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# How the Media Frames the Immigration Debate: The Critical Role of Location and Politics

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*The media plays an important role in how the American public understands controversial social and political issues, such as immigration. The purpose of this article is to examine how key features of the media, such as location (Arizona vs. National) and political ideology (Liberal vs. Conservative), affect the framing of arguments supporting and opposing the anti-immigration bill (Arizona SB 1070). A content analysis was conducted using 3 weeks of newspaper articles from two Arizona newspapers (one Conservative, one Liberal) and five national newspapers (three Conservative, two Liberal). Analyses revealed that both location and political ideology influenced the framing. Specifically, the national newspapers were more likely than Arizona newspapers to frame arguments supporting the bill in terms of threats (e.g., threats to economic and public safety) and to frame arguments against the bill in terms of civil rights issues (e.g., racial profiling). In*

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*terms of political ideology, Conservative newspapers were more likely than Liberal newspapers to frame the bill in terms of economic and public safety threats, but did not differ in mentions of civil rights issues. The implications for attitudes toward immigrants and legal ethnic minorities and for defining the boundaries of the American national identity are discussed.*

On April 23, 2010, when Republican Governor Jan Brewer signed Arizona State Bill 1070 into law, the divisive and controversial social and political issue of immigration was thrust into the public consciousness. The bill expanded the power of state and local law enforcement officers to reduce illegal immigration by questioning a person's citizenship based on "reasonable suspicion that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States." The purpose of the bill is to discourage illegal immigrants from living in Arizona by increasing concerns about being arrested, fined, detained and deported (American Immigration Council, 2010). At the same time, however, the expanded powers of law enforcement officers heightened concerns about civil rights violations (e.g., racial profiling) against American citizens (e.g., Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and other non-White Americans).

From the inception to the signing, the bill has been a partisan issue. For example, the bill was initially conceived and drafted by a conservative law professor from the University of Kansas, Missouri City (Schwartz & Archibold, 2010), and was further supported by Conservative Republicans in Arizona (Rossi, 2010). Likewise, with only Republican votes, the bill was passed by the Arizona House of Representatives and by the State Senate, and, ultimately, signed into law by Republican Governor Jan Brewer. Further reflecting partisan politics, after the bill was signed, Democrats largely opposed it because of concerns about potential civil rights violations, while Republicans largely supported it on the grounds of promoting national security.

Despite the polarized responses of both political parties, American citizens reported greater uncertainty about what to think about the bill and its potential consequences (Rough, 2010). Given this uncertainty, how the media presents the relevant issues and what issues receive attention is likely to play an important role in how people understand this important social and political issue (Iyengar, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this article is (1) to examine how key features of the media, including location (e.g., newspapers distributed in Arizona vs. newspapers distributed across the nation) and political ideology (e.g., Liberal vs. Conservative newspapers), affect how the arguments for and against the anti-immigration bill are framed, and (2) to consider the consequences of these prevalent frames for attitudes toward immigrants and for defining the boundaries of the American national identity.

## Media Framing and Attitudes About Immigration

The media both reflects and contributes to the ways in which the debate over illegal immigration is processed and understood. Specifically, the way in which the media frames arguments plays an important role in how social and political issues, such as immigration, are presented in the national debate, as well as how people respond to this controversial issue. *Framing* refers to the way that an argument is packaged (i.e., what the argument includes and what it leaves out), so as to make accessible and encourage a particular interpretation of a given issue (Entman, 2007; Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). Exposure to a particular frame, therefore, powerfully impacts both the attitudes that people form (Bennett, 2001; Domke, 2001; Liu & Sibley, 2004; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Sibley, Liu, & Kirkwood, 2006) and the ways that people behave (e.g., whether people vote; Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, & Roberts, 1978; Iyengar, Kinder, Peters, & Krosnick, 1984).

While the media should ideally report events as they actually occur and provide a balanced account of all the issues, like all representations of events, the media necessarily provides a particular framing of reality and thus a partial or biased account. Consider the following quote from Governor Brewer as an example of how a particular media framing of immigration can shape the American public's understanding and response: "Border-related violence and crime due to illegal immigration are critically important issues to the people of our state . . . We cannot sacrifice our safety to the murderous greed of drug cartels. We cannot stand idly by as drop houses, kidnappings, and violence compromise our quality of life" (Archibold, 2010). By choosing a quote that links illegal immigration to drug cartels, violence, and crime, the media frames immigration as a threat to the safety and security of the American public. The quote also reinforces and perpetuates negative stereotypes of Mexicans or other Latinas/Latinos as dangerous criminals who are a threat to American values. If immigrants are represented as a threat, then Americans are more likely to endorse negative attitudes toward members of this group (Gudykunst, 1995; Sherif, 1966), and to support policies that seek to exclude them from American society (Esses, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2002; Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009).

## Integrated Threat Theory and Attitudes About Immigrants and Immigration

Attitudes about immigrants and views of immigration policies in America have changed over time due to social and economic factors. For example, in the years prior to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, immigrants were mostly seen as beneficial to the American economy, and immigration policies were primarily designed to benefit society and to enhance immigrants' lives in America (Esses et al., 2002). After the attacks, however, Esses et al. (2002) used group

conflict and threat theories to predict that the terrorist attacks would increase the perception that Americans' lives were under threat and thereby increase negative attitudes toward immigrants. In response to these changing attitudes, they anticipated that policy makers would feel more pressure to pass restrictive immigration policies that would allegedly protect Americans from immigrants.

Combining insights from group conflict and threat theories, Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan et al., 2009) asserts that the perceived threats posed by immigrant groups elicit fear and anxiety, and ultimately lead to prejudice toward the immigrant groups. These threats include realistic threats to the welfare of one's group (e.g., physical harm or loss of resources; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005), symbolic threats (i.e., the belief that one's values, ways of life, or meaning systems are threatened; McConahay, 1986; Sears, 1988), and perceived threats that stem from negative stereotypes (Hamilton, Sherman, & Ruvolo, 1990) and intergroup anxiety (e.g., about being rejected or ridiculed by the outgroup; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Gudykunst, 1995).

Political Conservatism is one factor that may influence the extent to which these perceived threats elicit fear and anxiety. According to Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003), Political Conservatism is associated with motivational concerns related to the psychological management of uncertainty and fear. Specifically, it is supported and promoted by a set of interrelated epistemic, existential, and ideological motives, such as intolerance of ambiguity, mortality salience, uncertainty avoidance, need for order, need for structure, and need for closure. Taken together, the research on Political Conservatism and Integrated Threat Theory suggests that Conservative newspapers, compared to Liberal newspapers, will be more likely to frame the immigration bill in terms of threats to the American public.

The present article utilizes a content analysis of 3 weeks of newspaper articles from two Arizona newspapers (one Liberal and one Conservative), two Liberal national newspapers, and three Conservative national newspapers to examine how newspapers frame support for and opposition to the bill. We anticipate that the location (Arizona vs. National) and the political ideology (Conservative vs. Liberal) of the media source will influence the extent to which the newspapers frame the arguments in terms of threats (e.g., to public safety, social welfare, or economic concerns) and civil rights concerns (e.g., the potential for racism, the need to uphold democratic values, and the constitutionality of the bill).

Specifically, given the large number of illegal immigrants in Arizona and thus the immediate relevance of the issue to the inhabitants of this state, we hypothesize that Arizona newspapers will be more likely than a sample of national newspapers to frame illegal immigrants as a threat and less likely to frame the arguments opposing the bill in terms of civil rights infractions. Furthermore, guided by research on Intergroup Threat Theory and Political Conservatism, we anticipate that Conservative newspapers will utilize more threat language in the arguments supporting the bill than Liberal newspapers, and that they will not differ in their framing of arguments opposing the bill.

## Method

### *Newspaper Articles*

Two research assistants analyzed 3 weeks of newspaper articles that focused on the Arizona anti-immigration bill. The newspaper articles included in our analyses ranged from 1 week before the immigration bill was signed until 2 weeks after (April 17 to May 7, 2010). Using the Mondo Times (2010a; 2010b) to determine the most circulated newspapers, we selected the two most highly circulated daily Arizona newspapers, *The Arizona Republic* (conservative) and the *Arizona Daily Star* (liberal); the two most highly circulated daily liberal newspapers, *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*; and the three most highly circulated daily Conservative newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Post*, and *The Washington Times*. We sampled from more conservative than liberal newspapers because the conservative papers included fewer articles about the bill.

To identify relevant articles from *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Post*, and *The Washington Times*, we used LexisNexis, an extensive online database of newspapers. Since the two Arizona newspapers and *The Wall Street Journal* were not available in LexisNexis, we used the newspapers' own online archives. To obtain the most comprehensive list of articles, we initially collected all articles between the specified dates that included the phrase "immigration bill" or "immigration law." The search yielded a total of 631 articles. Then, two research assistants, blind to the study hypotheses, read every article to determine whether the article referenced the anti-immigration bill (SB 1070). After excluding 294 articles that did not refer to the bill, the final sample included 337 articles: *The New York Times* ($n = 35$), *Los Angeles Times* ($n = 44$), *The Arizona Republic* ($n = 94$), *Arizona Daily Star*, ($n = 129$), *New York Post* ($n = 1$), *The Washington Times* ($n = 19$), and the *Wall Street Journal* ($n = 15$).

## Procedure

### *Coding Scheme Development*

To develop the coding scheme, two authors of the article independently read the articles and identified the most prevalent themes supporting or opposing the anti-immigration bill. After the coding was complete, categories were dropped from the coding scheme if they were mentioned in less than 5% of the newspaper articles. The final coding scheme included five categories supporting and five categories opposing the anti-immigration bill. See Table 1 for descriptions of the coding categories.

**Table 1.** Anti-Immigration Bill Response Coding Scheme

| Category | Description |
|---|---|
| **Arguments in support of anti-immigration bill** | |
| Economic threats | Immigrants are a threat to our economy and social welfare system; they cost us too much money, are a burden to welfare system, or take American jobs. |
| Threat to public | Immigrants are a threat to public safety. Potential consequences are terrorism, drug cartels, violent and petty crimes, or increased health problems (such as H1N1). |
| Federal laws are inadequate | State-level laws, such as SB 1070, are necessary because there are no federal laws that address the issue appropriately, as federal laws are not being enforced, or the federal government is not taking responsibility. |
| Need to protect welfare | The general social welfare of individuals should be protected by cutting down immigration numbers and restricting social rights; by tightening the nation's borders; illegal immigrants should be deported or kept in detention centers. |
| Need to protect jobs | Our jobs should be protected by cracking down on employers who knowingly hire illegal workers. |
| **Arguments against anti-immigration bill** | |
| Racism | Immigration laws are racist, encouraging racial profiling, or stereotyping of immigrants as criminals, violent, dirty, or lazy. |
| Cost to ethnic minorities/legal immigrants | Immigration laws are a problem for legal minorities/legal immigrants; legal minorities or immigrants are hassled by law enforcement. |
| Immigration bill is unconstitutional | Immigration bill violates basic constitutional human rights of legal minorities and immigrants; immigration bill does not offer all citizens equal treatment under the law. |
| Need to uphold democratic values | Every citizen has to respect basic democratic principles and human rights (e.g., equal treatment under the law, freedom of expression, etc.). |
| Immigrant nation | The United States is an immigrant nation; immigrant work has made us a strong nation; immigrants are necessary for the success of the economy; immigrants deserve to be here if they follow the rules. |

### *Coding Procedure*

Two new research assistants, who were uninvolved in the selection of the articles and blind to study hypotheses, independently coded the newspaper articles. A code was applied if a category was both present and used in a way that was consistent with the direction of the argument (e.g., if a concern about racism

was present and was used as an opposition to anti-immigration bill argument). Coders could assign more than one code to any given article (present = "1"; absent = "0"). That is, if more than one argument appeared in the article, the coding scheme allowed the coders to capture all the arguments. The two coders were reliable (*M* kappa = .78; range: 66–.88) (Landis & Koch, 1977). After calculating the reliabilities and determining coder reliability, the coders discussed and resolved all coding discrepancies to ensure that the final codes used in our analyses were as accurate as possible.

## Results

A total of 19.9% of the articles did not contain content that fit any of the framings of the arguments supporting or opposing the bill.[1] The most common categories used to frame the arguments in support of the bill included the following: *Federal Laws Are Inadequate* (27.3%), *Threat to Public* (27.6%), *Need to Protect Welfare* (13.5%), *Economic Threats* (11.1%), and *Need to Protect Jobs* (5.6%). Conversely, the most common categories used to frame the arguments against the bill included the following: *Racism* (55.1%), *Costs to Ethnic Minorities and Legal Immigrants* (22%), *Bill Is Unconstitutional* (19.9%), *Need to Uphold Democratic Values* (18.5%), and *We Are an Immigrant Nation* (7.0%).

Next, chi-square analyses were used to compare the prevalent framings of the arguments in the sample of Arizona newspapers (*Arizona Republic* and *Daily Star*, $n = 223$) to the sample of national newspapers (*New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*, $n = 114$). Among the framings in support of the bill, only the *Need to Protect Welfare* framing was equally common among Arizona and national newspapers. Contrary to hypotheses, the remaining framings—*Federal Laws Are Inadequate*, *Economic Threats*, *Threat to Public*, and *Need to Protect Jobs*—were more common among national compared to Arizona newspapers. See Table 2 for complete results.

Among the framings of arguments opposing the bill, the *Bill Is Unconstitutional*, *Need to Uphold Democratic Values*, and *We Are an Immigrant Nation* were equally common in both national and Arizona newspapers. The *Racism* and *Costs to Ethnic Minorities and Legal Immigrants* framings were more common among national compared to Arizona newspapers. See Table 2 for complete results.

Finally, chi-square analyses were used to examine the prevalent framings of the arguments in Liberal newspapers (*New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Arizona Daily Star*; $n = 208$) as compared to Conservative newspapers (*New York Post*, *The Washington Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Arizona Republic*; $n = 129$). Among the

[1] The majority of uncoded articles were brief and included topics such as sports teams' responses to the bill, travel alerts to Arizona, details about Arizona protests, the effects of the bill for Arizona students and businesses, and brief clarification letters to the editor.

**Table 2.** Differences in Category Responses Between Arizona and National Newspapers

| Category | Arizona (%) | National (%) | Chi-square $\chi^2(1, 337)$ | $p$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Arguments in support of anti-immigration bill** | | | | |
| Threat to public | 22.4 | 37.3 | 8.5 | .00 |
| Federal laws are inadequate | 23.3 | 34.7 | 5.1 | .02 |
| Need to protect welfare | 11.2 | 17.8 | 2.8 | .09 |
| Economic threats | 8.5 | 16.1 | 4.5 | .03 |
| Need to protect jobs | 3.6 | 8.5 | 3.7 | .05 |
| **Arguments against anti-immigration bill** | | | | |
| Racism | 50.2 | 64.4 | 6.3 | .01 |
| Cost to ethnic minorities/legal immigrants | 17.0 | 31.4 | 9.2 | .00 |
| Immigration bill is unconstitutional | 20.6 | 18.6 | 0.2 | .66 |
| Need to uphold democratic values | 18.4 | 18.6 | 0.0 | .95 |
| Immigrant nation | 5.8 | 9.3 | 1.4 | .23 |

framings supporting the bill, *Federal Laws Are Inadequate* was equally common among Liberal and Conservative newspapers. As predicted, *Threat to Public* and *Need to Protect Welfare* were significantly more common among Conservative compared to Liberal newspapers. *Need to Protect Jobs* and *Economic Threats* showed a trend toward being more common in Conservative as opposed to Liberal newspapers, but were not significantly different.

Among the framings of arguments opposing the bill, *Racism, Costs to Ethnic Minorities and Legal Immigrants, Bill Is Unconstitutional,* and *We Are an Immigrant Nation* were equally common in both Liberal and Conservative newspapers. *Need to Uphold Democratic Values* was marginally more common among Conservative compared to Liberal newspapers. See Table 3 for complete results.

## Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine how key features of the media, including the newspaper's location (e.g., newspapers distributed in Arizona vs. across the nation) and political ideology (e.g., Liberal vs. Conservative newspapers), affect the framing of arguments for and against the anti-immigration bill (Arizona SB 1070), and to consider how these framings might influence attitudes toward immigrants and the boundaries of the American national identity. The content analysis revealed that both features of the media influenced the framing. Specifically, contrary to hypotheses, national newspapers were more likely than Arizona newspapers to frame support for the bill in terms of threats (i.e., *Threats to Public*, *Economic Threats*, *Need to Protect Welfare*, and *Need to Protect Jobs*). As hypothesized, however,

**Table 3.** Differences in Category Responses Between Liberal and Conservative Newspapers

| Category | Liberal (%) | Conservative (%) | Chi-square $\chi^2(1, 337)$ | $p$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Arguments in support of anti-immigration bill** | | | | |
| Threat to public | 23.1 | 34.6 | 5.4 | .02 |
| Federal laws are inadequate | 24.5 | 31.6 | 2.0 | .15 |
| Need to protect welfare | 7.2 | 23.3 | 18.0 | .00 |
| Economic threats | 9.1 | 14.3 | 2.2 | .14 |
| Need to protect jobs | 3.8 | 7.5 | 2.2 | .14 |
| **Arguments against anti-immigration bill** | | | | |
| Racism | 55.3 | 54.9 | 0.0 | .94 |
| Cost to ethnic minorities/legal immigrants | 20.7 | 24.1 | 0.5 | .46 |
| Need to uphold democratic values | 15.4 | 23.3 | 3.4 | .07 |
| Immigration bill is unconstitutional | 18.3 | 22.6 | 0.9 | .33 |
| Immigrant nation | 5.8 | 9.0 | 1.3 | .25 |

national newspapers were more likely to frame the arguments opposing the bill in terms of civil rights issues (i.e., *Racism* and *Costs to Ethnic Minorities/Legal Immigrants*). The results suggest that the mounting concerns about the "threat" of illegal immigrants extend well beyond Arizona newspapers to readers around the country, and that similar, if not more restrictive, legislation is likely to emerge in other states.

Second, as hypothesized, Conservative newspapers were more likely than Liberal newspapers to frame support for the bill in terms of threats (i.e., *Threats to Public Safety* and *Need to Protect Our Welfare*). Conservative newspapers were also more likely to frame support for the bill in terms of *Economic Threats* and the *Need to Protect Jobs*, but the differences were not statistically significant (all $p$'s $= .14$). As for arguments opposing the bill, the results reveal that aside from a marginal difference in mentions of *Democratic Values and Liberties* ($p = .07$), Conservative and Liberal newspapers were largely similar. These findings were consistent with research on Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan et al., 2009) and Political Conservatism (Jost et al., 2003). Conservative newspapers more than Liberal newspapers framed the arguments supporting the bill in terms of the same types of threat that are especially likely to elicit fear and uncertainty among political conservatives and among people more generally (Das, Bushman, Bezemer, Kerkhof, & Vermeulen, 2009).

## Implications of Media Framing of Anti-Immigration Bill

Given the powerful role that the media plays in influencing attitudes and behavior about immigration, it is critical to analyze the common metaphors or

scripts that the media utilizes to frame the immigration debate. With respect to immigration, the newspaper media provides a potent metaphor of threat that has the potential to shape what the American public deems to be appropriate "solutions" or policies. The concerns range from threats to public and economic safety to the perception that the current federal laws are inadequate for preventing the threat. Concurrently, the arguments supporting the bill suggest that the solution to the "illegal immigrant problem" is to protect our social welfare systems (i.e., close the borders and deport illegal immigrants) and to protect American jobs (i.e., crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants). On the other hand, the arguments against the bill, including the focus on civil rights infractions (i.e., the bill is unconstitutional because it encourages racism toward ethnic minorities and legal immigrants), offer no solutions to the "illegal immigrant problem" (i.e., to economic and public safety threats). In the absence of clear solutions, the need to eliminate threats and to protect our welfare are likely to be seen as more viable responses than the need to uphold democratic values or to protect civil rights.

Taken together, the prevalent framings of the anti-immigration bill arguments bring into sharp relief the ways in which the media promotes a biased account of reality, both in terms of the information that is included and the information that is left out (Baron, 2006). Consider, for example, how the media framing of immigration diverges from the actual research on the role of immigrants in America. In the media, although illegal immigration is frequently framed as a *threat to the American economy*, research from economics and public policy reveals that immigrants can be beneficial for the American economy (Dixon & Rimmer, 2009; Hinojosa-Ojeda, 2010). Furthermore, despite claims that Americans need to *protect jobs from immigrants*, research finds that immigrants have only a minimal impact on reducing the jobs available, in part, because they live in segregated parts of the country, have different levels of education, and work in different occupations (Current Population Survey, 2009).

Beyond economic issues, illegal immigrants are also frequently framed as *public safety threats*. Yet, research reveals that despite the growing number of illegal immigrants in Arizona between 2000 and 2009, the number of violent crimes during this time period has actually decreased in various Arizona cities (i.e., Phoenix, Tucson, and Mesa; Ewing, 2010; Passel & Cohn, 2009). Further revealing the disconnect between the framing of immigrants as a threat to public safety and the reality of the situation, research reveals that immigrants in the United States are five times less likely than American citizens to be incarcerated (The Immigrant Policy Center, 2007). In theory, the role of the media is to present audiences with a balanced account of social issues that would allow people to develop their own opinions and to make informed decisions. By leaving out these important findings and instead focusing on a representation of immigrants as a threat to the economy and to public safety, the prevalent framings utilized by the media have consequences for how Americans perceive immigrants, the role of

immigrants in society, and for how they respond to current and future immigration legislation.

## Defining the Boundaries of American National Identity

The prevalent media frames used to represent the issue of immigration also have consequences for defining and redefining the boundaries of American national identities. By focusing on immigrants as a threat, the arguments supporting the bill promote the idea that immigrants (them) are a threat to the American public (us). In these arguments, the boundaries of American identity are drawn such that immigrants are foreign "others" (i.e., as outsiders who are a threat to public safety and the economy) and thus not Americans or even potential Americans. Reicher and colleagues' research reveals that underscoring identity boundaries is an effective mechanism for mobilizing specific political agendas (Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006). They argue that defining group membership and creating group boundaries (e.g., antistrike Conservatives and prostrike Laborers) is an effective means of motivating one's audience to support a particular cause that would further their group's interests (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996).

Given the differences in how Conservative and Liberal newspapers frame the anti-immigration bill, their respective readers are likely to be differentially motivated to support or oppose the bill. First, given that Conservatives are more inclined to attend to threats (Jost et al., 2003), they may be more likely to accept the information that immigrants are a threat and may therefore feel justified in taking an anti-immigration stance, even if doing so is incommensurate with their beliefs about civil rights. Conversely, Liberals who are seemingly less focused on threats and more focused on maintaining an America with shared democratic values (Giddens, 1998; Jost et al., 2003) may be more likely to question this information and to consider the implications of the information for civil rights. The end result may be a widening of the ideological gap between Conservative Republicans and Liberal Democrats.

While the "immigrants are a threat" framing can be an effective means of mobilizing particular political agendas, it can also lead to a reshaping of what it means to be an American. By focusing on national security issues, the anti-immigration bill places national identities ("I am American") in opposition to racial-ethnic identities ("I am Mexican American"). When the bill is framed in this way, the salient question for the audience is whether the safety of *all* Americans (i.e., the country as a whole) is more important than the civil rights of legal non-White Americans. If being American is an important part of one's identity, then "Americans," by default, are people who do whatever it takes (i.e., accept civil rights violations) to protect their country. Therefore, being a "good" and patriotic American requires supporting the bill that is purportedly designed to protect the country. In contrast, people who do not support the bill and are not willing to

accept civil rights violations may be subsequently viewed as "bad" or as not fully American.

To the extent that immigrants are seen as a threat and the anti-immigration bill is seen as the only means by which the threat can be alleviated, then readers who accept this information may be more likely to view the civil rights violations as justified and legitimate (i.e., as a necessary wrong). Moreover, this willingness to violate civil rights has important consequences for the non-White Americans most likely to be affected by the anti-immigration bill. Although the bill was not explicitly designed to exclude or to violate the civil rights of legal non-White Americans, when police "reasonably suspect" that these people are "not Americans" and question them, the implicit message is that they do not belong because they do not fully fit the image of an American (i.e., they do not look or act like Americans). The American story, however, with the exception of the Indigenous People (i.e., Native Americans), is entirely an immigrant story and, by and large, past immigrants came to this country for the promise of equal opportunity. If Americans permit civil rights violations today, even if it seems justified and legitimate, where does the "slippery slope" of civil rights violations start and the promise of equality end?

As it stands, the current anti-immigration bill elicits these types of questions for legal non-White Americans and, as a consequence, creates an identity quandary that can have longstanding implications for both their status and their identities as Americans. In response to this conflict, non-White Americans are left to defend their American identity and prove that they belong by accepting a bill that may potentially violate their civil rights, or to protect their civil rights by rejecting the bill and risk being seen as anti-American. This "choice" between their American identity or their civil rights places legal non-White Americans in a no-win situation: If they oppose the bill, they will not be seen as fully "American," and if they support the bill, they will not benefit from the same rights afforded White Americans.

## Limitations

The current study represents an initial effort to capture the prevalent frames surrounding the immigration debate in one common source of the media. Future studies are needed to replicate these results and to generalize them to other types of media (e.g., television, Internet forums). Moving beyond the written news media, for instance, future studies should examine how the images accompanying the news influence attitudes and legislation directed at immigrants. Additionally, in the current article, we coded for the presence of a particular argument in the article. Future research is needed to explore whether the frequency of mentions or the quality of the argument might prove more influential than merely mentioning an argument. Comparing how immigration issues are framed in other countries

will also provide further insight into how media framing can mobilize support for more or less restrictive legislation.

Our findings reveal that both the location and political ideology of the news media promote different framings of the anti-immigration debate. Coupled with the Integrated Threat Research, our results suggest that the focus on immigrants as a threat may bias readers toward an anti-immigration stance. Future research is needed to directly test how the arguments supporting and opposing the anti-immigration bill influence attitudes and behaviors of both ingroup members (e.g., White Americans) and outgroup members (e.g., Mexicans, Mexican Americans). For example, research is needed to examine how the most common arguments supporting and opposing the anti-immigration bill, as well as their frequency (i.e., if the argument is made more than once in an article), influence the American experience for racial-ethnic minorities (e.g., Mexican Americans). If the framing of legislation draws boundaries regarding American identities in ways that exclude minorities, then one might expect negative psychological consequences for these individuals and for intergroup interactions between American majority and minority group members.

## Implications for Public Policy

The framing of important social issues, such as illegal immigration, importantly influences public support for legislation. If the media links illegal immigration with threats to public safety, such as increased terrorists attacks, crime rates, and diseases, then the media may inadvertently bias the public toward an anti-immigration stance, which could in turn influence people's voting behavior. Suggesting that this may, in fact, be the case, a recent Gallup poll (Jones, 2011) reveals that public perceptions of Mexico have declined. In 2005, 74% of Americans viewed Mexico positively, whereas in February 2011, only 45% viewed them positively. This number is only two percentage points above the lowest historical rating of Mexico in 1993, and it represents the second time ever that Americans reporting a negative view of Mexico outnumbered Americans reporting a positive view. The Gallup report claims that the decline is attributable to the ongoing illegal immigration issue, but given what is and what is not reported in the media, it may also be a result of media framing reifying negative stereotypes of Mexicans, Mexican immigrants, and Mexican Americans (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Greenberg, Mastro, & Brand, 2002; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Ortiz, 2007). These declining attitudes, as suggested, may also influence voting behaviors. Landau et al. (2004), for instance, demonstrate that reminding Americans of terrorism (i.e., a threat to personal safety) leads them to vote for the person or group who holds the same attitudes as they do and who is most likely to protect them from the threat.

While Arizona's anti-immigration bill has garnered the lion's share of media attention in recent months, the results of the study suggest that Arizona's response to immigration is by no means unique. In fact, at the time we wrote this article, similar anti-immigration bills were being introduced in 22 other states—Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah. Given the potential negative implications of these bills for racial-ethnic minority groups in America, this article speaks to the need for policymakers to recognize that anti-immigration laws, such as SB 1070, do more than regulate immigration.

Anti-immigration laws also have important implications for intergroup relations. For example, if law enforcement officers cannot distinguish between illegal and legal immigrants or Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and other non-White Americans without racial profiling, then creating legislation that treats Mexican Americans and other non-White Americans as potential criminals (i.e., illegal immigrants) may signal to these individuals that they are not fully American or that they do not deserve the same rights as other Americans. Such legislation may inadvertently redefine the boundaries of what it means to be American (i.e., equating American with whiteness) and provide mixed messages about whether the rights of Mexican Americans and other non-White Americans deserve protecting. Such laws may precipitate a crisis of trust and legitimacy for the justice system in the eyes of many Americans, but particularly for non-White Americans. As an immigrant nation, we must consider how the arguments supporting and opposing restrictive immigration legislation are shaping attitudes toward current and future immigrants and how they could be reshaped to promote a national identity that acknowledges the important role that immigrants have and the important role that they will continue to play in the future economic, social, and political development of the United States.

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