that is undeniably implicit: its immigration-related content is not acknowledged. There is good reason to suspect that Spanish cues immigration-related attitudes. Observations of recent immigration politics illustrate the particular power of concerns about language in energizing anti-immigration sentiment. In field research in small U.S. cities with rapidly growing immigrant populations, language emerged as a major flash point among local residents. Language barriers serve as an obstacle to communication, exacerbating suspicion and misunderstanding. Moreover, the presence of foreign languages raises concerns among some Americans that immigrants are failing to assimilate, instead imposing their culture on their host country. In Elgin, Illinois, a non-Hispanic white man explained how the growing prevalence of Spanish signs heightened his concerns about immigration: "There's Armando's Grocery Store up there. Signs used to be English, 'Potatoes—79 cents a pound,' and down below it would be in Spanish. Now the big sign is in Spanish and the little sign is in English... It's frightening to see that it's just kind of been dominated." In Yakima, a central Washington city that is also home to a growing Latino population, a non-Hispanic white man similarly explained how issues surrounding language affect local views on immigration: "Two years ago there was just a hell of a hullabaloo in this town. A fellow that I know wrote a beautiful version of the *Star Spangled Banner* that slips from English into Spanish, back into English and to Spanish... All hell broke loose. Instead of celebrating, [people said], 'What are

they doing? I mean now they're even changing our sacred national anthem, and profaning it by putting it in another language.”’

Political elites are not immune to such concerns. U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd once commented on the increasing use of Spanish, noting: “I pick up the telephone and call the local garage... I can’t understand the person on the other side of the line... They’re all over the place, and they don’t speak English. Do we want more of this?” (Fram, 1992). Huntington (2004) expresses similar concerns, arguing that Latino immigrants’ retention of Spanish threatens American national unity. Past research reinforces the close relationship between language issues and Americans’ conceptions of immigration and national identity (Paxton, 2006; Schildkraut, 2005; Citrin et al., 2001). In the words of a 1993 report on local native-immigrant interactions, “if a single source of conflict stands out, it involves the use of different languages” (Bach, 1993, pg. 7). Past work also illustrates the contentious politics surrounding state-level language policy (Schildkraut, 2001). Among the set of implicit cues related to immigration, the Spanish language is potentially powerful. We now turn to testing these hypotheses.

## 2 The Language Experiments

Survey researchers have long used experiments to make causal inferences (e.g. Iyengar and Kinder, 1987), drawing on experiments’ unique capacity to eliminate alternative explanations and identify causal effects. This section details the implementation and results of two experiments exposing respondents to written Spanish. In these analyses and in the subsequent experiments on explicit appeals, we investigate both main effects and effects conditional on a small number of theoretically motivated moderators. These moderating covariates—education, personal experience with Latino immigrants, and political partisanship—are all causally prior to the treatment itself.<sup>4</sup>

The first experiment was administered online through Knowledge Networks’ panel on a

---

<sup>4</sup>We thus avoid the steep methodological hurdles or increased assumptions needed to estimate mediation effects when the mediator has not been randomized (Glynn, 2008; Imai, Keele and Yamamoto, 2008; Bullock, Green and Ha, 2008).

random sample of 351 adult respondents, and was part of a larger survey conducted between February 23rd and February 28th, 2008. The median respondent was 47 years old with 13 years of education. 10% of respondents were black, 7% were Hispanic, and 6% were born outside the U.S. Researchers are commonly forced to conduct experiments on non-random sub-samples of the population, but here, we are able to use a nationally representative sample. The random sample reduces concerns about the generality of the results. The panel recruitment rate (RR3) was 62 percent. 144 respondents were randomly selected to view a welcoming note in English, and 137 saw the same note in English and Spanish. Another 70 respondents saw no welcoming note at all, and are grouped among the control units. It is certainly possible that seeing Spanish primes attitudes related to ethnicity, race, or to outgroups generally. But we are interested here in its influence on attitudes related to immigration.

In English, the introductory note read: “We are eager to learn what you think about various issues facing America today.”<sup>5</sup> Randomization checks on twelve key covariates indicate only one significant pre-treatment difference across the groups: those exposed to Spanish are more likely to be Democrats ( $p=0.04$ , two-sided test). To the extent that Democrats are more pro-immigration, this factor might make it harder to detect the hypothesized effects. The results reported below are all confirmed using parametric models which adjust for this covariate imbalance. The treatment is quite subtle, and the written Spanish is not being deployed by a political leader or group. We therefore think of these results as a lower bound which potentially understates the impact of Spanish when used politically. These analyses and those below all use two-sided tests of significance unless we have a clear directional prediction, as with the implicit cues, or unless our own prior results indicate the expected effect.

We measured the outcome of interest – attitudes toward immigration – in a variety of ways. After treatment, respondents were asked whether they agreed with a generic statement about threat (Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004): “These days, I am afraid that the American way of life is threatened.” There is nothing specific to immigration in this statement, and respondents could reply with reference to economic, social, or cultural threats. They were sub-

---

<sup>5</sup>The bilingual version also included the same note in Spanish: “Estamos conduciendo una encuesta publica acerca de la opinion de personas como usted acerca de asuntos importantes.”

sequently asked a common question about preferred levels of immigration: “[d]o you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be decreased a lot, decreased a little, left the same, increased a little, or increased a lot?” Responses to this variable are quite skewed, with just under 10 percent of respondents endorsing increased immigration (see also Schildkraut, 2009*a*). We thus focus on a binary indicator of whether the respondent supports decreased immigration or not.<sup>6</sup> An additional question assessed whether respondents agreed that “current and future immigration will threaten the American way of life.” They also probed whether the arrival of immigrants in the respondent’s community or country would raise taxes or levels of violence and crime.<sup>7</sup> To reduce concerns about multiple comparisons (e.g. Rice, 1989; Benjamin and Hochberg, 1995), we also create a composite index by adding each of the measures above into an anti-immigration index that weights each equally ( $\alpha=.79$ ). Finally, respondents were invited to provide additional open-ended comments. We noted whether those comments mentioned language concerns specifically. Together, these measures capture a wide variety of outcomes that are linked to immigration, including threats to safety, public finances, and culture.

What is the impact of seeing a single Spanish sentence early in the survey? On most of the dependent variables, there is no evidence of systematic differences across the full treated and control populations. In fact, there is not a single main effect significant at the 0.05 level.<sup>8</sup> However, there is a hint that seeing Spanish might shape some attitudes. Whereas 2.8 percent of control group respondents mentioned language issues explicitly in an open-ended response, 5.8 percent of respondents who saw Spanish did ( $p=0.09$ , one sided). The result is very similar when we use logistic regression conditional on party identification to estimate the treatment effect, a precautionary step given the imbalance on that covariate. The estimated treatment effect under the model is 2.9 percentage points, with a simulated, one-sided p-value of 0.09.

We then examined the hypothesis that seeing Spanish is especially influential among those who encounter it in their day-to-day lives. This group is perhaps more likely to have pre-existing

---

<sup>6</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all other questions have four response categories.

<sup>7</sup>Respondents were randomly assigned to questions with either “your community” or “this country” as the frame of reference.

<sup>8</sup>This conclusion was confirmed through ANOVA, which gives the probability of no group differences as 0.65.

attitudes and mental associations that can be made accessible by the cue. Consider the 210 respondents who report hearing Spanish at least once a week.<sup>9</sup> When exposed to the Spanish cue, they are more likely to say that immigrants bring violence and crime ( $p=0.06$ , one-sided) and that immigrants induce tax increases ( $p=.10$ , one-sided). Perhaps not surprisingly, seeing Spanish does not shape their response to the generic threat question. When asked about threats induced by immigration, however, those who saw written Spanish are more likely to report that the American way of life is threatened ( $p=.10$ , one-sided). They are also more supportive of reducing immigration, although the difference—53.6 percentage points versus 47.2 percentage points—is not significant ( $p=.18$ , one sided). Those who see Spanish are higher on the overall anti-immigration index as well ( $p=.11$ , one-sided). No one result here is overwhelmingly strong. But given the modest sample size and the subtlety of the cue, *the fact that similar results appear across a variety of measures is striking*.<sup>10</sup> Those who frequently encounter Spanish tend to respond negatively to a sentence written in Spanish. And that negative response persists for the duration of the survey.

Hearing Spanish frequently was not randomized, so these sub-group effects could actually be driven by any variable that is correlated with self-reported contact. One specific concern is that responses to the contact measures are colored by pre-existing immigration attitudes. Yet we see no empirical evidence of a strong relationship. In the control group that saw no Spanish, the Pearson’s correlation between the anti-immigration index and the frequency of hearing Spanish is  $-0.02$ .<sup>11</sup> Also, in the data set as a whole, hearing Spanish frequently is not strongly related to Democratic partisanship (correlation= $-0.05$ ) or conservative ideology (correlation= $-0.05$ ). Those who report hearing Spanish frequently do live in more Hispanic ZIP codes (correlation= $0.26$ ), see Latinos more frequently ( $0.66$ ), and talk to Latino immigrants frequently ( $0.59$ ). The measures of contact behave as we would expect measures of contact to, and are not related to ideology or attitudes.

---

<sup>9</sup>Specifically, prior to treatment, respondents were asked: “in your day-to-day life, how frequently do you hear Spanish spoken?” There were five response options, from “never or almost never” to “every day.”

<sup>10</sup>We also see the same pattern when removing the 70 respondents who saw no introductory note from the control group, further demonstrating the robustness of the results.

<sup>11</sup>For talking to Latino immigrants, a measure we use below, it is  $-0.03$ .

As additional tests of the interaction between personal experience and cues, we estimated linear models for each of our dependent variables for the full sample.<sup>12</sup> The key term in each model is the interaction between the treatment (seeing Spanish) and exposure to Spanish in day-to-day life. We also included lower-order terms for both of those variables, as well as an indicator variable for those who saw no introductory note and a seven-category measure of partisan identification. From each model, we predicted the average response for four hypothetical respondents, defined by whether or not the respondent encounters Spanish in her daily life and whether or not she saw written Spanish in the survey.

Figure 1 presents the results graphically, illustrating that there is a consistent and often significant interaction between respondents' exposure to Spanish and their response to the experimental cue. When exposed to Spanish, those who encounter the language frequently fall higher on the anti-immigration index. They become more threatened by immigration and more likely to think that immigrants cause higher crime and taxes. By contrast, those who rarely hear Spanish shift their attitudes in the opposite direction. We reach identical conclusions when we look only at the 281 respondents who saw some type of welcome message (not shown). Nor do the results change when we introduce other control variables, such as political ideology, Hispanic ethnicity, an indicator for African Americans, foreign birthplace, or gender. We thus have strong initial evidence that written Spanish leads to increased concern about immigration among Americans who hear the language frequently. It also has the opposite impact among people who rarely encounter Spanish, perhaps because of concerns about social desirability.<sup>13</sup> The sight of Spanish language text clearly brings to mind different considerations based on personal experience. In fact, prior experience might influence whether respondents even recognize the cue as Spanish, offering one potential explanation for the very different patterns in Figure 1.

---

<sup>12</sup>For the binary variable, we used logistic regression; for the others, we used Ordinary Least Squares.

<sup>13</sup>Using t-tests on the sample that does not frequently hear Spanish, we see that those exposed to Spanish are less likely to link immigrants to rising crime ( $p=0.09$ , two-sided test) and less likely to link immigrants to higher taxes ( $p=0.03$ , two-sided test).

## 2.1 Exit Poll

To further probe the impact of Spanish as a cue, and to confirm our initial findings, we conducted a second experiment embedded in an exit poll on the November 2008 presidential election. We focused on four major polling sites in two communities that are diverse in socioeconomic, political, and racial terms, and that were accessible to the research team. In light of the results above, we targeted heavily immigrant areas, where respondents would be likely to encounter foreign languages frequently. We chose Everett and Somerville, Massachusetts, both located in metropolitan Boston.<sup>14</sup> As expected, the vast majority of the exit poll respondents reported hearing Spanish or Portuguese frequently, with 88 percent reporting that they hear those languages at least once a week.<sup>15</sup> In the national survey described above, just 59 percent of people said they heard Spanish frequently. We should think of the 902 exit poll respondents as frequently exposed to foreign languages such as Spanish and Portuguese.

As before, the Spanish cue in the exit poll was quite subtle. All respondents received a one-page, English language survey fastened to a clipboard. For half of respondents, the top of the survey included a 16-point font sentence under the poll’s title that said in Spanish: “por favor, fíjense que uds. pueden contestar en español al otro lado.” The other half of respondents had no such sentence. In English, the sentence means “Please be aware that you can answer in Spanish on the other side.” To maintain realism for those respondents who spoke Spanish, the treatment survey included a full Spanish translation on the back side, while the control survey was blank on the back side. An image of the poll with the Spanish cue is available in the appendix.<sup>16</sup> The survey instrument intentionally emphasized a variety of issues, including vote choice, taxes, the economy, and presidential approval. To measure immigration-related attitudes, the instrument contained the same generic threat question as above, and then the

---

<sup>14</sup>Everett has a median household income of \$51,333, which almost exactly matches the national figure of \$50,007. It is 33 percent foreign born. According to the same 2005-2007 American Community Survey data, Somerville’s median household income was \$59,146, and it was 27 percent foreign born.

<sup>15</sup>Since Somerville and Everett are home to large Portuguese and Brazilian immigrant populations, we included mention of each of these languages in our question.

<sup>16</sup>Because the treatment was visible at the beginning of the survey, all of its 19 questions should be considered “post-treatment,” although our strong suspicion is that seeing Spanish will not influence self-reported income, vote choice or other covariates.

standard question about increasing or decreasing levels of immigration.

The researchers as well as ten research assistants administered the exit poll to every  $n$ th individual leaving one of four major polling sites in the two cities. The interval  $n$  was determined by the researcher at each site based on voter traffic and then fixed. Every other respondent received the Spanish treatment.<sup>17</sup> At the site with the lowest response rate, 49 percent of people who were approached declined to take the survey.<sup>18</sup> In the overall sample, there were a few covariate imbalances detected by randomization checks. Of the eight available covariates, those who received a survey with Spanish were more likely to be Black (16.0 percent versus 11.3 percent;  $p=0.039$  from a two-sided t-test). They were also slightly less educated, reporting 14.6 years of education as compared to the control group's 15.0 years ( $p=0.024$ , two-sided t-test).

We addressed these imbalances as well as the potential cross-site heterogeneity by estimating parametric models with the following covariates: an indicator for treated respondents, an indicator for African Americans, indicators for three of the four polling sites, and years of education. For the generic measure of threat, an OLS model detects no impacts at all. Those who saw Spanish are no more likely to report in general terms that they are afraid the American way of life is threatened. In all likelihood, the single Spanish sentence is far too subtle to cue immigration concerns with such a general question, and respondents instead answered with the economy, terrorism, or other issues in mind. However, we do find that Spanish can influence attitudes when people are asked about immigration specifically. The results for the full sample are given in the first two columns in Table 1. Under the model, the impact of seeing Spanish is 4.8 percentage points on average, raising the probability a respondent indicates wanting to decrease immigration to 61.8 percent. The p-value on the hypothesis that the impact is greater than zero is 0.103. The result is suggestive but not quite significant.

However, the impact of such cues could be influenced by pre-existing views. Cues can be

---

<sup>17</sup>Such a randomization is commonly employed in exit polls, and relies on the assumption that there is no systematic ordering in how voters leave the polling place. The treatment would be confounded, for example, if everyone voted with her spouse and if the more conservative partner always exited first. Our experience administering the survey as well as the randomization checks confirm that there were no such problems. Treated respondents were no more or less likely to vote for McCain, for example.

<sup>18</sup>There, our exit poll found 72% support for Barack Obama, when in actuality 62% of voters voted for Obama. National exit polls have seen comparable overstatements of Democratic support in recent years Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International (2005).

“galvanizing,” meaning that they trigger attitude changes among those who are already anti-immigrant. But they could also be “mobilizing,” meaning that they trigger attitude changes among those who are more favorable toward immigration to start (Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior, 2004). If one is already staunchly anti-immigration, ceiling effects might come into play, and the cue might have no impact. One available proxy for pre-existing views is the vote choice of our respondents. Sixty-seven percent of the 202 McCain voters wanted to see immigration decreased, as opposed to just 26 percent of Obama voters. We then estimated the impact of seeing Spanish only among Obama voters. Of Obama voters who saw Spanish, 29.8 percent wanted to decrease immigration, while just 22.7 percent of those who did not see Spanish voiced the same opinion ( $p = 0.02$ , one-sided t-test). This result remains significant ( $p = 0.04$ ) when using the Sequential Bonferroni test to adjust for multiple comparisons.<sup>19</sup> In fact, at all four sites, the Obama voters who saw Spanish are more likely to want reduced immigration. And at two of the sites, one-sided t-tests detect statistically significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level.

Still, owing to covariate imbalances, it is valuable to estimate treatment effects conditional on race and education. The second two columns of Table 1 do exactly that—and show the strong impact of seeing Spanish on Obama voters’ attitudes toward immigration. Among the majority of our sample who voted for Barack Obama, seeing a single sentence of written Spanish induced a marked anti-immigrant shift. For example, consider Obama voters at the Everett senior center which was the fourth site. The model estimates that 42.2 percent of those who did not see Spanish would voice anti-immigration attitudes. For those who did see Spanish, the comparable number is 54.1 percent, producing an estimated treatment effect of over 10 percentage points. Here, the p-value from a t-test that the coefficient is positive is 0.007, a strong indication that the treatment mattered for this group.<sup>20</sup>

We confirmed these results by estimating similar models with other covariates, including the respondent’s gender, ethnicity, income, age, time in the community, frequency of hearing Spanish or Portuguese, and frequency of talking with immigrants. Figure 2 presents the predicted

---

<sup>19</sup>Using ANOVA, we confirmed an inter-group difference among Obama voters at  $p = 0.04$ .

<sup>20</sup>Similarly strong results hold when we condition on self-reported Hispanics or remove the 69 Hispanic Obama voters from the analysis.

probabilities from a model that includes the original covariates as well as the interaction between Presidential vote choice and seeing the Spanish exit poll. It demonstrates that Obama voters are nine percentage points more likely to support decreasing immigration when exposed to the Spanish. It also suggests that McCain voters may move in the opposite direction, although this effect is not statistically significant and could result from the relatively small sample size. In all cases, the effect of seeing Spanish for Obama voters is stable and strong. Reinforcing the earlier results, we see that even subtle uses of Spanish by researchers can shape immigration-related attitudes markedly. Implicit cues are not just signals sent by politicians; they can come from the languages that people see in their day-to-day lives.

### 3 Explicit Cues

We now turn to the impact of explicit cues on attitudes toward immigration. This section presents two experiments, both of which demonstrate that anti-immigration appeals can backfire, leading to attitudinal shifts in the opposite direction. Education moderates these effects, suggesting that they are indeed driven by anti-racist norms. At the same time that the evidence presented here confirms the applicability of the implicit/explicit framework, it also extends that framework. First, it shows that explicit cues are not all equal in their impacts. Some explicit cues are sufficiently strong as to be rejected even by those with low levels of education. The evidence also demonstrates that personal experience is a second key moderator. Those who frequently talk with Latino immigrants are especially likely to reject certain explicit anti-immigration appeals.

The first experiment with explicit appeals was conducted on 429 respondents from the February 2008 Knowledge Networks survey described above. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of five conditions: a control condition with no appeal ( $n=70$ ), a control condition with a basic welcome note in English ( $n=144$ ), a treatment condition with an anti-immigration argument ( $n=68$ ), a treatment condition with a pro-immigration argument ( $n=72$ ), and a treatment condition with both arguments ( $n=75$ ). The arguments are as follows:

- *Pro-immigration*: Some people believe that the growing number of newcomers from other

countries strengthens American society. They argue that America is a nation of immigrants, and that immigrants make America more open to new ideas and cultures

- *Anti-immigration:* Some people believe that the growing number of newcomers from other countries threatens American society. They argue that immigrants are not incorporating into American life, making it harder for the country to stay united
- *Both Frames:* “some people believe that the growing number of newcomers from other countries strengthens American society. They argue that America is a nation of immigrants, and that immigrants make America more open to new ideas and cultures. Others believe that the growing number of newcomers from other countries threatens American society. They argue that immigrants are not incorporating into American life, making it harder for the country to stay united.”

These arguments focus on the cultural impact of immigration, and are commonly heard in contemporary political debates (Huntington, 2004). As Chong and Druckman (2007b) point out, competitive arguments are common in political life, and yet are rarely explored in experimental studies of political attitudes. In this case, we want to know whether the presence of the competing arguments can reduce concerns about social desirability as compared to only seeing an anti-immigration argument. If immigration acts like other, non-racial policy areas, we might expect that exposure to competitive frames will lead respondents to take a middle position (Chong and Druckman, 2007b). However, if the presence of an explicit anti-immigration argument generates concerns about social desirability, the anti-immigrant argument might trigger those norms irrespective of whether it is paired with a pro-immigration argument. Another possibility is that the pro-immigration argument will seem especially compelling when juxtaposed with an argument that might violate anti-racist norms. In short, all explicit references to immigrants might not be equal in their effects.

Randomization checks identified no unbalanced covariates in 36 tests with 12 available covariates and three treated groups. Our dependent variable is the generic question about threats to the American way of life, and was asked immediately after respondents read the assigned

argument. Although the dependent variable does not mention immigration, we expect respondents in the treated groups to have immigration-related issues at the top of their mind as they respond. Since we do not have directional hypotheses initially, the p-values reported in Figure 3 are for two-sided t-tests comparing each treated group with the control group.

As Figure 3 demonstrates, the anti-immigration appeal activates countervailing anti-racist norms, reducing the average threat level on a four-point scale by 0.27, from 2.82 in the control group to 2.54 in this treated group. This shift is equal to more than a quarter of a standard deviation. Using a two-sided t-test, we calculate that the probability that the control group and those who saw the anti-immigration frame have the same level of threat is 0.07. The explicit anti-immigration frame clearly backfired, reducing levels of threat. Surprisingly, it produces *less* threatened responses as compared to the pro-immigration appeal as well.<sup>21</sup>

Seeing both arguments together shifts attitudes in the same downward direction, although the resulting level of threat—2.63—is significantly different only from the level of threat induced by the pro-immigration argument ( $p=0.03$ , two-sided test). It is also important to break out the impacts by education, since the well educated are thought to be the strongest adherents to anti-racist norms (e.g. Huber and Lapinski, 2006). Evidence that education moderates these effects suggests that anti-racist norms are at work. Among those who have at least some college education, the anti-immigration argument shifts attitudes from 2.76 to 2.30, a difference whose p-value is 0.02. By comparison, levels of threat among those without any college experience are virtually identical in the anti-immigration condition and the control group. Education is a critical moderator of these contrast effects.

### 3.1 Confirmatory Experiment

These results were sufficiently strong and counter-intuitive that we did not initially believe them. The anti-immigration frame used in the experiment above is a common complaint about immigration, and it did not single out any group of immigrants. Yet it produced a sharp contrast effect, where those exposed were less likely to register threat. We thus replicated the

---

<sup>21</sup>ANOVA confirms significant differences across groups ( $p = 0.05$ ).

experiment on a separate sample of 1,102 Knowledge Networks panelists in June 2008. This follow-up experiment included the four experimental conditions used in the first experiment as well as four new treatments. Three of the new treatments were similar to those described above but noted that the immigrants were “Latino/Hispanic.” This modification allows us to observe if a more explicit ethnic appeal produces a stronger contrast effect. A final treatment replicated the original anti-immigration argument but instead noted that the immigrants were “illegal.” Just as the mention of a specific ethnic group might heighten the contrast effect, we hypothesized that the term “illegal” might neutralize the anti-racist norm. Fifty-six randomization checks comparing each treatment to the control group uncovered no significant covariate imbalances.

The overall results for the confirmatory experiments are presented in Tables 2, alongside the sample sizes for each randomly assigned group. For the entire population, the only significant treatment effect comes from the anti-immigration appeal that specifically mentions Latinos.<sup>22</sup> The mean threat level for this group is 2.71, the lowest of any of the eight groups across the two surveys. It is significantly different from the control group: the p-value from a one-sided t-test is 0.01. In the population as a whole, an explicit anti-immigration appeal that mentions Latinos backfires. This finding is consistent with the claim that social norms are at work, and that they are especially powerful when the appeal is overtly ethnic in tone. When it comes to immigration, not all explicit appeals have the same effects.

Still, given past work on racial attitudes (Huber and Lapinski, 2006), we are especially interested in whether the treatment effects are moderated by respondents’ levels of education. Dividing the sample at those who received more than a high school education, we are left with an average of 69 respondents per cell. Figure 4(a) presents the results for the second experiment for the well educated, and includes p-values from the appropriate one-sided or two-sided t-tests.<sup>23</sup> In all cases, the comparison is with the control group that saw no argument either way.

Of well-educated respondents, the left panel of Figure 4(a) shows that those exposed to the generic anti-immigration argument report lower levels of threat both compared to the control

---

<sup>22</sup>ANOVA finds no overall significant group-level differences in the sample as a whole.

<sup>23</sup>We use one-sided tests for appeals that showed a demonstrable effect in the prior experiment, and two-sided tests otherwise.

group and to those who read the pro-immigration argument. On its face, this suggests that those who wish to induce threat among the well educated are better off arguing *for* increased immigration. Certainly, this counter-intuitive finding is consistent with the claim that well-educated Americans are rejecting an argument that seems to violate anti-racist norms. Intriguingly, we do not see such strong impacts in this subset when the treatment singles out Latino immigrants, as shown in the right panel. However, a t-test cannot rule out the hypothesis that the Latino anti-immigration appeal and the generic anti-immigration appeal have the same impact on the well educated.

Figure 4(b) displays the same results for those who have a high school diploma or less education. As hypothesized, when the immigrants are described as “illegal,” we see no such contrast effect for either sub-group. For this group, the anti-immigration argument induces more threat than the pro-immigration argument, albeit not at a statistically significant level. But that does not mean that those without college educations are immune to anti-racist norms. Those who are exposed to both arguments report significantly lower levels of threat ( $p = 0.02$ ). In other words, the pro-immigration argument becomes much more appealing when juxtaposed with a potentially racist anti-immigration argument. Perhaps the presence of the pro-immigration argument makes the norm violation contained in the anti-immigration argument clearer. Again, explicit appeals are not all alike in their impact.

Those with less education also reject explicit appeals that single out Latinos, as shown in the right panel of Figure 4(b). The impact of the Latino anti-immigration treatment is significantly different from the control group ( $p < 0.01$ , one-sided test), and also significantly different from the generic anti-immigration argument ( $p = 0.01$ , one-sided test). Here too, we see that arguments can be more or less explicit in their references to ethnic or racial groups. And those distinctions have consequences for their ability to influence attitudes and provoke anti-racist norms. When the appeals go so far as to name a specific ethnic group, those without any college experience reject them as well. Contrary to some work on racial attitudes, this suggests that social desirability is not restricted solely to the well educated. This finding helps explain why anti-immigrant advocates are so careful in how they speak about immigration:

depending on the nature of their appeal, they may or may not produce contrast effects among their audience.

### 3.2 Personal Experience and Explicit Appeals

Both the theory developed above and the empirical results for the implicit cue of Spanish suggest that people with personal experiences might be especially susceptible to certain cues. Is the same true for the rejection of explicit cues? We suspect that those who speak regularly with immigrants might be more attentive to anti-racist norms, and more likely to reject anti-immigrant appeals. People who are sympathetic to immigrants may self-select to spend time with them. Even if frequent interaction with immigrants is not a matter of self-selection, people who spend time with immigrants may be more aware of anti-racist norms because they regularly self-police against potentially racist comments. Using data from the first survey, where contact-related covariates are available, we compared the 191 respondents who reported speaking with immigrants at least once a week to the 238 respondents who reported less frequent contact. Figure 4 presents the results. The p-values given in the figure come from two-sided t-tests, with the control group as the reference point. In both groups, we see that those who read the anti-immigration argument are somewhat less threatened. However, exposure to both arguments has a marked downward impact among those who regularly talk to Latinos, while we see no such impact for people who do not. Past personal experience with Latinos seems to strengthen the anti-racist norm when pro- and anti-immigration arguments are juxtaposed.

To test the claim of differential impacts more formally, we used OLS to estimate the impact of each treatment within the two subgroups. For the anti-immigration frame, the impact of the treatment is more pronounced and more negative for those who frequently talk with Latino immigrants. However, the difference is not statistically significant: in 35 percent of simulations, the coefficient for the group that rarely talks to Latinos is larger. Looking at the joint argument's impact, we see very clear evidence of a differential effect. In fewer than one percent of simulations do we find that the impact of the joint argument is lower for those who rarely talk with Latinos, corresponding to a p-value of less than 0.01. The same results hold when

these models add education, race, ethnicity, gender, or party identification as well. Personal experience proves critical, not just in people’s responses to implicit cues, but also in their responses to certain explicit cues. When presented with a pro-immigration argument and an anti-immigration argument side by side, those with personal experience respond as if they were being asked a racially charged question. Those without personal experience do not.

## 4 Conclusion

“There is no race in illegal. Illegal is illegal.” So said Lou Barletta, a Pennsylvania Mayor whose policies against illegal immigration earned him nationwide attention (Birkbeck, 2007). Like many advocates of stricter immigration policies, Barletta seemed to believe that the impact of his argument depended on whether it was perceived as racist. To make sense of comments like Barletta’s, and to test whether anti-racist norms shape the expression of attitudes on immigration, this paper used four survey experiments with more than 2,500 unique respondents. Its findings hold across multiple experiments: Americans do reject explicit appeals about immigration, especially when the appeals single out a particular ethnic group. For some appeals, this rejection is not confined to the well educated. Appeals can vary in how explicit they are, and thus in how consistently they provoke anti-racist expressions in response. A framework that was originally developed to explain racial attitudes helps explain immigration attitudes as well.

These findings also have implications for pro-immigration advocates. As Barreto et al. (2008) document, the use of Spanish-language appeals in U.S. politics increased markedly in the 2008 Presidential election. This paper finds that even subtle uses of Spanish can serve as powerful primes of anti-immigration sentiment among certain subgroups. When Obama voters in the Massachusetts exit poll were exposed to a single line of Spanish, they became 7 percentage points more likely to want to decrease immigration. Effects may be even larger when Spanish is invoked by political figures themselves. To the extent that immigrant organizers or others use Spanish, they might undermine support among potential political allies. This finding has challenging implications for immigrant political incorporation, since efforts to bring Spanish

speakers into the political mainstream may have the unintended consequence of lessening support for immigration.

Past case studies and focus groups show that language issues can be potent and divisive (Paxton, 2006; Schildkraut, 2005, 2001; Horton, 1995). The findings from these experiments reinforce that conclusion. Of the 238 respondents to the initial survey who provided an open-ended comment, language issues were the second most common issue raised. Moreover, our experiments show that seeing written Spanish has a more negative impact on respondents who regularly encounter Spanish in their day-to-day lives. In the same vein, we find that those who frequently talk with Latino immigrants are especially likely to report low levels of threat when confronted with arguments for and against immigration. Scholars have sometimes conceived of cues as influencing people who lack personal experience or knowledge on an issue (see also Chong and Druckman, 2007*a*; Kinder, 1998; Mutz, 1992; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). But this study provides evidence for the reverse: that cues are especially powerful when they resonate with day-to-day experiences. In this case at least, cues operate when pre-existing attitudes are strong, not when pre-existing attitudes are weak.

Like racial politics, immigration politics are about distinguishing among groups of people. And like racial politics, immigration politics give rise to complex patterns of public opinion, wherein reported attitudes shift markedly depending on how explicitly they are cued. Immigration appears to be an issue where stated opinions and actual opinions can diverge, a valuable fact as we try to make sense of the patterns of immigration politics. Scholars have long been impressed with the volatility of immigration politics and the speed with which immigration appears and disappears from the agenda (e.g. Tichenor, 2002; Higham, 1992). The politics of immigration might be volatile in part because seemingly small differences in anti-immigration appeals can produce sharp differences in Americans' willingness to voice their agreement. When anti-immigration organizers are able to find rhetoric that does not trigger anti-racist norms, they can build public support for their cause. But when their appeals seem to violate norms, the public condemnation can be just as swift.

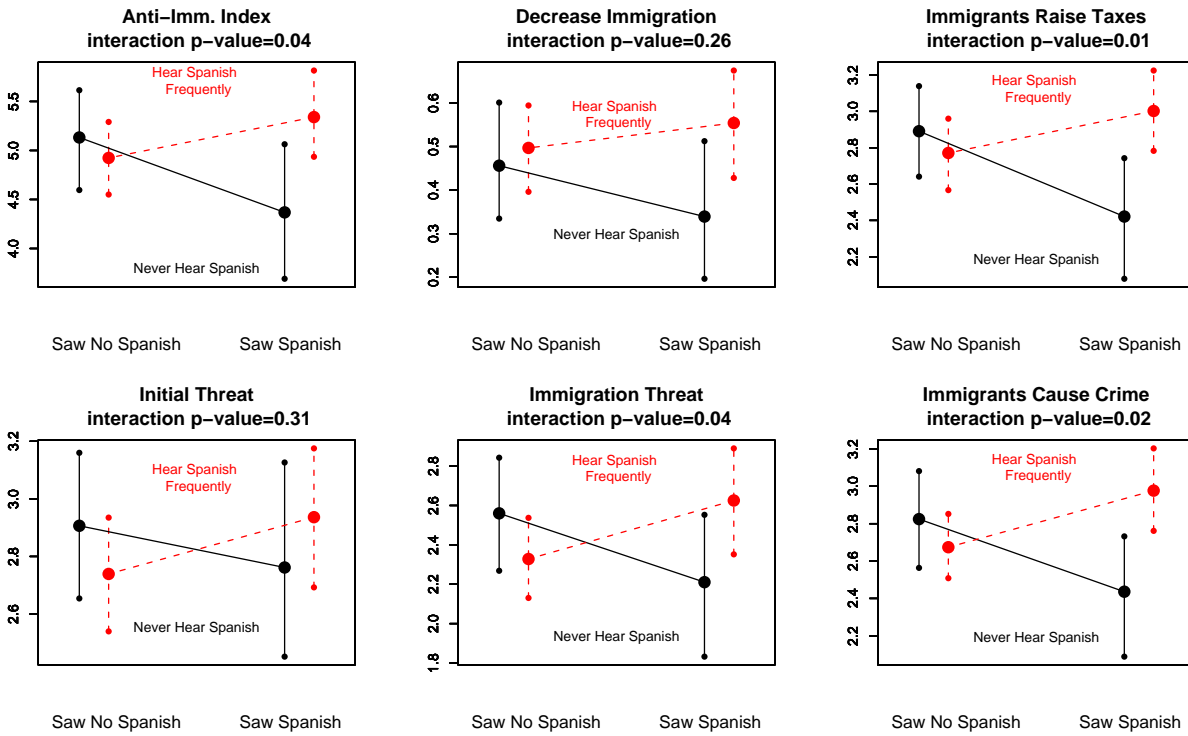


Figure 1: Each figure depicts the interaction between hearing Spanish in day-to-day life and seeing the Spanish cue at the beginning of the survey for a different dependent variable.

	All Respondents		Obama Voters	
	$\beta$	SE	$\beta$	SE
Intercept	1.51	0.47	1.19	0.56
Site 2	-1.57	0.20	-1.56	0.25
Site 3	-1.55	0.34	-1.18	0.39
Site 4	-0.42	0.21	-0.34	0.25
Black	-1.34	0.27	-1.12	0.30
Education	-0.08	0.03	-0.10	0.04
Saw Spanish	0.20	0.16	0.48	0.19
df	844		659	

Table 1: This table presents the results of two logistic regressions. The experimental treatment of seeing Spanish increases the probability of wanting to reduce immigration, and does so powerfully among those who voted for Barack Obama.

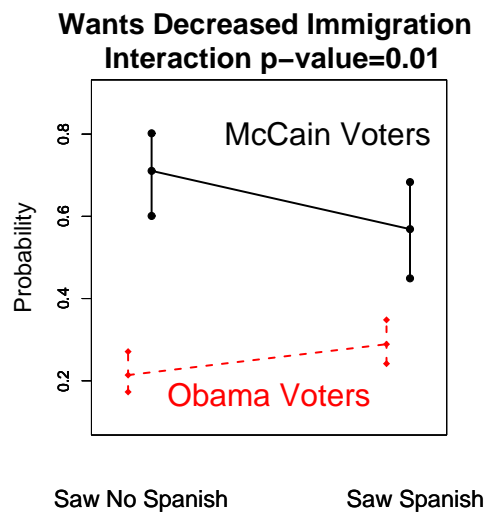


Figure 2: This figure illustrates the interaction of Presidential vote choice and the effect of seeing Spanish on the exit poll.

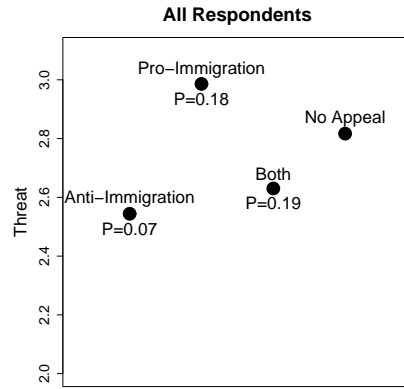
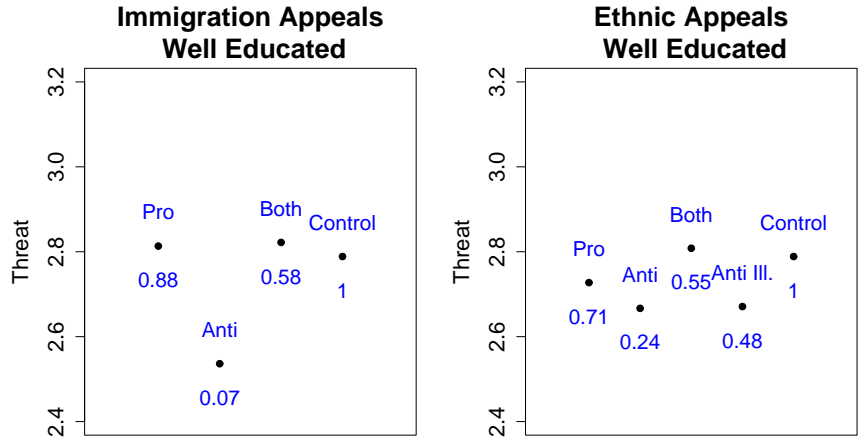


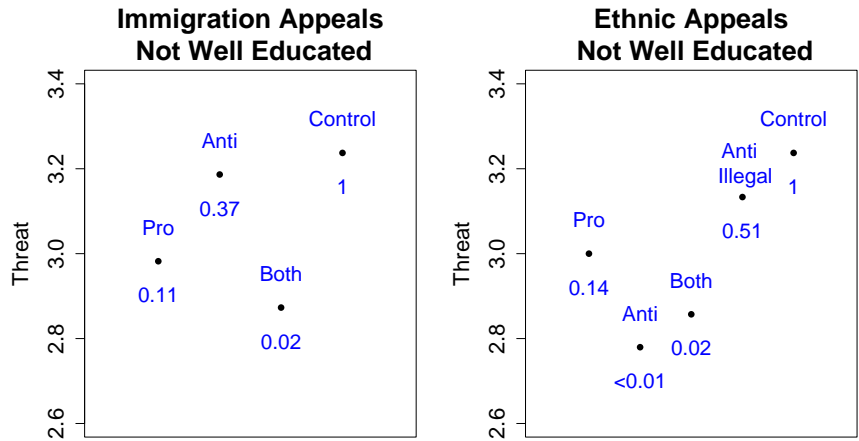
Figure 3: For the first experiment with explicit appeals (n=429), this figure presents the mean threat level for each of the four groups. P-values from two-sided t-tests comparing each treatment to the control group are listed as well.

	Mean	SD	n	Pro	Anti	Joint	Control
Pro	2.89	0.86	132	1.00	0.66	0.72	0.35
Anti	2.84	0.95	128		1.00	0.94	0.19
Joint	2.85	0.99	136			1.00	0.23
Control	2.99	0.98	130				1.00
Pro, Latino	2.85	0.95	141	0.75	0.90	0.96	0.23
Anti, Latino	2.71	1.05	143	0.14	0.31	0.28	<b>0.02</b>
Joint, Latino	2.83	1.03	137	0.64	0.97	0.90	0.19
Anti, Illegal	2.90	1.02	155	0.92	0.61	0.67	0.42

Table 2: This table and the subsequent table present the results of t-tests comparing any two treatment groups in the second experiment on explicit cues (n=1,102). The first column presents the mean threat level for each treated group, and the second column presents the standard deviation.



(a) For highly educated respondents, this figure presents the means for each experimental sub-group in the follow-up survey. The p-values are from one- or two-sided t-tests comparing that group with the control group.



(b) For the follow-up survey, these figures show means for each experimental group for people with no more than a high school education. The p-values given below each mean are from one- or two-sided t-tests comparing that group with the control group.

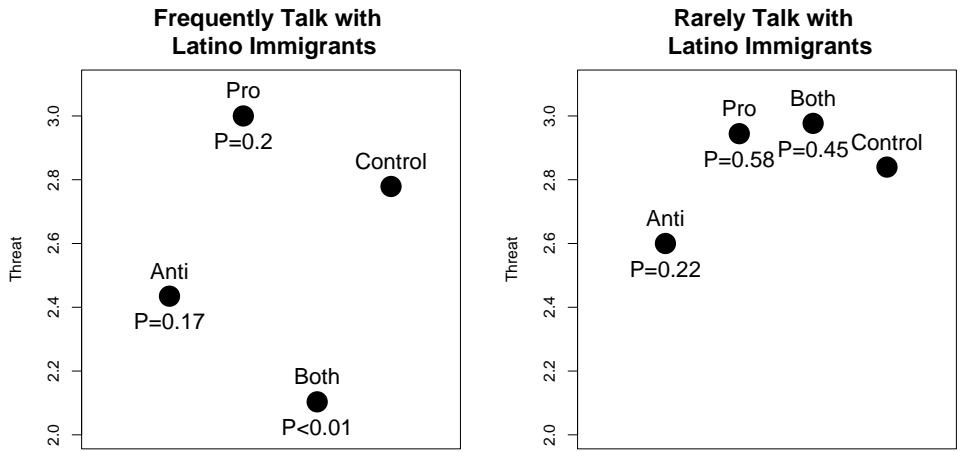


Figure 4: For the first experiment on explicit appeals (n=429), this figure compares the impact of the treatment among those who frequently talk to Latinos and those who rarely or never do.

## References

- Albertson, Bethany and Shana Kushner Gadarian. 2009. "Is Lou Dobbs Frigthening? The Effect of Threatening Advertisements on Black, White, and Latino Attitudes towards Immigration." Draft.
- Bach, Robert L. 1993. *Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities*. New York, NY: Ford Foundation.
- Barkan, Eliot. 2003. "Return of the Nativists? California Public Opinion and Immigration in the 1980s and 1990s." *Social Science History* 27(2):229–283.
- Barreto, Matt A., Jennifer Merolla and Ricardo Ramírez. 2007. "Arnold Habla Español: The Effects of Targeted Ads on Latino and Non-Latino Voite Choice in Cah-Lee-Forn-ya." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois.
- Barreto, Matt A., Victoria M. DeFrancesco Soto, Jennifer L. Merolla and Ricardo Ramirez. 2008. "Bulls' Eye or Bomb? Ethnically Targeted Campaign Ads in the 2008 Election." Presented at the "Race and the American Voter" conference, Harris School, University of Chicago, December 11.
- Benjamin, Yoav and Yosef Hochberg. 1995. "Controlling the False Discovery Rate: A Practical and Powerful Approach to Multiple Testing." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 57(1):289–300.
- Birkbeck, Matt. 2007. "Immigration debate fails to find common ground." *Morning Call* (May 3, A1).
- Brader, Ted, Nicholas Valentino and Elizabeth Suhay. 2008. "Is It Immigration or the Immigrants? The Emotional Influence of Groups on Public Opinion and Political Action." *American Journal of Political Science* Forthcoming.
- Bullock, John G., Donald P. Green and Shang E. Ha. 2008. "Experimental Approaches to Mediation: A New Guide for Assessing Causal Pathways." August 16 Draft.
- Carmines, Edward G. and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007a. "A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation." *Journal of Communication* 57:99–118.
- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007b. "Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies." *American Political Science Review* 101(04):637–655.
- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007c. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10:103–26.
- Citrin, Jack, Beth Reingold and Donald P. Green. 1990. "American Identity and the Politics of Ethnic Change." *The Journal of Politics* 52(4):1124–1153.
- Citrin, Jack, David O. Sears, Christopher Muste and Cara Wong. 2001. "Multiculturalism in American Public Opinion." *British Journal of Political Science* 31:247–275.
- Citrin, Jack, Donald P. Green, Christopher Muste and Cara Wong. 1997. "Public Opinion Toward Immigration Reform: The Role of Economic Motivations." *The Journal of Politics* 59(3):858–881.
- Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International. 2005. "Evaluation of the Edison/Mitofsky Election System 2004." Available online at <http://vote.caltech.edu>.
- Fram, Alan. 1992. "Sen. Byrd Says He 'Spoke Unwisely' About Immigrants." *Washington Post* . June 26.
- Frey, William H. 2006. *Diversity Spreads Out: Metropolitan Shifts in Hispanic, Asian, and Black Populations Since 2000*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Gamson, William A. 1992. *Talking Politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Glynn, Adam. 2008. "Using Counterfactual Models to Address Two Fallacies of Inference for Causal Mechanisms." Presented at the Summer Meeting of the Society for Political Methodology, Ann Arbor, Michigan, July.
- Hanson, Gordon H., Kenneth Scheve and Matthew J. Slaughter. 2007. "Public Finance and Individual Preferences Over Globalization Strategies." *Economics and Politics* 19(1):1–33.
- Higham, John. 1992. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Hood, M.V. and Irwin L. Morris. 1997. "Amigo o Enemigo? Context, Attitudes, and Anglo

- Public Opinion Toward Immigration.” *Social Science Quarterly* 78(2):309–323.
- Hood, M.V. and Irwin L. Morris. 1998. “Give Us Your Tired, Your Poor...But Make Sure They Have a Green Card: The Effects of Documented and Undocumented Migrant Context on Anglo Opinion Toward Immigration.” *Political Behavior* 20(1):1–15.
- Horton, John. 1995. *The Politics of Diversity: Immigration, Resistance, and Change in Monterey Park, California*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Huber, Gregory A. and John S. Lapinski. 2006. “The Race Card Revisited: Assessing Racial Priming in Policy Contests.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2):421–440.
- Huntington, Samuel. 2004. *Who Are We? America’s National Identity and the Challenges it Faces*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Hurwitz, Jon and Mark Peffley. 2005. “Playing the Race Card in the Post-Willie Horton Era.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(1):99–112.
- Hutchings, Vincent L., Hanes Walton and Andrea Benjamin. 2008. “Explicit Racial Cues and Support for Confederate Symbols and Southern Partisanship.” Presented at the “Race and the American Voter” conference, Harris School, University of Chicago, December 11.
- Imai, Kosuke, Luke Keele and Teppei Yamamoto. 2008. “Identification, Inference, and Sensitivity Analysis for Causal Mediation Effects.” Presented at the Applied Statistics Workshop, Harvard University, November 12.
- Iyengar, Shanto and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Junn, Jane and Natalie Masuoka. 2007. “The Face of Immigration: The Effect of Racial Primes on Attitudes about Immigration.” October 17 draft.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kinder, Donald R. 1998. “Communication and Opinion.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 1:167–197.
- Kinder, Donald R. and Lynn M. Sanders. 1996. *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Lapinski, John S. and Gregory A. Huber. 2008. "Testing the Implicit-Explicit Model of Racialized Political Communication." *Perspectives on Politics* 6(1):125–134.
- Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mendelberg, Tali. 2008. "Racial Priming Revived." *Perspectives on Politics* 6(1):109–123.
- Miller, Joanne M. and Jon A. Krosnick. 2000. "News Media Impact on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: Politically Knowledgeable Citizens are Guided by a Trusted Source." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2):301–315.
- Mutz, Diana C. 1992. "Mass Media and the Depoliticization of Personal Experience." *American Journal of Political Science* 32(3):483–508.
- Oliver, J. Eric and Janelle Wong. 2003. "Intergroup Prejudice in Multiethnic Settings." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(4):567–582.
- Paxton, Pamela. 2006. "What's to Fear from Immigrants? Creating an Assimilationist Threat Scale." *Political Psychology* 27(4):549–568.
- Rice, William R. 1989. "Analyzing Tables of Statistical Tests." *Evolution* 43(1):223–225.
- Scheve, Kenneth and Matthew Slaughter. 2001. "Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 83(1, February):133–145.
- Schildkraut, Deborah. 2005. *Press One for English: Language Policy, Public Opinion, and American Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Schildkraut, Deborah. 2009a. "Amnesty, Guest Workers, Fences! Oh My! Public Opinion about "Comprehensive Immigration Reform"." Presented at the "Dynamics of Public Opinion on Immigration in the U.S. and the West" conference, University of Texas at Austin, February 27-28.
- Schildkraut, Deborah J. 2001. "Official-English and the States: Influences on Declaring English the Official Language in the United States." *Political Research Quarterly* 54(2):445–457.
- Schildkraut, Deborah J. 2009b. "The Dynamics of Public Opinion on Ethnic Profiling after 9/11: Results from a Survey Experiment." *American Behavioral Scientist* .

- Sides, John and Jack Citrin. 2007. "European Opinion about Immigration: The Role of Identities, Interests, and Information." *British Journal of Political Science* 37:477–504.
- Sniderman, Paul, Louk Hagendoorn and Markus Prior. 2004. "Predisposing Factors and Situational Triggers: Exclusionary Reactions to Immigrant Minorities." *American Political Science Review* 98(1):35–49.
- Tichenor, Daniel. 2002. *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Valentino, Nicholas. 1999. "Crime and the Priming of Racial Attitudes During Evaluations of the President." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63:293–320.
- Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings and Ismail K. White. 2002. "Cues that Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 96(1):75–90.
- White, Ismail K. 2007. "When Race Matters and When It Doesn't: Racial Group Differences in Response to Racial Cues." *American Political Science Review* 101(02):339–354.
- Wong, Cara and Katherine W. Drake. 2006. "Multiracial Identities in Multiracial Contexts: The Conditional Political Effects of Race, Identity, and Environment." Draft, cited with permission.
- Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

## Online/Reviewer's Appendix

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
McCain Voter	0.17		0	1	149
Obama Voter	0.79		0	1	700
Didn't Vote/Other	0.04		0	1	36
Female	0.58		0	1	860
Non-Hispanic White	0.65		0	1	587
Non-Hispanic Black	0.12		0	1	108
Hispanic	0.08		0	1	76
Other Race/Ethnicity	0.15		0	1	131
Age	41	14	18	88	818
Education	14.81	2.80	5	19	873
Income	2.80	0.95	1	4	835
Talk with imm. (5=Everyday)	4.11	1.23	1	5	866
Hear Spanish (5=Everyday)	4.47	0.97	1	5	871
American life threatened	2.95	0.97	1	4	861
Decrease immig.	0.35		0	1	854
Somerville Firehouse	0.43		0	1	386
Somerville Library	0.07		0	1	66
Everett Recreation Center	0.28		0	1	250
Everett Senior Center	0.22		0	1	200

Table 3: This table provides descriptive statistics from the 2008 Massachusetts exit poll.

NOVEMBER 2008 POLL BY RESEARCHERS AT HARVARD AND MIT  
*Por favor, fíjense que uds. pueden contestar en español al otro lado*

This is a voluntary and anonymous exit poll about current events and the election conducted by researchers at a local university. *Please do not write your name on this survey.* This poll is *not* official, and is not affiliated with the Cities of Everett or Somerville or the Board of Elections. Your effort in answering these questions will make sure that the views of residents from (insert town name) are represented in this research. You may decline to answer any or all questions at any point in the survey.

1. **For President, who did you vote for? (check one)**  
 John McCain (Rep.)                       Someone else  
 Barack Obama (Dem.)                       Did not vote
2. **On Ballot Question 1, which proposed to end the Massachusetts state personal income tax, how did you vote? (Please answer even if you did not vote)**  
 Did not vote       Voted "No" (not to end the tax)  
 Voted "Yes" (to end the tax)
3. **Which is the worst tax—that is, the one that is the least fair? (check one)**  
 State sales tax                       Federal income tax  
 Local property tax                       State income tax  
 Social Security tax

Regardless of how you voted on Ballot Question 1, please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

4. **"The Commonwealth of Massachusetts can reduce its annual spending by 40% without a major impact on schools, roads, parks, policing, or other services."**  
 Strongly agree                       Somewhat disagree  
 Somewhat agree                       Strongly disagree
5. **"Eliminating the Massachusetts state income tax would lead to large increases in other taxes."**  
 Strongly agree                       Somewhat disagree  
 Somewhat agree                       Strongly disagree
6. **Now thinking about the economy in the country as a whole, would you say that over the past year the nation's economy has been (check one)**  
 Much better than normal       Worse than normal  
 Better than normal                       Much worse than normal
7. **Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the economy over the last year? (check one)**  
 Strongly approve                       Disapprove  
 Approve                       Strongly disapprove
8. **Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president? (check one)**  
 Strongly approve                       Disapprove  
 Approve                       Strongly disapprove

9. **Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "These days, I am afraid that the American way of life is threatened." (check one)**  
 Disagree strongly                       Agree somewhat  
 Disagree somewhat                       Agree strongly
10. **Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be (check one)**  
 Increased a lot                       Left the same  
 Increased a little                       Decreased a little  
 Decreased a lot
11. **In your day-to-day life, how frequently do you have conversations with immigrants?**  
 Never or almost never                       1-3 times per month  
 Less than once a month                       At least once a week  
 Every day
12. **In your day-to-day life, how frequently do you hear Spanish or Portuguese spoken?**  
 Never or almost never                       1-3 times per month  
 Less than once a month                       At least once a week  
 Every day
13. **How long have you lived in this community?**  
 Less than one year                       11 to 20 years  
 1 to 5 years                       More than 20 years  
 6 to 10 years
14. **Are you Hispanic or Latino? (check one)**  
 Yes                       No
15. **Your race: (check all that apply)**  
 Asian                       White  
 Black/African American                       Other
16. **Your gender: (circle one)**                      M                      F
17. **Year you were born:**                      19\_\_\_\_\_
18. **Highest educational level completed: (check one)**  
 Some grade school                       2-year college  
 8th grade                       4-year college  
 High school diploma/GED                       Post-graduate
19. **Your total yearly household income is: (check one)**  
 Less than \$20,000                       \$40,000 - \$80,000  
 \$20,000 - \$40,000                       Above \$80,000

Survey Administered 11/04/2008, Version 9

Figure 5: This is an image of the treatment version of the 2008 exit poll.