

Interest Groups and Political Attitudes

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Democratic politics is waged by groups. Parties and interest organizations battle to implement their policy solutions to the problems of the day, attempting to influence legislators and the electorate to support their side in debate. Despite the centrality of group competition to politics, scant research attention has been placed on the impacts of strategic communication created by interest group and party competition on public support for policy alternatives. Using a series of experimental tests on the topic of U.S. immigration policy, the paper attempts to explain the conditions under which groups may influence political opinions. The results constitute the first research on public evaluations of and responses to interest group framing in policy debate and the findings suggest that interest groups struggle to shape public attitudes due to their obscurity in the minds of citizens. Implications for democratic politics and for future research are discussed.

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Democratic politics entails organized interests competing for power and policy with the public as judge of who wins and loses. How competition between groups shapes public opinions — and thus who wins — is an important political puzzle. Yet there is a dearth of empirical evidence documenting groups' effects on public attitudes. Under what conditions do groups influence public opinions? And what capacity do groups have to frame policy questions in their favor? Despite recognition that most citizens, lacking opportunity and/or motivation to engage with politics, must depend on groups to structure political debates and provide the necessary cues from which citizens can reach political judgments (Popkin 1991; Zaller 1992; Lupia 1994; Sniderman 2000), organized political groups are hardly to be found in empirical research on public opinion and political communication.¹

This lack of empirical research on the effects of group issue competition is surprising given both the prominence of interest organizations and political parties in real world political debates and the centrality of groups in classical works of political science (Olson 1965; Truman 1971; Schattschneider 1975). As Schattschneider puts it, "it is the competition of political organizations that provides the people with an opportunity to make a choice" (137; Sniderman see also 2000). Understanding groups' strategic use of political arguments is therefore crucial to understanding the basic decision-making tasks of democratic citizenship, something framing literature has acknowledged but not examined (Sniderman and Theriault 2004; Chong and Druckman 2007a) and that interest group literature has hardly acknowledged at all (but see Danielian and Page 1994; Kollman 1998). In the vast framing literature, which explicitly admits the importance of competitive argumentation (Sniderman and Theriault 2004; Chong and Druckman 2007a), political framing effects are typically examined without (real) sources (but see Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Druckman 2001a,b; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus

¹By interest groups, I mean any political organization that does not offer candidates for elective office. This definition is intentionally broad and meant to capture both member organizations and non-member organizations (e.g., trade groups), as well as "groups" that exist only for advertising or issue campaigning (e.g., PACs) or exist in name only (e.g., political groups on social networking websites).

2013) and in isolation. Yet frames must come from somewhere and the source of political frames is often organized groups actively competing in the political environment. This paper aims to correct for this deficit of attention to the influence of groups on opinion by theorizing the conditions under which groups can be expected to shape opinions and testing for the effects of groups using a series of experiments on political framing.

Through two large survey experiments, this paper tests how frames are perceived when attributed to different political groups, and how those group-communicated frames affect attitudes toward immigration policy. The first experiment examines how the perceived effectiveness of arguments varies across different political groups, including political parties and interest groups, to understand the degree to which groups provide a salient and meaningful cue (a precondition for influence). The second experiment examines the effects of groups' frames on public opinions and how expansions of source (i.e., larger political coalitions) and expansions of argument (i.e., greater numbers of arguments) impact the effectiveness of those communications. The results from both studies are synthesized to provide a novel picture of the conditional nature of group influence. To preview, the findings suggest groups can frame political debates but when those groups are obscure in the minds of citizens, which for many groups may be much of the time, those groups are unlikely to condition the opinion changing effects of frames (i.e., they do not provide powerful cues). Where parties provide widely understood ideological heuristics that can overwhelm the effects of argument content, interest organizations generally do not, even when acting in broad coalitions.

Effects of Group-based Issue Competition

Where psychological research on persuasion has seen source characteristics — such as gender, age, attractiveness, expertise, and so forth — as critical factors in shaping message recipients' reactions to messages (see especially Petty and Cacioppo 1986), political

communication research has largely ignored source effects of arguments (and instead focused on message content as persuasion or priming Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson 1997; Chong and Druckman 2007b). While understandable given the contextual differences between face-to-face persuasion studied in psychology and the mass communication typically studied by political scientists, this gap is still puzzling given that political messages rarely emerge organically from the ether, instead being the result of strategic efforts on the part of political actors like parties and interest groups to capture media attention and sway public opinion. If the sources of political communications matter for the persuasive impact of those communications, then extant research has left a significant gap in understanding. Of course, a substantial body of research documents the activities and strategic objectives of interest organizations (see, for example, Truman 1971; Olson 1965; Moe 1981; Baumgartner et al. 2009). Yet that literature has offered surprisingly little insight into how such groups influence public opinions. Indeed, the recent *Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups* indexes only four mentions of public opinion and all point to work on “outside lobbying” by Kollman (1998), who studies public mobilization as nothing more than another mechanism of legislative influence (alongside direct lobbying of legislators) without any attention to the conditions under which groups may or may not influence the public.² If we accept the argument made by Schattschneider (1975) that the study of politics is the study of conflict between groups, then why have we ignored his dictum that “conflicts become political only when an attempt is made to involve the wider public” (39)?

Clearly, the strategic incentives for groups to attend to public opinion extend beyond the instrumental use of “outside lobbying.” Groups depend directly on public support — and the behavioral and financial consequences that support brings — in order to persist over-time and thus to achieve their policy objectives. And public support for a

²Indeed, the interest group literature focuses more on selection into “outside lobbying,” rather than the effects thereof (Kollman 1998; Mahoney 2007; Binderkrantz and Krøyer 2012).

cause, independent of any direct contact between public and legislators, offers symbolic value that can strengthen groups' positions, or at least prolong debate (Herbst 1995). Thus at least some groups, some of the time, invest time, money, and effort in public communication to further their causes (Goldstein 1999). Danielian and Page (1994) find that businesses, unions, and interest groups receive the most media attention about political activity; interest groups and parties have strategic, political incentives to publicly communicate (Kollman 1998). While interest groups are thus an obvious part of information-opinion dynamics, few studies have actually examined how interest group sources affect citizens (see Groenendyk and Valentino 2002; Grant and Rudolph 2003; Hartman and Weber 2009; Neddenriep and Nownes 2012; Weber, Dunaway, and Johnson 2011). Political parties have received somewhat more attention as sources of political communications (Slothuus 2010; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013), but most work on the public influence of political parties falls within the domain of campaign dynamics — where the outcome of interest is turnout or vote choice rather than political attitudes.

Theorizing Group Influence on Opinions

Recent work on political parties as sources of elite frames (Slothuus 2010; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013) suggests some obvious directions for theory development: parties provide strong cues to the citizens because individuals affiliate with those parties, thus the effects of partisan framing attempts vary systematically across those who identify with and do not identify with each party. Because political parties are only one type of political organization, a more general theory that incorporates parties *and* other types of groups seems necessary.³ Non-party political

³Interest groups, for example, are far more numerous than parties and also more variable in their size, formality and institutionalization, political leanings and extremity, familiarity, credibility, issue-focus, communication behavior, and political agenda. And, while parties have broad bases of support that are organized by strong identities and thus have credibility among broad swaths of the electorate, other groups have smaller bases of support but membership with less firmly held identities and non-members

organizations may strategically communicate like parties (i.e., choosing and timing public communications for strategic reasons) but may lack the salient political affiliations and widespread public recognition associated with political parties. Indeed, their members may be embedded partisans (Koger, Masket, and Noel 2009; Heaney et al. 2012) or transcend party boundaries (Grossmann and Dominguez 2009). Thus while much literature has discussed the prospect of group cues as heuristic decision-making rules (Popkin 1991; Kuklinski and Quirk 2001; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Gilens and Murakawa 2002), this literature is underdeveloped with regard to what kind of information an interest group cue actually provides.

Thus theory about the effects of groups can take its lead directly from research on partisan framing and position-taking but must deal with the greater variability of political groups and thus the potentially greater degree of heterogeneity of their effects. Under what conditions can interest groups influence opinions? At least three requirements seem to be necessary. Groups must provide a cue. As already mentioned, some groups may not actively seek to communicate their political positions to the public, but many do. Only when groups make public statements can they have any (direct) effect on the public. Second, following from the literature on party cues (see, for example, Slothuus 2010; Bullock 2011), the group must be recognizable and salient for the recipients of a group's communications. Party cues and party frames are powerful precisely because their source is — to at least some portion of the electorate — a salient, credible source of political information. If interest groups are not salient and credible, they seem unlikely to be able to influence public opinions. Lastly, beyond being recognized and credible, groups must also present strong arguments (unless those groups are particularly credible

with less salient or firmly held evaluations of the group. In other words, little that is said by Democrats is credible to Republicans, and the Sierra Club is most credible to environmentalists but many people may be ambivalent about the Sierra Club — neither identifying with it or against — but that wouldn't be the case for the Democratic or Republican parties. Importantly, groups also vary cross-nationally, such that some political systems have large numbers of active political groups where others have few and some systems entail publicly visible groups where others involve groups that work primarily through direct lobbying and contact with bureaucracies.

sources). Research from psychology clearly demonstrates that non-credible sources must make strong arguments to be persuasive (Petty and Cacioppo 1986), so groups' ability to influence hinges directly on their public salience or their use of strong arguments, or both.

And, while political cue-taking may resemble many of the features of "peripheral processing" of argument-based persuasion, political realities often provide ideologically self-interested groups as argument sources rather than the unbiased experts often examined in psychological studies of source credibility. For example, Lupia (1994) showed that individuals could vote congruent with their self-interest by voting with particular interest groups' endorsements, but more recent evidence suggests that interest group cues do not always provide such univalent guidance in decision making. Arceneaux and Kolodny (2009) demonstrate that a liberal interest group endorsement aided Republicans in voting against the endorsed candidate. Whereas in Lupia's study voters were homogeneously informed about a cue, Arceneaux and Kolodny show that cues can have heterogeneous effects depending on public perceptions of the group. Heterogeneity in the effects of political cues reflects a tendency on the part of citizens not to blindly and uniformly follow the advice of interest groups, but to instead follow the lead of groups that appear to comply with their predispositions (Kuklinski, Metlay, and Kay 1982; McDermott 2006), a pattern of behavior congruent with Downs's effort-minimizing cue-taking theory (Downs 1957). In short, interest group endorsements as cues arguably provide a much less clean endorsement than either the party cues studied in extant research or the "expert" sources that underly much of the work on argument-based persuasion.

Strategies of Communication Expansion

If groups fail to provide particularly strong cues or strong arguments, a plausible strategy is to strengthen their position through the use of multiple arguments (which might separately appeal to different segments of the electorate) and/or to cooperate strategi-

cally with other groups so to present a larger coalition of support for their position. As such, understanding the effects of interest groups requires attention to both the psychological processes by which citizens might respond to group-communicated arguments as well as the strategic possibilities of argument expansion through the use of multiple frames and “source magnification” through coalition formation.

A core premise of psychological models of persuasion is that more strong arguments increase the amount of attitude change in response to persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo 1984, 1986). Particularly if message recipients are unmotivated or not paying close attention (which is arguably the norm in political contexts Zaller 1992), increasing the number of arguments provides a powerful cue about the strength of the evidence supporting a proposed policy (Chaiken 1980; Chaiken and Maheswaran 1994; Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Even if one argument is not particularly influential, at least one of several arguments offered will be. Even if one source is not credible or persuasive, at least one of several sources will be.

Groups may also form lobbying coalitions with other groups under various circumstances (Salisbury et al. 1987; Hojnacki 1997, 1998; Heaney 2004) and thus merit examination both as isolated information sources and as parts of publicly visible coalitions advocating joint policy objectives (Grossmann and Dominguez 2009). What effect do these coalitions have? The psychological evidence appears to be quite clear. Through three experimental studies, Harkins and Petty (1981a) show that increasing the number of sources offering arguments increases message recipients’ focus on message content, thereby increasing persuasion when those arguments are strong (see also Harkins and Petty 1981b). Follow-up work showed that multiple sources were most convincing when they were seen as representing distinct perspectives rather than operating as a unified voice (Harkins and Petty 1987). These psychological findings suggest that coalition expansion can provide powerful political influence for groups desiring to influence public views.

These ideas of argument and source expansion suggest obvious implications for political strategy: larger coalitions making a diversity of arguments will be more effective at swaying public opinions than smaller coalitions making fewer arguments, because they convey cues about the prevalence and diversity of supporters and supply voters with a choice of possible justifications for supporting a policy. Yet the expectations from the persuasion literature regarding more arguments and more sources may be less applicable than they initially appear given that original problem that many political groups may not provide meaningful source cues. The effects of source and argument expansion thus face boundary conditions imposed by the salience of groups in the minds of citizens. In order for source expansion to become effective political strategy, citizens needs to see those sources as credible. Just as credible sources can make weak arguments persuasive (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013), unfamiliar sources can easily undermine the content of arguments. As such, it is reasonable to expect substantial *between-source* variations in the effectiveness of political arguments, based not on perceived expertise but instead on the lines of perceived ideology and identification with group.

There are further reasons to be skeptical of source and argument expansion as effective political strategy because the persuasion paradigm differs quite dramatically from the political framing literature in terms of its underlying framework of attitude change. Persuasion theories focus on belief change with a message supplying new justifications of a position so 'more' is always better, be it reasons or cues. But framing theory (Chong and Druckman 2007b) focuses on selective priming of particular considerations (see also Zaller 1992). That is to say, framing is thought to work by focusing on individuals' attention on a single, salient, univalent set of issue-relevant considerations. And that focusing of one's attention is good political strategy when leading the public to think in terms of only one dimension leads the majority of the public to have no choice but support the communicator's position (Riker 1996; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Benford and

Snow 2000).⁴ From this view, the attitude-changing effects of frames are undermined by competition because individuals weight conflicting considerations (Chong and Druckman 2007a, 2013). If framing changes attitudes by narrowing one's cognitive attention, then increasing the number of salient dimensions surrounding an issue — even if they still point voters in the same policy direction — may actually undermine the political-strategic value of policy advocacy.⁵ The argument magnification hypothesis expected by persuasion theory is therefore reversed when the underlying psychological theory focuses on belief weights rather than belief change: more salient considerations mean less weight attached to each argument and a less coherent distinction between which policy stance is right versus wrong.

Thus persuasion theories expect a *magnification effect*, with larger amounts of attitude change with larger and more diverse coalitions, while framing theory expects a *heresthetic effect*, where a single, though perhaps broadly sponsored argument is most effective in swaying public opinions. Due to the challenge of finding broadly resonant (i.e., heresthetic) frames, magnification would seem on face value to be particularly effective strategy for a heterogeneous public. In either case, a reduction in attitude change would be expected when oppositely valenced arguments are available in the environment due to competition. Thus magnification and heresthetics are rival expectations about how one-sided political environments shape individuals' attitudes, but an uncontroversial expectation is that two-sided environments reduce attitude change due to the balancing of favorable and unfavorable arguments for a policy. No group ever has a communication monopoly, so both competition (across policy positions) and coalition expansion (on one side of an issue space) are important phenomena to examine in the study of public opinion formation.

⁴“Macro” framing often focuses on shifting public debate around a winning dimension, reducing the complexity of political debate to a single frame rather than a collection of strong arguments thought to shape movement in public opinion.

⁵Chong and Druckman (2007a) note that weak frames might have this effect due to some evidence of a “backfire effect” on attitudes when a strong frame is paired with a directionally aligned weak frame.

In either case, the ability of a group to effectively argue for its preferred policy position depends on the extent to which the group itself is salient in the mind of citizens. It is therefore to this issue that we turn to first.

Empirics

This section describes and reports the results of two large, survey-experimental tests of the impact of interest group framing in a political debate surrounding immigration reform. Both studies consider how individuals respond to arguments made about the DREAM Act, a long-debated but as-of-yet unadopted policy to allow the children of undocumented immigrants to the United States to obtain citizenship, conditional on completion of higher education training or military service. Unlike highly partisan and polarized issues like gun control or abortion, immigration is an issue where many policy alternatives are available and support for each transcends party lines. At the same time, the issue is somewhat prominent, unlikely the typically obscure issues usually studied in framing research (Druckman and Leeper 2012a). Political debate surrounding the DREAM Act provides a useful site for understanding the effects of interest group and partisan coalitions due to the complex pattern of interest group endorsement of the policy and the heterogeneity of public attitudes on the issue. Indeed, while Democrats tend to favor the DREAM Act and Republicans oppose, several conservative interest groups have endorsed the DREAM Act (including the Chamber of Commerce, the Catholic Church, and the Cato Institute) and others have retained their opposition (such as the Heritage Foundation and the American Legion). The 2012 Democratic Party platform was the first to mention the DREAM Act explicitly. Debate over the issue has also garnered the interest of a wide variety of groups, each of which offers unique arguments about why (or why not) the policy should be adopted.

A Gallup poll from December 2010 showed that only 54% of Americans favored the

DREAM Act, with about two-thirds of Democrats and one-third of Republicans supporting the policy.⁶ Measurement of attitudes toward the DREAM Act has been sparse since then, with an October 2011 poll by Latino Decisions reporting that 84% of Latinos and 58% of the general population were somewhat or strongly supportive of the policy.⁷ A recent nationally representative survey-experiment showed that median voter position on the issue was barely supportive, with Democrats averaging 4.2 on a 7-point scale of support and Republicans averaging just 3.0 (Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013). Thus the policy has potentially wide but nowhere near universal support among the American public and, though a partisan divide exists, the differences between Republican and Democrats are not substantial.

With this context in mind, the first experiment examines public perceptions of different arguments made about the DREAM Act. Relying on a common technique in experimental framing research, the experiment examines the perceived effectiveness and valence of a number of frames used in public debate. Differing from common practice, however, the experiment executes this pretesting process by randomly attributing the frames to different groups, such that some respondents evaluate arguments attributed to the Democratic Party, Republican Party, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Council of La Raza, and so forth. The experiment thus provides initial evidence about how individuals' perceptions of frames might vary depending on who is communicating. The study also examines the respondents' perceptions of the different interest groups, thus providing further insight into how interest organizations are understood and viewed relative to political parties.

The second experiment builds on the evidence from the first experiment by showing how parties, interest groups, and coalitions thereof influence attitudes toward the

⁶Gallup. 10 December 2010. "Slim Majority of Americans Would Vote for DREAM Act Law." Retrieved 27 March 2013 from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/145136/Slim-Majority-Americans-Vote-DREAM-Act-Law.aspx>.

⁷Univision News/Latino Decisions Poll. October 2011. Retrieved 27 Mar 2013 from the iPOLL Database, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

DREAM Act when one or more arguments are used to make their case. This experiment enables a realistic test of how citizens respond to political debate waged by isolated political organizations and broader coalitions. The evidence thus arbitrates between the magnification and heresthetic hypotheses in one- and two-sided environments. The following subsections describe and report the results of each experiment in turn.

Study 1: Public Perceptions of Groups and Frames

The first study tests for between-source variations in how individuals perceive the strength and valence of different arguments. The standard procedure for doing so in framing research is to provide a sample of respondents with short versions of each of several different issue frames (some more positive and some more negative) and ask them to evaluate each frame on the strength and valence dimensions. This procedure allows researchers to identify strong and weak frames for use in subsequent research.

Experiment 1 elaborates this approach by examining respondents' impressions of issue frames conditional on what group is reported to be making those arguments. Thus the experiment randomly assigns respondents to either a condition where they simply receive the frames without attribution or one where the frames are attributed to a party or interest group organization. Thus, each participant in the study completed the same frame evaluation questionnaire, but were randomized to receive those frames from one of the groups. Though I principally focus on interest organizations as sources, I also examine evaluations of frames attributed to political parties (i.e., the the Democratic Party and the Republican Party). The reason for this is to provide a baseline by which the interest groups results might be assessed. The major political parties arguably provide the strongest and most salient affective cues to citizens and allow citizens to make the clearest inferences about the ideological or policy content of group endorsements. As such, the effects of interest groups can then be understood relative to any patterns seen in evaluations of party-provisioned frames. The interest groups used in the study are as

follows:

1. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a civil rights organization
2. Southern Poverty Law Center, a legal organization that opposes hate speech and racism
3. Minuteman Project, an armed border security activist group
4. Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank
5. National Council of La Raza, a Latino interest organization
6. U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a business lobby
7. AFL-CIO, a trade federation
8. U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Church's American leadership
9. Southern Baptist Convention, a conservative religious denomination

These groups were selected to reflect a diversity of positions on the DREAM Act, a variety of ideological stances, different levels of public prominence, and a variety of types of group (labor, religious, think-tank, etc.). The set of groups includes both organizations that have taken strong public stances on the DREAM Act specifically (e.g., the ACLU and La Raza) and those with positions that might be seen as contradictory of the group's overall ideology (e.g., the U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the DREAM Act). Though this list is in no way comprehensive and is not a representative sample of all groups (Baumgartner et al. 2009), it reflects a highly varied set of relevant political groups.

At the beginning of the study, respondents were asked about their familiarity with their randomly assigned group,⁸ perceptions of the group's overall ideology,⁹ and self-identification with that group.¹⁰

⁸The exact question read: "How much do you know about the [GROUP NAME]?" and offered responses on a five-point scale from "Nothing" to "A lot."

⁹The exact question read "Generally speaking, do you think the [GROUP NAME] takes positions that are..." and offered responses on a seven-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative."

¹⁰Two measures of self-identification were used. One asked "To what extent do you identify with the [GROUP NAME]?" and elicited responses on a five-point scale from "not at all" to "a lot". The second used a feeling thermometer in responses to the question "On a scale from 0 (meaning cool or unfavorable)

Table 1: Frame Evaluations

| | Valence | Effectiveness |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Social justice | 0.59 (0.01) | 0.57 (0.01) |
| Gridlock | 0.48 (0.01) | 0.50 (0.01) |
| Family | 0.56 (0.01) | 0.56 (0.01) |
| Human dignity | 0.62 (0.02) | 0.59 (0.01) |
| Immigrant tradition | 0.70 (0.01) | 0.57 (0.01) |
| Corporate complicity | 0.53 (0.01) | 0.56 (0.01) |
| Deportation Impractical | 0.44 (0.01) | 0.54 (0.01) |
| Loss of talent | 0.68 (0.01) | 0.59 (0.01) |
| Border security | -0.36 (0.02) | 0.45 (0.01) |
| Rule of law | -0.57 (0.02) | 0.48 (0.01) |
| Criminality | -0.64 (0.02) | 0.39 (0.01) |
| Prospect for fraud | -0.51 (0.02) | 0.49 (0.01) |
| Nativism | -0.69 (0.02) | 0.38 (0.01) |
| Encourage immigration | -0.62 (0.02) | 0.46 (0.01) |
| Social burden | -0.68 (0.02) | 0.44 (0.01) |
| Military recruiting | -0.32 (0.02) | 0.39 (0.01) |

Note: Cell entries are sample means (for all conditions), with associated standard errors in parentheses.

Respondents were then asked to evaluate several arguments about the DREAM Act. Sixteen frames were constructed for use in the study, half of which made positive and half of which made negative arguments. To conserve respondents' time and attention, each respondent evaluated a randomly displayed set of ten of those frames (i.e., each participant received a randomly selected 10 of the 16 frames, presented in random order to mitigate question order effects). The exact wording of each frame is included in the Appendix. For each argument, respondents were asked to evaluate how effective the argument was at making its case (from 'not at all effective' to 'extremely effective'),¹¹ whether the argument was supportive or opposed to the DREAM Act (on a 7-point scale from 'strongly opposed' to 'strongly supportive'),¹² and how likely the attributed group source was to make that argument (from 'very unlikely' to 'very likely').¹³

to 100 (meaning warm or favorable), please rate how cool or warm you feel toward the [GROUP NAME]."

¹¹The question read: "How effective would you say this argument is in making its case?"

¹²The question read: "Would you say this argument, overall, comes across as being more opposed, neither opposed nor supportive, or more supportive of immigration?"

¹³The question read: "How likely do you think the [GROUP NAME] is to make this argument about immigration?"

Table 1 lists all the frames used in the study, along with mean evaluations (among all respondents) on the valence and effectiveness dimensions. It shows that the pro and con frames were accurately perceived as supportive and opposed, respectively. Grouping all source conditions, significant variation in the perceived effectiveness and direction of pro and con frames was observed.¹⁴ ‘Nativism’ was seen as the most extreme con frame, while ‘immigrant tradition’ was seen as the most supportive.

The final part of the questionnaire asked respondents for their position on the DREAM Act: “To what extent do you oppose or support the DREAM Act?” with responses offered on a seven-point scale from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support.” Respondents occupied the entire scale range, with a mean of 0.16 (SE=0.02), suggesting a slight lean toward support for the policy. A total of 1571 participants were recruited for the study from Amazon Mechanical Turk and paid \$0.40 for their participation.¹⁵ The study took about ten minutes to complete. While MTurk provides only a convenience sample, both Studies 1 and 2 rely on this same population and make use of large sample sizes to maximize the diversity of the samples and obtain sufficient statistical power.

Study 1 Results

I begin by examining respondents’ perceptions of the various groups, then discuss their overall impressions of the pro and con frames, before looking at any heterogeneity in frame evaluations across groups.

Table 2: Group Evaluations

| | Familiarity | Ideology | Group Identification | Thermometer |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Democratic Party | 0.61 (0.02) | 0.48 (0.04) | 0.59 (0.04) | 0.15 (0.06) |
| Republican Party | 0.63 (0.02) | -0.58 (0.04) | 0.32 (0.03) | -0.35 (0.05) |
| American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) | 0.40 (0.02) | 0.37 (0.05) | 0.38 (0.04) | 0.14 (0.05) |
| Southern Poverty Law Center | 0.20 (0.02) | 0.10 (0.05) | 0.20 (0.03) | -0.07 (0.04) |
| Minuteman Project | 0.23 (0.02) | -0.37 (0.05) | 0.15 (0.03) | -0.27 (0.05) |
| Heritage Foundation | 0.21 (0.02) | -0.11 (0.05) | 0.12 (0.02) | -0.16 (0.05) |
| National Council of La Raza | 0.15 (0.02) | 0.31 (0.04) | 0.07 (0.02) | -0.22 (0.05) |
| U.S. Chamber of Commerce | 0.33 (0.02) | -0.19 (0.03) | 0.17 (0.02) | -0.10 (0.04) |
| AFL-CIO | 0.23 (0.02) | 0.13 (0.05) | 0.15 (0.02) | -0.20 (0.04) |
| U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops | 0.16 (0.02) | -0.50 (0.04) | 0.09 (0.02) | -0.31 (0.04) |
| Southern Baptist Convention | 0.24 (0.02) | -0.59 (0.04) | 0.11 (0.02) | -0.37 (0.04) |

Note: Cell entries are sample means with associated standard errors in parentheses. Column 1 (familiarity) is scaled 0-1; all other columns are scaled -1 to 1. Higher scores in each column represent greater familiarity, liberal ideology, self-identification with group, and warmer feelings, respectively.

Group Perceptions

How do people perceive political groups? Table 2 reports mean assessments of each group on measures of familiarity, ideology, and two measures of group identification. Looking at the first column, measuring familiarity, it is clear that the sample is far more familiar with the Democratic and Republican parties than any of the interest groups. Those groups range from hardly familiar at all (e.g., La Raza and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops) to moderately familiar (e.g., the ACLU and the Chamber of Commerce). Perceptions of groups' ideologies are somewhat more variable (see column 2). Generally, the sample correctly sees left-leaning groups as liberal and right-leaning groups as conservative,¹⁶ but the Southern Poverty Law Center, Heritage Foundation,

¹⁴Kruskal-Wallis χ^2 values, and associated p-values, were as follows. Pro frames: direction (394.5, $p < 0.00$), effectiveness (58.5, $p < 0.00$); con frames: direction (396.2, $p < 0.00$), effectiveness (106.1, $p < 0.00$). Note that the statistics for con frames exclude the "military recruiting" frame, which is obviously less effective and less negative than all other con frames.

¹⁵Demographic characteristics were not collected, but extant literature suggests that MTurk participants are more diverse than typical convenience samples, especially on measures of age, education, and political variables (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012).

¹⁶Because I have no objective measure of group ideology, I do not focus on specific variations across these ratings.

and AFL-CIO are seen (probably incorrectly) as ideologically moderate. With the exception of the Southern Baptist Convention, the parties are perceived as the most ideologically extreme groups, suggesting that extreme groups (like the Minuteman Project) are insufficiently familiar to have publicly salient ideological positions. In column 3, we see that the sample is fairly unattached to any of the groups, save the Democratic Party. Column 4 also shows that while the sample is warm to some extent toward the Democratic Party and ACLU, they have negative feelings toward all other groups. The lack of familiarity with the groups seems to translate into those groups being relatively negative cues. But how do these perceptions of groups affect perceptions of the arguments?

How much variation is there in frame evaluations when offered by different groups? Table 3 reports summary statistics and p-values of tests of equality of evaluations of different frames, conducted separately for each group source. For example, the first row shows that in the control group, there was no detectable variation in the effectiveness of the pro frames, but significant variations were found among the con frames. Variations in frame valence were found among the pro and con frames. All other rows show analogous tests for each group source and also show tests of whether frames were all perceived as equally likely to be used by that group.

Perceived Effectiveness of Frames

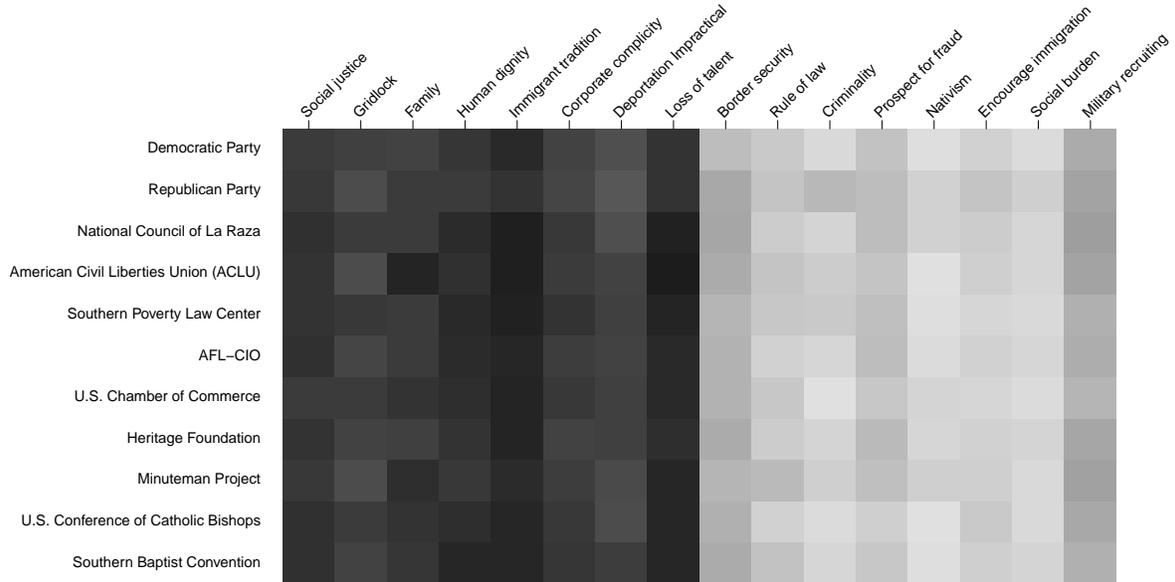
We saw above (in Table 1) that the effectiveness of the set of pro frames and the set of con frames did not (generally) vary for the entire sample (i.e., all of the frames were seen as fairly strong). Digging into the data bit more, the effectiveness of frames varied insignificantly across sources (see columns 1-2 of Table 3), directly contradicting a basic tenet of dual-mode theories of persuasion, which expect dramatic between-source variations in perceived argument strength. Only for the Republican Party and Catholic church are variations found in the effectiveness of pro frames. Perceived effectiveness varied more among the con frames for nearly all the groups. The content of frames seems to

Table 3: Variation in Effectiveness, Valence, and Likelihood of Frames, by Group

| | Effective (Pro) | Effective (Con) | Valence (Pro) | Valence (Con) | Likely (Pro) | Likely (Con) |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Control Group | 9.1 (0.24) | 14.6 (0.02) | 37.7 (0.00) | 35.2 (0.00) | — | — |
| Democratic Party | 4.8 (0.69) | 10.1 (0.12) | 25.7 (0.00) | 31.6 (0.00) | 9.8 (0.20) | 13.9 (0.03) |
| Republican Party | 15.4 (0.03) | 11.5 (0.08) | 33.6 (0.00) | 22.2 (0.00) | 12.8 (0.08) | 10.8 (0.10) |
| American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) | 10.0 (0.19) | 5.9 (0.43) | 52.7 (0.00) | 38.1 (0.00) | 12.6 (0.08) | 8.6 (0.20) |
| Southern Poverty Law Center | 12.0 (0.10) | 15.1 (0.02) | 39.7 (0.00) | 33.1 (0.00) | 2.7 (0.91) | 8.3 (0.22) |
| Minuteman Project | 9.9 (0.19) | 10.3 (0.11) | 42.0 (0.00) | 24.9 (0.00) | 1.9 (0.97) | 6.1 (0.41) |
| Heritage Foundation | 3.7 (0.82) | 15.7 (0.02) | 29.6 (0.00) | 42.9 (0.00) | 3.2 (0.87) | 3.4 (0.75) |
| National Council of La Raza | 11.2 (0.13) | 12.3 (0.06) | 51.1 (0.00) | 39.8 (0.00) | 13.6 (0.06) | 7.5 (0.28) |
| U.S. Chamber of Commerce | 10.7 (0.15) | 12.8 (0.05) | 27.3 (0.00) | 44.0 (0.00) | 6.4 (0.49) | 8.8 (0.19) |
| AFL-CIO | 4.1 (0.76) | 14.4 (0.03) | 40.3 (0.00) | 40.1 (0.00) | 7.2 (0.41) | 4.1 (0.67) |
| U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops | 16.7 (0.02) | 14.9 (0.02) | 35.8 (0.00) | 48.6 (0.00) | 9.3 (0.23) | 5.2 (0.52) |
| Southern Baptist Convention | 3.4 (0.84) | 10.9 (0.09) | 28.7 (0.00) | 42.2 (0.00) | 8.4 (0.30) | 10.8 (0.09) |

Note: Cell entries are nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis χ^2 statistics for the test of equality of medians, with associated p-values in parentheses.

Figure 1: Perceived Valence of Frames, by Group



Note: Cells represent mean evaluations of each frame’s valence, by group source. Scale ranges from strongly opposed (white) to strongly supportive (black).

trump whatever conditional effects sources introduce (and, as was just noted, for some groups it is completely unclear to study participants what policy position they might take). Indeed, looking at the data a different way (i.e., within-frames/between-sources rather than between-frames/within-sources) only for the ‘border security’ frame is there a significant variation in the perceived effectiveness of the frame across the different groups ($\chi^2 = 20.0, p < 0.05$). For all other frames, there were no significant variations in perceived effectiveness between different group sources.

Perceived Valence of Frames

Columns 3-4 of Table 3 show summary statistics for perceived valence of pro and con frames, by source. The small p-values for every test show that the valence of frames was seen as significantly variable within each group source, reflecting the variability of valences seen for the entire sample in Table 1. Groups therefore do not appear to

imbue a particular frame with their own ideology or issue position; all frames do not converge on conveying the same policy position just because a particular group is using them. One might think that extreme groups would be perceived as making extreme arguments, regardless of the content of those arguments. Yet, this is not really the case.

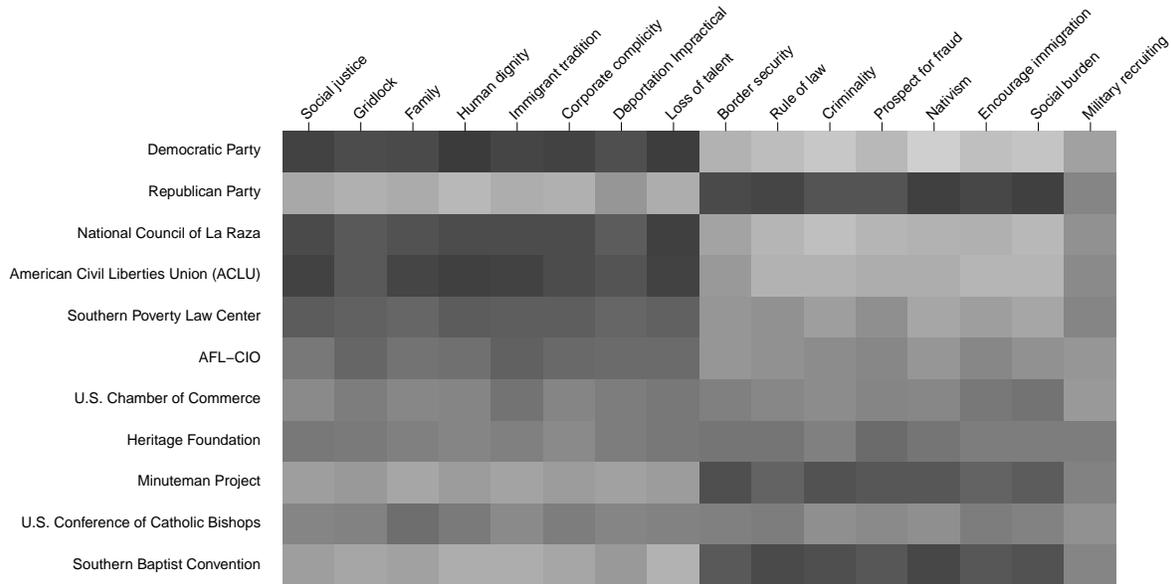
But does the perceived valence of a given frame differ depending on who conveys it (i.e., does valence vary within-frames/between-sources)? No. The perceived valence of a frame seems to depend hardly at all on who is conveying it. Figure 1 shows the pattern of valence perceptions as a matrix of frame-by-source evaluations, with each group displayed as a row and each frame as a column. The darkest cells represent frame-by-source combinations perceived as most supportive, while the lightest cells portray those combinations seen as most opposed. The pro frames are consistently seen as supportive and the con frames opposed, regardless of source. This can be seen in the color variation across frames (columns) but with little variation for a given (pro or con) frame across sources (rows).¹⁷ More formally, only for the ‘criminality’ frame is there any significant difference in the perceived valence of a given frame across the different sources ($\chi^2 = 19.8, p < 0.05$). For all other frames, no significant between-source variation is detectable.

Perceived Likelihood of Frame Use

Finally, there were almost no significant variations in the perceived likelihood that a group would use any of the particular pro frames or any of the particular con frames (see columns 5-6 of Table 3). Respondents were apparently unable to determine which groups “owned” certain frames (e.g., the Minutemen relying on a ‘border security’ frame) and would therefore be more likely to use that frame than other similarly valenced frames. The lack of substantial variation across frames suggests that individuals struggle to separate a frame’s implied policy position from its argumentative content. Groups likely to

¹⁷The results seen in Table 3 are essentially ANOVA comparisons for each row (separately for the pro and con sets of frames).

Figure 2: Perceived Likelihood of Group Use of Frames



Note: Cells represent mean assessments of each group’s use of the frame. Scale ranges from very unlikely (white) to very likely (black).

use particular frames are thought likely to use any frame that generally supports their broadly perceived issue position.¹⁸

That said, respondents were generally able to distinguish that liberal groups would use pro frames and conservative groups con frames. Figure 2 shows another frame-by-source matrix, with darker cells showing groups perceived as most likely to use a given frame. As is clear in the first two rows, the entire sample accurately viewed Democrats as likely to use any of the pro frames and Republicans more likely to use the con frames. Liberal interest groups — La Raza and the ACLU — were similarly seen as likely to make pro arguments, but for other groups, perceptions were more muddled. The AFL-CIO was thought only slightly more likely to make pro arguments. The Heritage Foundation — strongly opposed to the DREAM Act — was seen as equally likely to make any of the frames. The Minuteman Project was seen as more likely to make con frames, but

¹⁸Thus, despite consistently detectable differences in frame valence, participants’ lack of understanding of groups’ ideology or issue stance mean that they are unable to pair particular frames to particular groups.

Table 4: Difference in Groups’ Perceived Likelihood of Using Pro and Con Frames

| | Pro Mean (SE) | Con Mean (SE) | U Statistic (p-value) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Democratic Party | 0.46 (0.36) | -0.48 (0.46) | 10548.0 (0.00) |
| Republican Party | -0.34 (0.46) | 0.42 (0.40) | 2386.5 (0.00) |
| National Council of La Raza | 0.37 (0.35) | -0.41 (0.48) | 13410.5 (0.00) |
| American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) | 0.41 (0.36) | -0.37 (0.53) | 11674.0 (0.00) |
| Southern Poverty Law Center | 0.23 (0.41) | -0.22 (0.49) | 13922.5 (0.00) |
| AFL-CIO | 0.14 (0.44) | -0.11 (0.48) | 10982.5 (0.00) |
| U.S. Chamber of Commerce | -0.01 (0.42) | -0.01 (0.43) | 10269.0 (0.71) |
| Heritage Foundation | 0.00 (0.50) | 0.04 (0.50) | 7343.5 (0.86) |
| Minuteman Project | -0.24 (0.50) | 0.28 (0.45) | 3479.5 (0.00) |
| U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops | -0.00 (0.45) | -0.03 (0.49) | 9103.0 (0.68) |
| Southern Baptist Convention | -0.30 (0.49) | 0.35 (0.38) | 2457.5 (0.00) |

Note: Cell entries in columns 1 and 2 are treatment group means pooling all pro and con frames, respectively, with associated standard errors in parentheses. Cell entries in column 3 are nonparametric Mann-Whitney U statistics for two-sample location problem, with associated p-values in parentheses.

their core arguments about border security were not seen as particularly likely frames. Among the religious groups, Catholics — supportive of the DREAM Act — were thought unlikely to use most of the arguments, while conservative Southern Baptists — who are officially neutral on the issue — were thought more likely to use con frames.

Table 4 formalizes these comparisons by showing the mean perceptions of frame use by each group for pro and con frames and a test of the difference in those perceived likelihoods. The Democrats were thought much more likely to use pro than con frames ($p < 0.00$) and Republicans the reverse ($p < 0.00$). For the Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Foundation, and the Catholic Church’s leadership, there was no detectable difference in perceived likelihood of using the pro or con frames. And, aside from the, La Raza, and the ACLU, the absolute size of the differences in perceived likelihoods of pro versus con frame use were quite small.

Variations in Frame Evaluations by Respondent

It is worth mentioning briefly that frame perceptions, while not varying much at all by who was communicating, were conditioned to some extent by who was receiving the

Table 5: Variation in Effectiveness and Valence, by Respondent Opinion

| | Effective (Pro) | Effective (Con) | Valence (Pro) | Valence (Con) |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Opponents | 0.42 (0.01) | 0.58 (0.01) | 0.54 (0.02) | -0.58 (0.02) |
| Neutral | 0.51 (0.01) | 0.48 (0.01) | 0.37 (0.02) | -0.34 (0.03) |
| Supporters | 0.64 (0.01) | 0.36 (0.01) | 0.65 (0.01) | -0.63 (0.01) |

Note: Cell entries are subgroup means pooling all pro and con frames, respectively, with associated standard errors in parentheses.

frames. Policy supporters, policy opponents, and those with neutral opinions perceived frames somewhat differently than one another. The results are perhaps unsurprising. Supporters universally find pro arguments to be more effective than con arguments; opponents similarly see con frames as more effective than pro frames (see columns 1-2 of Table 5). Those with neutral opinions fall somewhere in between, seeing the sets of pro and con frames as comparably effective.¹⁹

In terms of valence, a slightly different pattern emerges. Opponents and supporters were better able to tell which groups would use which frames than those who were undecided about the issue. Supporters and opponents could accurately perceive the pro and con frames as offering more extreme positions on the issue than those who were neutral. Perhaps the attitude-reinforcing biases that lead individuals to see arguments in favor of their own position as more effective than counterarguments are interlaced with cognitive architecture that also enables opinionated individuals to better understand what different frames mean. Lacking an opinion on the issue apparently means that arguments, while somewhat effective, do not reflect particularly dramatic policy differences.

¹⁹Neutral individuals found arguments about immigrant families and the country's immigrant heritage particularly good reasons to support the DREAM Act and fraud was seen as a convincing reason to oppose. By contrast, supporters were convinced by social justice and 'loss of talent' frames, while opponents were convinced by 'border security' and 'rule of law' frames. Supporters and opponents did not see the arguments favored by each other to be nearly as convincing as the arguments they themselves found most convincing. Opponents and supporters liked arguments typical to political debate surrounding immigration and their preferences for different arguments suggest that the elite frames favored by issue opponents and supporters talk past one another in this debate.

Study 2: Effects of Group Competition

The results from Study 1 suggest that most interest groups are not well-known and thus their issue positions are imprecisely perceived. As a result, the content of frames seems to prevail over any source-specific effects on the perception of different issue frames. While study participants were generally able to detect variations in frame valence and could pair some of the interest groups to particular areas of the policy space, such differentiation was relatively rough with sources hardly conditioning perceptions of frame effectiveness or valence. Yet Study 1 depended on subjective perceptions of frames, and did not look at the actual effects of exposure to those frames on policy opinions.

To test the impact of group frames on opinions, Study 2 examines the attitude-changing effects of exposure to one or more arguments about the issue coming from one or more sources. Specifically, the experiment involved three manipulations. Respondents in all conditions began by reading a short introductory text about the DREAM Act:

Since 2001, lawmakers have debated a new immigration law called the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (also called the DREAM Act). The law would allow undocumented immigrants to gain citizenship if they entered the U.S. before the age of 16, maintained good moral character (had no criminal record), earned a high school diploma, and completed two years of college OR two years of military service.

Then the experimental manipulations were applied. First, individuals received either one or three arguments favorable toward the DREAM Act. Thus, some received one strong argument about why they should support the DREAM Act, while others received three strong arguments for why they should support it. Comparisons between these groups enable a test of magnification hypothesis with respect to arguments. Those receiving one argument read a “human dignity” frame, while those in the three-argument conditions received that frame in addition to two others focusing on “loss of talent” and America’s “immigrant tradition.” Exact wording of the three arguments is included in

the Appendix.²⁰

Second, individuals received one of five different sources of the frame(s), as follows:

- No source (frame/s only)
- One interest group²¹
- Three interest groups²²
- One party²³
- One party and three interest groups²⁴

The three interest groups endorsing the DREAM Act that were used in the study were selected to reflect a diversity of perspectives, with La Raza being an organization with an obvious self-interest in immigration policy, the ACLU being a prominent liberal interest group, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce being a somewhat unlikely supporter of the DREAM Act, given its business-oriented policy stances.²⁵ A third manipulation provided some respondents with one or three con arguments about the DREAM Act, which were combined to simplify presentation into a single “competitive” factor.²⁶ An additional set of respondents received no issue-relevant information and thus serve as a baseline control condition.

After reading these prompts, participants were asked for their opinion toward the

²⁰To ensure that respondents read the stimuli, those in the one-argument conditions were prevented from proceeding with the survey for 10 seconds and those in the three-argument conditions were prevented from proceeding with the survey for 30 seconds.

²¹The text read: “Supporters of the DREAM ACT include an array of organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).”

²²The text read: “Supporters of the DREAM Act include an array of organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Council of La Raza.”

²³The text read: “Supporters of the DREAM Act include an array of organizations, such as the Democratic Party.”

²⁴The text read: “Supporters of the DREAM Act include an array of organizations, such as the Democratic Party, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Council of La Raza.”

²⁵An alternative approach would have been to use three clearly liberal groups, such as the ACLU, People for the American Way, and the AFL-CIO. These groups, however, may not convey a diversity of perspectives, which research by Harkins and Petty (1987) suggests is critical for the added value of multiple sources in persuasion to manifest.

²⁶Specifically, the “competitive” factor collapses four sets of treatment groups who received one or three arguments in opposition to the DREAM Act from one (the Heritage Foundation) or three interest groups (the Heritage Foundation, the American Legion, and the Minuteman Project).

DREAM Act on a seven-point scale from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support” (rescaled to range from -1 to 1),²⁷. Respondents then answered a few additional demographic questions, including about their ideological and partisan self-identifications, before the study concluded. A total of 4141 participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk and compensated \$0.50 for their participation in the study, which took about five minutes to complete.²⁸ Though a convenience sample, the pool of respondents was diverse.²⁹

Study 2 Results

Overall, the sample was somewhat supportive of the DREAM Act, with the control group’s mean at 0.39 (SE=0.02) on a -1 to 1 scale. But how responsive were they to group-sponsored debate? Figure 3 shows the effects (relative to the control group) of each sponsorship coalition on attitudes, separated by one- and three-argument conditions. For most coalitions of groups, exposure to three arguments (black bars) has no impact on individuals’ attitudes and are in the direction of making people more opposed to the policy, the reverse effect they should have under the predictions of persuasion theories. This suggests that magnification is at least ineffective and possibly counterproductive as political strategy. Exposure to a single frame (gray bars), by contrast, seem to increase support — albeit marginally — regardless of the size of the coalition offering that frame, which suggests some support for the heresthetic hypothesis. A single frame narrows attention to one issue dimension, and thus focuses attitudes in the intended direction where three frames cloud judgment with multiple arguments.

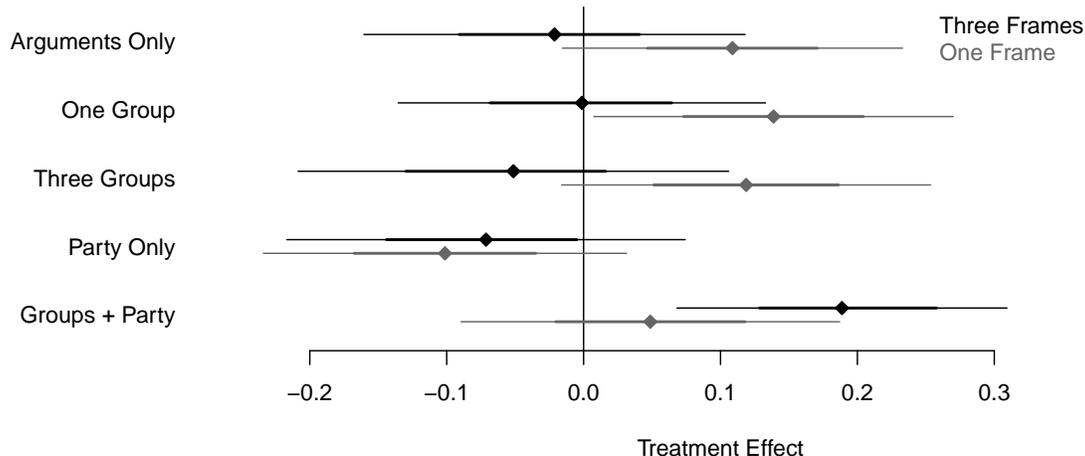
When one or three frames are supported by the Democratic Party, however, the sample seems to move toward being less supportive, though the effect is not statistically

²⁷As in Study 1, the question read: “To what extent do you oppose or support the DREAM Act?”

²⁸Participants in Study 1 were prevented from participating in Study 2.

²⁹Forty-six percent of the sample was female. Seventy-five percent self-identified as white, 7% as African American, 9% as Asian American, and 5% as Hispanic or Latino. Twenty-five percent indicated that they or their parent(s) were immigrants to the United States. The sample was disproportionately young (40% were 18-24, 36% were 25-36). And, the median level of educational attainment among respondents was “some college,” with 31% reporting only a college degree and 13% some post-graduate education.

Figure 3: Treatment Effects, by Number of Frames



Note: Points are treatment effects (relative to control group), with bars representing one- and two-standard errors for each effect.

different from zero. This suggests that party cues trump both interest group endorsements and frame content. Finally, when a large, diverse coalition makes three arguments, they produce a sizable and significant increase in support for the policy, while that same coalition making only one argument has no effect. These last two conditions suggest a reversal of the above trend: magnification rather than heresthetics is advantageous when the coalition is large, diverse, and partisan. To understand these dynamics in greater detail requires a look at the heterogeneity in responses to the treatments across different types of respondents.

Liberals, the majority (55.5%) of the sample, were generally supportive of the policy (0.58, SE=0.02).³⁰ Regardless of treatment condition, liberals remained supportive of the policy, suggesting a possible ceiling effect. That said, all conditions (except the party cue conditions) were more positive than the control group, reflecting marginal increases in support despite the supportive baseline opinions among liberals. Yet even when the Democratic Party and three interest groups expressed support for the policy with three

³⁰The effects of interest groups should not be directly attached to party identification, but may be conditioned by ideology. I therefore focus on heterogeneity across ideological groups. Dynamics are similar if heterogeneity across party identification is examined.

strong arguments, Liberals only averaged 0.70 (SE=0.05) in terms of support. While magnification may have some advantages, it appears to be only minimally effective in moving weak supporters to the extreme.

The effects among conservatives, 20.5% of the sample, may make for a stronger test of the magnification and heresthetic hypotheses, due to their lower level of baseline support, with a mean opinion of 0.08 (SE=0.05) in the control condition. To what extent are they influenced by a coalition of supportive groups? The dynamics reflected in treatment group means (see first column of Table 6) suggest that both hypotheses may be correct, but under different circumstances. The strongest effects among conservatives come when one group communicates one or three arguments or when a large coalition of three groups and the Democratic Party offer three arguments. These effects emerge despite suggestive (but not statistically significant) evidence that party endorsement alone dramatically decreases conservatives' support (to -0.09 and -0.18 in the one- and three-frame conditions), combined with evidence that these individuals are not terribly receptive to the three pro frames when they are received without attribution (averaging -0.13). Both a heresthetic approach of finding a single simplifying dimension for the political debate and the magnification approach of using a large, diverse coalition to communicate multiple frames appear to be effective strategies for increasing opponents support. Indeed, the highest aggregate support for the policy are found when the large, diverse coalition makes three arguments (0.58, SE=0.06), followed by conditions where one or no group makes a single argument.

Of course, one critique of this evidence is that it ignores the very political dynamics it attempts to illuminate: competition. While these one-sided conditions contribute novel evidence about competition among arguments advocating the same policy direction (i.e., support for the DREAM Act), the results thus far do not speak to competition across the policy space (nor to the effects of that competition on the resilience of liberals' and conservatives' attitudes under conditions of competitive framing). Figure 4 addresses

Table 6: Policy Support in One-Sided Environments, by Treatment and Ideology

| | Conservatives | Liberals |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Arguments Only * 1 | 0.20 (0.18) | 0.68 (0.05) |
| Arguments Only * 3 | -0.13 (0.16) | 0.68 (0.04) |
| One Group * 1 | 0.31 (0.15) | 0.67 (0.07) |
| One Group * 3 | 0.26 (0.14) | 0.62 (0.07) |
| Three Groups * 1 | 0.18 (0.17) | 0.65 (0.08) |
| Three Groups * 3 | 0.07 (0.12) | 0.64 (0.09) |
| Party Only * 1 | -0.09 (0.14) | 0.47 (0.08) |
| Party Only * 3 | -0.18 (0.22) | 0.50 (0.07) |
| Groups + Party * 1 | 0.15 (0.14) | 0.56 (0.07) |
| Groups + Party * 3 | 0.44 (0.14) | 0.70 (0.05) |
| Control | 0.08 (0.05) | 0.58 (0.02) |

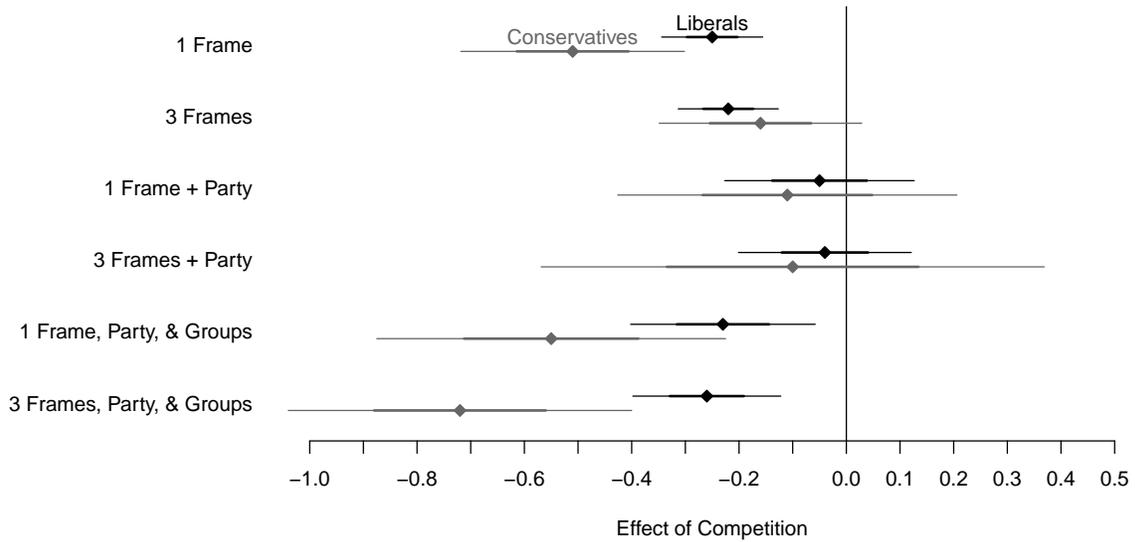
Note: Cell entries are treatment group means with associated standard errors in parentheses.

this question by showing the difference between the one-sided conditions just described and the conditions where both pro and con arguments are offered.³¹ When only one pro frame is offered (top set of bars), competition dramatically reduces support, especially among conservatives. A single frame exposure — as is typically used in communication experiments — may increase support, but that gain in support is incredibly sensitive to the presence of competing arguments in the environment. With three pro frames (second set of bars), competition has a similar, though smaller competitive effect, whereby the one-sided framing effect is mitigated by competition.

Another interesting dynamic made apparent in Figure 4 involves the party cue conditions (the third and fourth set of bars). When one or three frames are sponsored by the Democratic Party, there is no effect of frame competition nor the number of frames. By endorsing the policy in isolation, the Democratic Party appears to have solidified the liberals' baseline attitudes toward the policy and clarified conservatives' opposition (as seen in Table 6). Parties therefore play a risky strategy of endorsing policies alone because they provide a powerful cue to supporters, but also especially to opponents. Party framing effects, when parties work alone, seem to be driven much more by party

³¹This figure combines the argument-only and interest group conditions, due to the consistent dynamics found in these conditions (see Figure 3).

Figure 4: Effects of Competitive Framing, by Treatment Condition and Ideology



Note: Points are treatment effects (relative to one-sided conditions), with bars representing one- and two-standard errors for each effect.

endorsement cues than by content of arguments because what frames being offered (regardless of quantity or the presence of competitive argumentation) had little effect on support once a party endorsement was made.

The contrast between the party-only conditions and the party-plus-groups conditions, the final set of bars, therefore become all the more interesting. Diverse coalitions that include parties can be quite influential in moving public attitudes even when the party acting alone might be ineffective. As we saw (in the last row of Table 6), conservatives and liberals were each most supportive of the policy when the largest coalition (of three groups and the Democratic party) made three arguments in support of the DREAM Act. Yet the large, negative effects of competition seen among conservatives (as well as liberals) in the final set of bars in Figure 4 signify that this strategic advantage of forming a large, diverse coalition is also incredibly fragile when an issue is the site of competitive argumentation. While conservatives in one-sided environments were most receptive to the magnified coalition, once competition came they become the least supportive of any

experimental condition. Liberals, too, were affected by competition (though to a lesser extent than conservatives), meaning that in the face of competition the large coalition was unable to hold onto those who were (a priori) supportive nor retain the persuaded conservatives to stay on their side. Such results suggest that the large effects of frames, of partisan cues, and of endorsements become much less significant as the political debate surrounding an issue becomes enlarged by additional actors and arguments.

Discussion

Extant research has contributed a considerable amount to our understanding of how individuals respond to political communications. Indeed, every part of Lasswell's (1948) classic formulation: "who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect" has been considered. Yet there is a surprising lack of attention to the first part of Lasswell's formulation: the 'who.' Without 'who,' the political communication field studies the effects of messages on recipients as if those messages simply emerged organically from the ether. But political messages are created by people, often political elites such as politicians (e.g., party leaders, elected officials), media (journalists, commentators, bloggers), interest groups and activists, and religious, racial, business, labor, and other leadership. Research on argument-based persuasion has given us every reason to believe that who sends a messages affects who has the opportunity to hear that message, who receives it, and how those recipients process and react to the informational content of the message.

The present research has turned greater attention to the issue of 'who' and its implications both for understanding group-based political competition, as well as for advancing research into political communication and its effects on public opinions. While groups have important effects on public attitudes toward policy issues, those effects appear to be highly conditioned by the prominence and ideological reputation of groups and the contents of political debate. Where parties are able to shape public attitudes

(to their advantage and disadvantage) with simple policy endorsements, other political organizations appear to be sufficiently obscure in the minds of citizens to not offer such convincing cues. Only when interest groups form large, diverse coalitions are they able to significantly move opinion; even then, however, they remain vulnerable to counterframing (Chong and Druckman 2007a, 2013). Maintenance of coalitions can also be difficult (Heaney 2004; Heaney and Rojas 2008), in part due to activists' differing policy demands (Strolovitch 2008), thus undermining coherence of coalition communications.³² Of course, some groups may have little interest or incentive to influence public opinion directly. Where parties have a seemingly special ability to influence public opinion, this also reflects the asymmetry between parties and other political organizations: parties depend directly on the mass public for power, where interest organizations do only indirectly.

At a time when immigration continues to be a focal issue in American political debate, the results also offer important insights into why groups struggle to shape public attitudes. Indeed, they show that the search for broadly compelling arguments about immigration reform is made difficult by the diversity of ideological positions held by members of the public and the attempted use of strong frames can easily be undermined by other groups' efforts — including those on the same side of the debate — who rely on different frames. The DREAM Act was first introduced during the 107th Congress, more than twelve years ago, and has yet to become law. The efforts of countless interest groups appear to have not had tangible influence on immigration policy, so examining the DREAM Act as a case study through the lens of interest group influence on policymaking might suggest that interest groups are impotent. Yet public attitudes

³²One reason for the underwhelming effects of interest group frames might be that citizens, unfamiliar with particular groups, are unconvinced that such groups — as opposed to parties — can credibly achieve the policy objectives they describe. So-called limitations of “source efficacy” (Clark, Evans, and Wegener 2011) might undermine interest groups' abilities to persuade the public at-large. If many citizens want politics to provide them useful, effort-minimizing cues (Downs 1957; Lipsitz et al. 2005), then the minimal effects of many groups may be due to the minimal value of unfamiliar cues (see also Barakso and Schaffner 2013). Source and argument expansion may only be effective for certain issues promoted by high-profile groups.

toward immigration have shifted dramatically for the past decade, despite economic conditions that might discourage support for liberal immigration policy. To what extent is that change due to interest group activity that keeps immigration as an issue in the news, framed in the ways they intend? These results suggest interest group efforts are an unlikely explanation for public opinion shifts, but the short exposure used here may not adequately emulate the persistent communication of groups over the last decade.

Of course, this research has limitations. Despite large sample sizes used in both studies, the convenience sample of respondents skewed liberal-Democratic and tended to favor the policy at-hand. Other samples and other issues might offer different causal dynamics, thus the questions raised and findings offered here merit replication across context, sample, and issue (Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2001). The use of immigration reform as a focal issue — given its long-standing place in American politics — might have been clouded by pretreatment processes related to the frames used in the study (Druckman and Leeper 2012*b*) or inferred party positions on the issue (Slothuus 2013).³³ Study 2 participants reported relatively strong post-treatment attitudes toward the issue, scoring at 0.62 on a 0-1 measure of attitude certainty and at 0.45 on a 0-1 measure of attitude importance, suggesting that such attitude characteristics, if present before exposure to the experimental treatments, may have made participants a priori resistant to influence (Krosnick 1988). The study also occurred at only one point in time, exposing participants to a relatively brief communication. Given the importance of over-time dynamics to public opinion processes (Chong and Druckman 2010; Druckman and Leeper 2012*b*), the pattern of opinion changes here may have looked different had messages been repeated over an extended period of time.

That said, this paper invites new research in a number of veins. First, while interest groups seem unable to dramatically shape public preferences in the same manner as political parties, it is worth investigating how groups impact their own members and

³³The American context, with its robust supply of interest groups, may also generalize only to similar pluralist democracies.

those who hold strongly negative feelings toward the groups (see, for example, Claassen and Nicholson 2013; Sabatier and McLaughlin 1990). Parties appear to provide a salient and meaningful endorsement (positive for supporters and negative for out-partisans) toward policies, and it seems reasonable to suspect that interest groups provide the same if only for their members. Second, if groups provide uneven opinion-changing influence, why then do they communicate? If interest groups struggle to influence opinions, their communications may impact other important political outcomes, like public perceptions of their group, the arguments and claims used by political parties and politicians, and citizens' understandings of politics. Third, while mass communication may not be a particularly effective persuasive strategy for groups, more attention might be paid to how citizens obtain messages from interest groups and what effects that selective exposure has responses to communications. To what audiences do interest groups communicate and how do those selective audiences respond interest group arguments and information. For example, many interest groups send their members lists of "good" and "bad" policies and "dirty dozen" lists of politicians or companies that their members should support and oppose. Such targeted messaging might be more important than broad communication. Finally, larger coalitions did not seem to have particularly overwhelming influence on citizens' opinions, but multiple coalition members each communicating to their core members about specific, important issues with their most targeted messages may collectively amount to better strategy than publicly communicating together. Riker tells us that heresthetics provide powerful political consequences. In the cacophony of group-based politics, however, ideal strategy may be anything but possible.

A Frames from Experiment 1

Pro frames

Social Justice

The children of immigrants face some of the greatest challenges of any young people in our country. Brought to the United States by their parents, they are now being punished for their parents' decisions and are discriminated against for choices they did not make. The DREAM Act promises them the opportunities available to everyone else's children and ends unfair discrimination against this group of young people who want nothing more than to go to college, earn their citizenship, and live the American dream.

Policy Gridlock

The American immigration system is broken. Since comprehensive immigration was first discussed in 2005, Congress has been gridlocked and has made no progress toward improving the countless problems in immigration law and enforcement. This gridlock has left the children of undocumented immigrants in limbo, with little memory of their parents' place of origin and bleak prospects here in the United States. The DREAM Act proposes to resolve this deadlock, fixed part of the immigration mess, and finally give these young people a path to citizenship.

Families

While most children born to immigrant parents are American citizens by birth, those who were brought to this country at a young age by parents without legal authorization have no clear path to citizenship or even legal status. Millions of immigrants reside in "mixed-status" households with at least one child or one parent who lacks legal immigration status. The DREAM Act offers a path to citizenship for many of these young people and helps keep families together, which means that mixed-status families won't be forced to separate across international borders.

Human dignity

Undocumented immigration and the lack of effective immigration policies have left millions of young people in the shadows, without access to basic rights or the opportunities afforded other people. Brought to the United States as children, these young people deserve to be treated humanely, but have few opportunities for work or post-secondary education, regularly face deportation to countries they have never known, and are prohibited from the basic human right of citizenship. The DREAM Act would bring these young people out of the shadows and treat them with the dignity they — and all of us — deserve.

Immigrant tradition

The United States is a nation of immigrants. Since before the founding of the United States, hardworking immigrants shaped the American landscape, the American economy, and built the very idea of an "American Dream." Without immigration, our country would be poorer, smaller, and less diverse. The DREAM Act respects our immigrant heritage by giving young people who seek the American Dream an opportunity to real-

ize it, through the same hard work that built this country since the 1700s.

Corporate complicity

Undocumented immigrants come to the United States because opportunities are better and more widely available than their country of origin. Yet many American businesses have taken advantage of immigrants' quest for economic opportunity by exploiting them as cheap labor with few of the rights of documented immigrants or American citizens. Putting profit ahead of fair labor practices, these businesses help to perpetuate a broken immigration system. The DREAM Act would protect the children of undocumented immigrants by giving them a path to citizenship and helping them to avoid the trap of becoming cheap labor for heartless corporations.

Impracticality of mass deportation

As many as two million young people currently residing in the United States were brought here as children by parents who entered the country illegally. Some have suggested that these young people and their families should face immediate deportation. The cost of that proposal is immense and mass deportation of all undocumented immigrants is, in reality, practically impossible without major increases in government spending. The DREAM Act takes a different approach for the children of undocumented immigrants, offering them a path to citizenship rather a push over the border.

Loss of talent

Immigrants fuel our nation's economy, yet current immigration laws do little to encourage talented immigrants to remain in the United States. One group — the children of undocumented immigrants — is especially vulnerable. With a college education, who knows what these young people might contribute to the American economy. Yet present law subjects them to deportation back to countries they may little remember. The DREAM Act gives these young people the chance to be doctors, lawyers, scientists, or anything they can dream of and helps keep their talent here for the benefit of the American economy.

Con frames

Border Security First

The biggest problem with immigration law today is the lack of secure borders. How can the United States enact comprehensive immigration reform without first stopping the onslaught of illegal immigration? Advocates of the DREAM Act are offering an incomplete solution to the massive immigration problem. The right solution starts at the border to keep new immigrants from entering the country illegally, gives priority for residence and citizenship to those who have waited their turn, and encourages undocumented immigrants to return to their home country and get in line if they want to come back.

Rule of Law

A defining feature of American democracy is the rule of law. Everyone must follow the law, but that obligation comes with the right to influence what those laws are. When foreigners violate the rule of law by entering the country illegally, they deserve to go

home. The DREAM Act gives special privileges to rule breakers who entered this country without permission and now think they deserve to be treated as innocent. Supporters of the DREAM Act are trying to hide the fact that the legislation would grant amnesty to illegals and let them jump to the front of the line ahead of those who have been waiting years to enter the United States legally.

Criminality

The DREAM Act promises to keep immigrant youth here in the United States rather than sending them home. Immigrants commit a disproportionate amount of the criminal offenses in the United States and young immigrants are more likely to be in gangs and use drugs than citizens. By preventing the deportation of all young immigrants, the DREAM Act would shield gang members, drug users, and other criminals from deportation, keeping them on American streets rather than in the foreign jails in which they belong.

Prospect for Fraud

The DREAM Act promises citizenship and other perks to millions of undocumented immigrants. All these immigrants need to do is document that they entered the country before age 16. But without legal documentation of their immigration to the United States, how are they supposed to prove that? And what is stopping unqualified immigrants from forging documents so they get benefit from the program? The legislation is an invitation for massive immigration fraud on a scale never seen before.

Nativism

Immigrants, especially those who enter this country illegally, are a threat to the American way of life. Most illegal immigrants come from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries and show little interest in learning English or adopting American culture. Why should we let these foreigners stay in the country at all, let alone give them a chance to become citizens like the DREAM Act is proposing? Immigration policy should serve American interests first and only let in immigrants who are willing to wait their turn in line, learn our language, and integrate into American society.

Encourage immigration/Take Jobs

Millions of people around the world want to come to the United States and many are willing to break the law to get here right away. The DREAM Act will give citizenship to millions of young immigrants, even though they entered the country illegally. Unsurprisingly, this legislation will encourage people from other countries to come to the United States and take American jobs, which will add even more problems to an already over-burdened immigration system and a country suffering with 8-percent unemployment.

Social Burden

Immigrants place a burden on American society. Through the DREAM Act, immigrants would not only be excused for the costs they have already placed on the United States but would be allowed to remain here indefinitely and take further advantage of social services. With those continuing costs, vulnerable Americans will find it harder to get the help they need because time, money, and services are spent on immigrants who take

without paying their fair share.

Military Recruiting

The DREAM Act may seem like a good idea, but what its supporters fail to admit is that the legislation is a façade for a massive military recruiting effort. Children of undocumented immigrants are vulnerable, with little opportunity for work or education. That makes the opportunity of citizenship seem worth the cost of a dangerous tour in the armed forces. Forcing non-citizens to fight for the United States with only a promise of future citizenship is hardly a reasonable immigration policy.

B Vignettes from Experiment 2

Respondents in one- and three-argument conditions read the following:

Some supporters argue that the lack of effective immigration policies has left millions of young people in the shadows, without access to basic rights or the opportunities afforded other people. Brought to the United States as children, these young people deserve to be treated humanely, but have few opportunities for work or post-secondary education, regularly face deportation to countries they have never known, and are prohibited from the basic human right of citizenship.

Respondents in three-argument conditions additionally read:

A second argument some supporters make is that immigrants fuel our nation's economy, yet current laws do little to encourage talented immigrants to stay in the United States. The children of undocumented immigrants are especially vulnerable. With a college education, the DREAM Act gives these young people the chance to be doctors, lawyers, scientists, or anything they can dream of and keep their talent here for the benefit of the American economy.

A third argument some supporters make is that the United States is a nation of immigrants. Since before the founding of the United States, hardworking immigrants shaped the American landscape, the American economy, and built the very idea of an American Dream. The DREAM Act respects our immigrant heritage by giving young people who seek the American Dream an opportunity to realize it, through the same hard work that built this country since the 1700s.

Respondents in two-sided conditions additionally read:

Opponents of the DREAM Act include an array of organizations, such as the Heritage Foundation[, the American Legion, and the Minuteman Project].

Some opponents argue that a defining feature of American democracy is the rule of law. When foreigners violate the rule of law by entering the country illegally, they deserve to go home. The DREAM Act gives special privileges to rule breakers who entered this country without permission. That would be amnesty to illegals, letting them jump to the front of the line ahead of those who have been waiting years to enter the United States

legally.

Some of those in two-sided conditions also read:

A second argument some opponents make is that the DREAM Act promises citizenship and other perks to millions of young, undocumented immigrants. But without legal documentation of their immigration to the United States, what is stopping unqualified immigrants from forging documents so they benefit from the program? The legislation is an invitation for massive immigration fraud on a scale never seen before.

A third argument some opponents make is that the DREAM Act will give citizenship to millions of immigrants, even though they entered the country illegally, encouraging others to break the law to move here. This legislation will encourage people from other countries to come to the United States and take American jobs, which will add even more problems to a country suffering with 8-percent unemployment.

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