

Rising to the Challenge:

Political Responses to Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Strategies Among Latinos

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Abstract

Interest groups and campaigns intent on spurring political participation often focus on highlighting potential threats in order to engage their target audiences. However, the use of threat in this approach is at times immobilizing because it diminishes the extent to which people feel equipped to respond. In this study, the author re-assesses the hypothesis that exposure to threatening political messages is a necessary and sufficient condition to encourage one's political activism, particularly among Latinos, a group understood to be predominantly motivated by restrictionist immigration policy threats. Political elites seeking to increase civic participation may be more likely to engage individuals if they couple threat with an opportunity frame that emphasizes policy initiatives a group can aspire to accomplish. Based on two original online survey experiments of Latino adults in the United States (n=1,015; n=1,351), this study finds that a message combining elements of threat and opportunity is a significant catalyst of various forms of participation, including intended and observed forms of civic engagement.

Introduction

Edmund Burke asserts in *The Sublime and The Beautiful*, “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear” (as cited in Altheide and Michalowski, 1999). Yet, political mobilizers often seek to garner support and encourage participation by pointing to the looming catastrophe at hand, often triggering a sense of urgency (Alinsky 1971).¹ Interest groups and campaigns intent on encouraging participation believe that appeals to threat represent an effective means of mobilization. However, the use of threat might immobilize people because it diminishes the extent to which people feel equipped enough to respond to the crisis (Vasi and Macy 2003; Soroka and McAdams 2015; Brader 2006). Is it possible that threat cues mobilize some and do not mobilize certain segments of the populace? Instead of only relying on a threatening message that emphasizes potentially aversive outcomes (Altheide and Michalowski 1999), mobilizers seeking to spur greater levels of political participation may be more effective if they *couple* this approach with an opportunity message that emphasizes the possibility of more desirable policy goals, which I have coined as the “*coupled threat-and-opportunity*” strategy. For example, the extant literature has focused almost exclusively on the role of restrictive immigration environments as the primary catalyst driving political participation within the Latino electorate (Pantoja et al. 2001; Ramirez 2013; Wallace et al. 2014; Ybarra, Sanchez and Sanchez 2015).

Threatening immigration policies that were widely perceived as undermining the interests of this community as seen in the late 1990s in California and in nationwide protests in the spring of 2006. Previously, scholars found that propositions aimed at scaling back social services from

¹ While fear stimulates effortful thought-processing and readies the body for action (Marcus et al. 2000), anxiety and anger have been found to be associated with action and greater levels of political participation (Valentino et al. 2008, 2011; Groenendyk and Banks 2014; Druckman and McDermott 2008; Huddy, Feldman, Taber and Lahav 2005; Lerner and Keltner 2001; Brader 2006).

undocumented immigrants, spurred the naturalization rates and participation of Latinos across California in the 1990s in a form of defensive or reactive mobilization (Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001; Bowler, Nicholson and Segura 2006; Barreto and Ramirez 2004).² These ballot propositions are thought to have been the largest contributors to the dramatic reversal in California's political landscape from Republican to Democratic, particularly among Latinos (Pantoja et al. 2001; Bowler et al. 2006). From February to May of 2006, an estimated 3.5 to 5.1 million Latinos protested in close to 400 demonstrations held over 160 cities in the United States (Bada, Fox and Selee 2006; Wallace, Zepeda-Millan and Jones-Correa 2014; Zepeda-Millan 2014a). If passed, House Bill 4437 (H.R. 4437) would have increased penalties on undocumented immigrants by criminalizing their status in the U.S. as well as penalizing those who employed and provided them shelter (Bada et al. 2006; Wallace et al. 2014).³ The unprecedented activism has been characterized as a direct response to the threat of a punitive immigration bill—H.R. 4437 (Barreto, Manzano and Ramirez 2009).

Latinos serve as an ideal population to test the coupled threat-and-opportunity messaging strategy on, not because they are more susceptible to this coupled strategy, but because the Latino “sleeping giant” has been predominantly construed as an electorate particularly stirred by restrictive or threatening immigration policy shocks. Furthermore, this rapidly growing electorate is heavily sought after by Republican and Democratic campaigns (File 2013), but also continually excluded and included, being repeatedly exposed to numerous threat and opportunity messages. Additionally, Latinos represent a large immigrant-based community, a community that has felt especially targeted by immigrant legislation and

² Proposition 187 (restricted public services from undocumented immigrants) was proposed in the November 1994 ballot, Proposition 209 (outlawed affirmative action in public domains) was proposed in the November 1996 ballot, and Proposition 227 (outlawed bilingual education) was proposed in the 1998 primary ballot. These 3 statewide ballot initiatives were seen as examples of racial/ethnic animus toward Latinos (Pantoja et al. 2001).

³ Some of these ramifications included criminal penalties up to 5 years in prison for knowingly assisting any undocumented immigrant “to reside in or remain” in the U.S., which affected assistance provided by educators, hospitals, clergies, families, etc. (Bada et al. 2006; Wallace et al. 2014).

the immigration policy rhetoric in the U.S. at the federal and state level (Huntington 2004; Okamoto and Ebert 2010; Ramírez 2013; Latino Decisions 2015; Vargas, Sanchez and Valdez 2017). Because Latino immigrants make up the largest portion of undocumented immigrant populations in the U.S., Latinos experience the largest impact from the nation's contentious immigration policy discourse (Chavez 2001, 2013; Garcia 2011; Latino Decisions 2013a, b; 2014; 2015).⁴ Finally, if a more representative democracy consists of more equal participation from all groups, and not just the few or most affluent (Hansen 1985; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), grasping a better stronghold on the motivating effects of one's political context is essential to our democracy. Understanding what better drives political activism among Latinos, one of the largest growing populations and most low participating groups in the U.S. (File 2013), would make great strides in creating a more representative democracy.

Though some might assume we have arrived at a consensus about the way emotions help people contend with their political environments (Gray 1990; Marcus et al. 2000), some studies have found threat to be immobilizing (Miller 2005; Brader 2006; Valentino et al. 2011). In fact, Valentino et al. (2011) find that fear has quite a sporadic effect on political action, sometimes deterring participation from a large battery of campaign-related political activities. Additional studies also raise more questions about the expected "free riding" effects of opportunity appeals. Some scholars argue that opportunity appeals tend to have a mobilizing effect (albeit smaller than the effect of threat) on political participation depending on the political outcome of interest (Miller and Krosnick 2004; Miller 2000; Hardin 1968; Olson 1965; Ostrom 1990). In fact, Miller and Krosnick (2004) find opportunity messages increase the rate of people sending postcards. Thus, my argument is not that enthusiasm or hope stirred by opportunity appeals is more catalyzing for individual political action,

⁴ Although Mexican and Central American immigrants make up two-thirds the share of all unauthorized persons, 94 percent of those deported since 2005 have been almost exclusively Latino (Rugh and Hall 2013; Passel and Cohn 2014).

but rather that the combination of fear and hope is most effective. After all, upon drawing heavily from the neuroscience and automatic processing of emotions, there is reason to expect that the combination of the hope and fear may be particularly motivating, especially as both positive and negative emotions might lead to action (Gray 1990) and boost political participation (Marcus et al. 2000).

To illustrate the coupled threat-and-opportunity message approach, I turn to immigration policy, a highly salient and contested policy arena with several examples of policy threats and policy opportunities (Steil and Vasi 2014; Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus 2013).⁵ Political observers often overlook the fact that not all immigration policies have been restrictive. Since 2005, nearly 370 local governments across the U.S. have proposed or implemented policies aimed at either incorporating or restricting undocumented immigrants (Walker and Leitner 2011).⁶ Despite the proliferation of both pro- and anti-immigrant prospective policy changes, the extant literature has focused almost exclusively on the role of restrictive immigration environments as the primary catalyst driving political participation within the Latino electorate (Pantoja et al. 2001; Ramirez 2013; Wallace et al. 2014; Ybarra, Sanchez and Sanchez 2015). We do not know if the effects captured are conflating efforts led by immigrant advocates attempting to provide more desirable policy goals amidst the political threats being passed or proposed. Thus, the simultaneously motivating effects of threat and opportunity signals remain untapped and untested in the literature. The policy threats that are seen as the dominant motivators in mobilizing the Latino electorate offer, at best, a partial story. I do not discount that threat can play a catalyzing role in one's political

⁵ The author refers to the coupled threat-and-opportunity approach or coupled approach interchangeably throughout the paper.

⁶ For more on state government and municipal action on immigration policies and proposals, see Skerry (1995), Filindra (2009), Okamoto and Ebert (2010), Jones-Correa and DeGrauw (2013), and Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010).

motivation.⁷ Instead, I aim to pinpoint the causal impact of threat appraisals, which may not only consist of careful thought-processing of the risk or danger posed by a threat, but it may also involve an appraisal of the opportunity messages—and the potential promises—surrounding this particular debate.

There are at least two additional shortcomings in the literature. First, there is the failure to grapple with alternative explanations for heightened political participation among Latinos—such as exposure to messages designed to signal progress in the status quo and not just threats to derail it. In fact, legislative proposals aimed at expanding immigrants' rights (e.g. sanctuary cities and access to driver's licenses), may engage and motivate people to take action beyond an awareness or call to action to stop threatening anti-immigrant policies (e.g. English-only ordinances and penalties to landlords who knowingly rent to undocumented immigrants). For clarity, by *policy threat messages*, I mean messages that emphasize proposed policies that are perceived to undermine one's group interests—highlighting how the status quo may worsen. By *policy opportunity messages*, I refer to messages that point to proposed policies perceived to offer potential gains to a group—highlighting how the status quo may improve (Just, Crigler and Belt 2014).⁸ I argue that it is important to consider the coupled effects of threat-and-opportunity, particularly as a contested policy issue, like immigration, since these policy issues are more complex than a one-sided argument or movement.⁹ Instead of potentially exacerbating feelings of helplessness while only emphasizing a sense of urgency (or policy threat), combining these messages with more

⁷ In fact, threat may also be a catalyst for opportunity appeals from the opposing side of an issue, as seen with a social movement and its countermovement (Tilly 1979). With the social movement surrounding immigration, scholars have found very strong proponents and opponents of the most heavily protested punitive immigration policies in the past decade (Barreto et al. 2009; Steil and Vasi 2014).

⁸ Admittedly, a few studies have focused on the effects of policy opportunities (Miller and Krosnick 2004; Groenendyk and Banks 2014; Albertson and Gadarian 2015), but they have not addressed the coupled message approach where respondents are exposed to both threat and opportunity messages.

⁹ See Tilly (1979), Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010), Ebert and Okamoto (2010), and Walker and Leitner (2011).

opportunity-based policy alternatives may be the most ideal strategy to mobilize a group to rise, and not succumb, to the challenge before them.

Second, and equally important to these alternative explanations, is the limitation posed by relying on aggregate measures of threatening contexts. That is, threat is often measured by objective measures at the aggregate level (e.g. based on living in a state or city with punitive immigration politics) rather than relying on measures at the individual-level (Zepeda-Millan 2014a). Although existing observational studies have allowed us to account for the interplay of state political contexts and individuals, (Ramakrishnan 2005; Pantoja et al. 2001; Bowler et al. 2006; Barreto and Ramirez 2004; Pantoja and Segura 2003), there are still a lack of measures accounting for the simultaneous policy goals in one's political environment. Thus, without measuring threat at the individual-level, it is difficult to conclude that threat alone motivates previously observed peaks in political activism (Pantoja et al. 2001; Bowler et al. 2006; Barreto and Ramirez 2004; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Okamoto and Ebert 2010).¹⁰ This study helps us begin to build on and beyond the nuance of threat and its effects on Latino political behavior more broadly. Finally, though untested, there is a presumed link between the policy environment and the levels of political participation among Latinos. The experiment design in Study 1 will allow me to test the causal inference behind this expectation in the existing literature, has been driven by predominantly observational correlations (qualitative exceptions in Barreto et al. (2009), Zepeda-Millan (2014), Zepeda-Millan and Wallace (2013)), which cannot disentangle the multiple aspects of issue campaigns.

¹⁰ Moving beyond cross-sectional studies that have found a positive relationship between nativist legislation and increases in Latino mobilization efforts (Pantoja and Segura 2003; Pantoja et al. 2001; Bowler et al. 2006), Barreto et al. (2009) Zepeda-Millan (2014) and Zepeda-Millan and Wallace (2013) rely on qualitative data to gain further insight into the mechanisms motivating organizers of local 2006 marches in non-traditional gateway cities. While they explore the role grievances or threatening nativist policies play in mobilizing the Latino community, they do not explore the motivating role of more promising or desirable policy goals in these contexts. Interestingly, interviews by Garcia Bedolla (2005) reveal that threat leads to more disengagement among some Latinos, largely based on whether they have a positive sense of Latino identity or not.

Perceptions of Threat and Opportunity

The rationale behind threat appeals in politics is based on the human desire to survive and protect one's self-interests (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Lazarus, 1991, 2006; Marcus et al. 2000; Miller and Krosnick 1994); in fact, threat appeals often signal danger or fear and induce a "fight or flight" response in the decision-maker (Miller and Krosnick 2004; Marcus et al. 2000; Lazarus 1991, 2006). In psychological terms, we expect threat to be especially motivating because in the presence of threatening stimuli, peoples' brains are alert and in an anxious state (Lazarus 1991, 2006; Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Miller and Krosnick 1994). However, though Brader (2006) initially found fear appeals to spur action to volunteer time for a campaign and encourage others to vote, he also points to the demobilizing effects of fear appeals in regards to the intent to vote in primary and general elections, especially among those who know less about politics. Thus, we cannot expect political threats alone to be the dominant drivers of other forms of political action, including attending a rally, donating money to a campaign and working for a party or candidate. Even with Miller's focus on single cues of threat and opportunity action alerts (2000, 2004), we see that there are mixed results on the effect of threat. Threat mobilized people to donate more money, but it inhibited one from contacting an elected official about their opinion (Miller 2000; Miller and Krosnick 2004). Azab and Santoro (2017) rely on an Arab-American sample from Michigan to better understand the curvilinear effects of fear on participation. Using data from the Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS), they find that too much fear can deter people from engaging in political participation, whereas a mid-range level of fear is correlated with a greater likelihood in participating in protests.

While not as heavily studied as the concept of threat, policy opportunities have most typically been correlated with people devoting less energy toward collective action efforts (Miller

and Krosnick 2004; Marcus et al. 2000). The predominant deterring trend of opportunity messages are often explained through free-riding or “social loafing” effects in prospect theory (Miller, Krosnick, Lowe and Holbrook 2002; Kahneman and Tversky 1979). According to prospect theory, people are more motivated by losses than gains from a basic evolutionary standpoint (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Miller and Krosnick (2004) find an exception to this dominant trend when they turn to various forms of issue activism. Depending on the type of political behavior, opportunity messages can spur greater rates of political action. For example, Miller and Krosnick (2004) find opportunity messages are associated with an increased rate of sending postcards to the President, but not effective at increasing donations to and volunteering time with an organization. Brader (2006) and Valentino et al. (2011) find that enthusiasm significantly boosts participation including joining a rally, working for a campaign and donating money. Thus, my argument is not that enthusiasm or hope stirred by opportunity appeals is more catalyzing for individual political action, but rather that the combination of fear and hope is most effective. After all, upon drawing heavily from the neuroscience and automatic processing of emotions, there is reason to expect that the combination of the hope and fear may be particularly motivating, especially as both positive and negative emotions might lead to action (Gray 1990) and boost political participation (Marcus et al. 2000).

Support for the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Message

However, while it might seem intuitive for people to be more mobilized if they are alerted to a crisis that jeopardizes their interests (Brader 2006; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, and Davis 2008), it may be detrimental and counter-productive to follow suit and only emphasize the crisis at hand (Vasi and Macy 2003; Rogers and Mewborn 1976). In effect, the threat-only approach may be immobilizing some while mobilizing others, and the extant literature has often only

focused on this messaging strategy's mobilizing effects. Furthermore, it may also be difficult to sustain one's energy and interest levels under never-ending threat, also known as encountering "battle fatigue."¹¹ Relatedly, Leventhal (1970) finds that if people feel vulnerable to a threat, they tend to show more resistance to attitudinal and behavioral change. The promise of hope provided by viable alternatives is crucial in one's response to threatening situations. In fact, in the field of persuasive communication and psychology, "fear appeals" were found to be unsuccessful if unaccompanied with an alternative (Vasi and Macy 2003; Leventhal 1970; Mewborn and Roger 1979; Rogers and Mewborn 1976). To this end, Vasi and Macy (2003) present the mobilizer's dilemma and find that participants were more likely to take action when encountering a threat if, and only if, they had an empowering message that reinforced the utility of their collective action.

Vasi and Macy (2003) emphasize that collective action is difficult to initiate and sustain and therefore poses a substantial social dilemma on participants and mobilizers (Olson 1965). Aside from calls to action competing with the busy lives among the inattentive masses (Olson 1965; Marcus et al. 2000), Vasi and Macy (2003) suggest that potential participants are faced with two challenges in the mobilizer's dilemma. First, one may not receive a greater portion of the benefits if they put forth their own effort (the "efficacy problem") (Marwell and Oliver 1993). Second, participants also face the temptation to free ride or enjoy the benefits others worked toward to achieve the desired goal (the "free-riding problem") (Hardin 1968; Olson 1965; Ostrom 1990). The strains between individual and collective interest in social dilemmas can be alleviated through persuasive communication techniques (Klandermans 1992; Fireman and Gamson 1979; Van Vught 1999). As a result, mobilizers might be tempted to sound an "alarm" and point to the

¹¹ For example, in response to hostile social and academic campus environments, black male students reported psychological responses symptomatic of racial battle fatigue (e.g., frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness and fear) (Smith, Allen and Danley 2007).

urgency of a situation to make their need for a response and coordinated action readily apparent (Marcus et al. 2000). However, the mobilizer's dilemma suggests that the efforts to create a call to action may backfire by undermining the belief in the ability to make a difference (Vasi and Macy 2003). Instead, the Vasi and Macy (2003) suggest that mobilizers can better spur participation, and consequently alleviate the "efficacy problem," by issuing empowering messages that highlight the possibilities and victories of collective action and affirm the importance of individual efforts when coordinated with others (Klandermans 1992).

A related line of research in psychology provides additional reasons to expect that the joint effect of threat-and-opportunity appraisals will enhance participation (Dienstbier 1989; Blascovich and Tomaka 1996; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey and Leitten 1993). Tomaka and colleagues (1993) and several other scholars (Folkman and Lazarus 1985; Lazarus and Folkman 1984) argue that threatened individuals perceive the potential for loss, with little, if anything, to be gained in the situation; contrastingly, *challenged* individuals perceive the possibility of gain as well as loss. Threats occur when the decision-maker experiences insufficient resources to meet situational demands (Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey and Leitten 1993). When such resources are present (perceived or real), it becomes a *challenge* (Pang, Jin and Cameron 2007). Thus far, this distinction in the threat appraisal process, and its complexity, has been notably absent from the existing political science literature (with the exception of the demobilizing effects of fear found in Brader (2006), Valentino et al. (2011), and Azab & Santoro (2017)). This coupled threat-and-opportunity approach is especially important because individuals who feel challenged (as opposed to only threatened) may be more focused and less distracted by the negativity stirred by the crisis-only message (Folkman and Lazarus 1985; Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Tomaka et al. 1993). This two-pronged strategy is intended to convey the possibility of loss and gain, guarding against feelings

of hopelessness or despair produced by a threatening environment. *Contrastingly*, challenged individuals perceive the possibility of gain as well as loss, and are more eager to accomplish the goal at hand (Tomaka et al. 1993). This distinction in the threat appraisal process, and its complexity, has been notably absent from the existing political science literature.

Borrowing from this basic principle of promise and possibilities in the empowering messages (Vasi and Macy 2003), the current manuscript applies this to mobilizing messages that are policy-specific. This study focuses on alternatives in a goal-oriented policy context that go beyond a call to stop the threat or instructions on how to cope with the threat (Mewborn and Rogers 1979; Leventhal 1970).¹² In sum, there is room to delve more deeply into these motivating (or reassuring) paired messaging alternatives within the field of political science where social movements, like that of immigration, give rise to a dynamic set of policy options, some of which may be more desirable and provide hope for the Latino electorate as opposed to those that create a sense of threat.

Methods and Procedures

In order to address the hypotheses described above, an experimental design will allow me to isolate the effects of coupled threat-and-opportunity appeals on one's political behavior relative to those who received a non-political message. Campbell (1957) explained internal validity as the ability of the investigator to be able to find a significant difference between the treatment and control condition. By design, Study 1 directly measures and captures the causal inference that previous cross-sectional studies have been unable to speak to. "The direct manipulation of media content, coupled with random assignment of subjects to treatment and control conditions, produces

¹² While Vasi and Macy (2003) assign participants to a control condition with no message, a crisis message condition, and a coupled condition combining a crisis and empowerment message, they do not test the tendency to free-ride when the messages are empowerment-only.

strong inferences about specific elements of a message that alter citizens' decision-making criteria" (Valentino, Hutchings and White 2002, p. 77). Study 2 hones in on the emotional causal mechanisms behind the coupled threat-and-opportunity messaging strategy.

Each study relies on a convenience sample collected on the Internet by two professional polling firms, one in the early summer of 2016 and one in the fall of 2017. I expect the process by which threat-and-opportunity messages impact one's political participation to be generalizable to a broader population (White et al. 2014; Druckman and Kam 2011). Thus, I am confident in the assumption that if my samples of more online savvy and more educated Latinos who are exposed to policy vignettes and emotion-induction prompts can perceive a sense of threat and opportunity from an immigration policy debate, then I would expect a broader population and different issue public to respond in similar ways depending on the policy domains they follow.

For details on how my samples compare to the general adult Latino population in the U.S., see Table A-1 of the Online Appendix. For comparability purposes, the experiment sample demographics are juxtaposed with those of the The American Community Survey in 2014 in the Online Appendix. Given that these are web-based Latino samples, it is quite possible that this more sophisticated sample would have a cognitively easier time processing the message content in the experiment. However, it is also possible that this more educated sample is further removed from the threat of restrictive immigration policy concerns, making it more difficult to test my hypotheses with a more affluent sample.

Experiment 1:

Study 1 was fielded through *Latino Decisions* from May 21, 2016 through June 1, 2016.¹³ The sample consists of 1,015 Latino adults in the U.S., including 511 women and 504 men.¹⁴ Sample quotas were collected based on loose benchmarks of nativity, generation status, Latino subgroup ethnic origin, age, gender, income and census region from the U.S. Census 2010 and American Community Survey (2014).

Treatments

The fictional experimental treatment designs consist of three versions of an online action alert said to have been displayed by Reform Immigration for America, “the online component of a united national coalition that brings together individuals and grassroots organizations with the mission to build widespread support for workable, humane and comprehensive immigration reform” (Reform Immigration for America 2016). Participants were randomized to a Control Condition, a Threat Condition, an Opportunity Condition, and a fourth condition that includes both threat-and-opportunity-based cues, referred to as the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition. Subjects assigned to the non-political Control Condition read an article about smartphone messaging apps that was the same length as the single cue messages. All three experimental treatments consist of a realistic action alert regarding a U.S. Senate immigration proposal that participants are told will be voted on within the week. By manipulating the content of the proposed Senate bill(s) and its corresponding photograph, the treatments will consist of a call to action that has either 1) threat-

¹³ The survey firm compensated respondents with redeemable points, or the equivalent of one movie ticket or a \$10 iTunes gift card. Participants took the survey in the privacy of their own home at their leisure.

¹⁴ Fourteen outliers were dropped based on spending less than four minutes on the overall survey, as well as based on spending over ten times the average length on either the overall survey or experimental treatment screens (which included separate timers). These outliers may have consisted of those who were distracted and spent lots of time away from the survey screen. Thus, the analyses are restricted to 1,001 cases, including 496 women and 505 men. As a final note, the survey length in English is approximately sixteen minutes long, while in Spanish it is approximately seventeen minutes long (Spanish language surveys historically take longer to read than English translations).

only, 2) opportunity-only, or 3) a combination of the threat-and-opportunity cues. The Threat condition refers to a policy proposal that suggests eliminating the birthright citizenship of children born to undocumented immigrant parents. The Opportunity Condition references a policy proposal that would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants in the U.S. A detailed description of each of the conditions can be found in Table 1, with differences across the action alerts highlighted in bold text.

The juxtaposed use of photographs and verbal text can enhance the memory for and comprehension of the verbal information to achieve the message's effect (Abraham and Appiah 2006; Abraham 2003; Hutchings, Walton, Mickey and Jardina, 2011).¹⁵ By design, embedded survey experiments require extensive pretesting to finalize the treatment designs. As such, the author conducted intercoder reliability tests with seven adult respondents from Amazon's Mechanical Turk from October 15 through October 18 of 2015, and more extensive rounds of pretesting of the treatment designs were gathered with a snowball sample of 221 respondents in February of 2016.¹⁶ Finally, the policy content reading ease for each of the experimental vignettes is accessible at a 6th grade reading level, according to readability software online (<https://readability-score.com/>). For cell distributions by treatment condition, refer to the Online Appendix (Table A.11).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

¹⁵ Screenshots of the treatment messages are available upon request.

¹⁶ In October of 2015, coders described eight different photographs found through Google images search. Approximately 18 coders described the photographs in an open-ended question, as well as six measures regarding their affective responses, the subjects', race, ages, gender and social groupings. The coders also provided their affective responses to each of the treatment messages, meaning they described whether the messages made them feel excited, fearful, happy, hopeful, hopeless, angry, proud or sad. Coders also described the threat/opportunity policy content without their accompanying images. The same tasks were assigned to coders in February of 2016 as the treatment designs became further developed.

The text-based differences across the three treatments begin with the headlines, as shown in the first row of Table 1. In the Threat Condition, people are alerted to the urgency of the proposal attempting to revoke the birthright citizenship status of children born to undocumented immigrant parents. This policy proposal is not far from reality as there have been such bills introduced to every U.S. Congress since 1993 (Feere, 2010), and there have already been attempts to revoke birthright citizenship in Arizona and Texas through legislation or administrative rulings (Van Susteren 2011; Jacobson 2010); furthermore, then-candidate Donald Trump brought more attention back to revoking birthright citizenship during his campaign trail (Connelly 2015).

The Opportunity Condition also refers to matters of citizenship, but this message focuses on signaling a more integrative policy on immigration. The Opportunity Condition is centered on passing reform that includes a pathway to citizenship, an issue immigrant advocates and the Latino community have favored for the last decade (Jones 2015).¹⁷ The Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity approach provides language from the single-cue Threat and Opportunity conditions so that respondents learn about the attempt to revoke birthright citizenship and the bill aimed at providing a pathway to citizenship. Each of the treatments ended with a call to action. As seen in the text provided in Table 1, there are no references to a particular candidate, elected official or partisan cues.

Manipulation Checks

The appraisal process of threat and opportunity has often involved various reactions, including cognitive and affective stages of processing (Folkman and Lazarus 1980; Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Folkman et al. 1986; Lazarus 1991). People respond with fear when they confront threats that are either difficult to control or it is not clear how to address them. In this

¹⁷ Depending on the way the question is worded, this overwhelming major support ranges from 86% approval in 2006 to 77% among Latino voters today (Jones 2015).

study, hope is the desire and expectation for a promising or appealing policy goal to materialize in the future (Phoenix 2015; Just, Crigler and Belt 2007). Thus, it is also worth pointing to an additional manipulation check I added to the survey instrument. Immediately after being randomized the experimental treatment screen, subjects were asked about their affective responses to the treatments.¹⁸ Perhaps due to not having a larger sample, and the fact that the treatment screens were not designed to tap the emotional causal mechanism of one's responses to the treatments, there is only one statistically distinguishable result that emerged from the analyses of the emotion manipulation check: the threat condition was negatively correlated with feeling hopeful (Appendix Table A.2, $b = -.068$, $p = .035$).¹⁹ The emotions were coded from 0 to 1 (1 = a great deal, .5 = a moderate amount, 0 = not at all). There are ways to design a randomized treatment so as to trigger the intended emotions. This separate treatment design is implemented in Study 2. Again, the aim in Study 1's experiment was to first establish the causal effect between policy messages (involving threat and opportunities) and one's motivation to take political action. As expected, and relative to those in the Control Condition, subjects in the Threat Condition reported greater rates of perceived threat levels ($b = .092$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) and those in the Opportunity Condition were substantially less likely to report perceived threat levels ($b = -.172$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$) and more likely to report greater opportunities for undocumented immigrants. Those in the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition landed in the middle on this spectrum ($b = -.003$, $p\text{-value} = .912$), though indicating perceptions of threat and opportunity

¹⁸ The exact question read: "What kind of emotional response did you have, if any, based on what you read or saw in the previous screen? For each of the 10 emotions shown below, do you feel that emotion a great deal, a lot, a moderate amount, a little or not at all?" The 10 emotions included were: anxious, proud, angry, hopeful, afraid, excited, happy, sad, uneasy and hopeless. The order of the emotions was randomized and the participants saw one emotion at a time.

¹⁹ When it comes to the potential mediating effects of fear and hope in the appraisal process of threat and opportunity, I included these measures in dissertation's Online Appendix (Table B.4) to test whether my participation outcomes still remained significant. In fact, I find the results remain consistent upon controlling for both cognitive and affective manipulation checks.

for those in this combined approach were not statistically distinguishable from those in the Control Condition. Because we know that the treatment messages triggered the policy signal they were intended for, we can be confident that the coupled threat-and-opportunity, in effect signals of peril and promise, catalyzed greater rates of political engagement among my participants.

After embedding the manipulation checks within my survey design (including a timer on each treatment screen), I verified the participants in each treatment condition were exposed to the randomized policy signals their vignette was intended for, thereby preserving the internal validity of the treatment design.²⁰

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Dependent Variables

Political participation was measured with three non-electoral behavior measures: the likelihood of participating in a march, talking about politics with friends or family, and volunteering time with a political interest group. These outcomes are 5-level categorical variables ranging from 0 (“not at all likely”) to 1 (“extremely likely”). Respondents were asked “If given the opportunity to do so, we would like to know whether you are extremely likely, very likely, moderately likely, slightly likely or not at all likely to take part in any of the following three activities to express your opinion about immigration policies.” Because the march, talk and volunteer items were on the same question prompt, I combined these into an overall Participation Scale ranging from 0 to 1, with 1 meaning they were “extremely likely to take part in all three non-electoral forms of political behavior.” The Cronbach’s alpha was .85 for all three items. I combined all three behaviors into the Participation Scale.

²⁰ For the cognitive check, respondents were asked whether they thought current federal immigration proposals would either make life harder or easier for unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. Their response options were on a 7-point Likert scale, with “1” meaning “U.S. laws would make life a great deal harder for unauthorized immigrants” and 0 meaning “U.S. laws would make life a great deal easier for unauthorized immigrants.” Refer to Online Appendix Table A.3.

Furthermore, this study provides analyses for intended electoral political behavior. Among respondents who said they were registered to vote or planned on registering to vote (n=789), they were then asked about how likely they were to vote in the general election in November. This 5-level categorical variable was recoded from 0 to 1, with 1 meaning “extremely likely” and 0 meaning “not at all likely.”²¹

Finally, after being asked about intended forms of political participation, the hypotheses are also tested with an observed measure of behavior, including sending an electronic postcard to the U.S. Senators of their state (1 meaning they “sent any postcard message,” 0 meaning they “did not send any postcard message”). All respondents had the option to urge their U.S. Senators to cast an affirmative or opposing vote on either or both of the following immigration proposals: 1.) ending birthright citizenship for children born of immigrant parents who do not have legal U.S. status, and/or 2.) providing a path to citizenship for immigrants living in the U.S. without legal status. Subjects also had the option to write their own message about immigration reform (n=96). Lastly, subjects were also given the option to select “I do not want to send any message.” For the distribution of each of the electoral and non-electoral behavior measures by condition, refer to the table below.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

As opposed to my analyses of the intended forms of political participation, the observed postcard measure is potentially less vulnerable to one overestimating how willing they are to engage in politics. Furthermore, given that this was an Internet survey experiment, there is much less social pressure on this platform than there would be with a classroom laboratory experiment

²¹ To dispel beliefs that the differences in the distribution of sociopolitical variables across the cells might account for the results, the models were also estimated with controls for gender, education, income, age, immigrant generation status and partisanship, which yielded slightly stronger results for the main effects models. These results are available in the Online Appendix. All these control variables were coded from 0 to 1. Control variables are also provided in the summary statistics Table A-1 in the Online Appendix.

where the investigators are present (Merolla et al. 2012; see discussion of this difference in social pressures in Morton and Williams 2010). When it comes to analyzing actual forms of political engagement, this postcard measure is part of a broader and newer range of online political behaviors (Valentino et al. 2011; Merolla, Pantoja, Cargile and Mora 2012), particularly one moving beyond more conservative forms of behavior (e.g. information gathering seen in previous studies)(Gibson, Lusoli and Ward, 2005; Brader 2005, 2011; Valentino, Hutchings, Banks and Davis 2008; Hutchings, Valentino, Philpot and White 2006). This actual form of participation allowed participants to send either an anti-immigrant or pro-immigrant message (or both) to their U.S. senators, which is an improvement from previous studies that have only captured one-sided forms of political activism (Miller 2000; Miller and Krosnick 2004). Finally, participants were able to write their own message if they wanted to go into more detail about their views. Again, the survey was available in English and Spanish, so the sample was able to write their messages in their preferred language.²²

Hypotheses

The primary testable hypothesis in Study 1 involves the combined effects of the threat-and-opportunity cues. When both cues are present, the coupled message will lead to heightened levels of political participation. Thus, the coupled threat-and-opportunity cues will encourage respondents to participate in politics at a greater rate, relative to the non-political appeals condition (H1). Moreover, I also expect the coupled threat-and-opportunity cues will encourage respondents to participate in politics at a greater rate, relative to the threat-alone or opportunity-alone conditions (H2). The threat-alone condition will either be ineffective or discourage respondents from

²² Among those who sent postcards, 96 (nearly 15%) wrote open-ended postcard messages. Some of the messages people wrote on their own emphasized the importance of embracing America's diversity and highlight the deservingness of immigrants and their children.

participating in politics, relative to the non-political appeals condition (H3). Finally, the opportunity condition is expected to have a discouraging effect for respondents from participating in politics, relative to the non-political appeals condition (H4).

Study 1: Results

Rising to the Challenge

My primary hypothesis involves the variation in participatory behavior across experimental conditions, relative to non-political appeals. Thus, my primary independent variables are the three experimental treatment conditions. Specifically, I explore the following question in Tables 3, 4 and 5: does the combination of policy threat and policy opportunity lead to greater mobilization rates than being exposed to non-political appeals? Secondly, I determine whether the combination of threat-and-opportunity cues would yield greater observed participation rates relative to the single-cue conditions for the postcard outcome (Table 5). This approach allows me to discern with greater precision whether any observed effects are as a result of any appeal other than the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity approach.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

As anticipated, Table 3's results suggest the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition mobilizes participants at greater rates than the non-political Control Condition. This is the only treatment whose effect is statistically distinguishable from the baseline. The mobilizing effect of the Coupled Condition is particularly the case for the intent to join a march and talk about politics with friends or family. The Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition's coefficient translates to a 5 percent increase for joining a march relative to those exposed to the Control message ($b = .051$, $p < .100$). Moreover, in terms of talking about politics with friends or family, the Coupled

Condition's coefficient translates to a 7 percent increase ($b = .070$, $p < .050$) compared to those in the Control Condition. These results are modest, but significant. There are no reliable mobilizing effects that emerge when predicting one's intent to volunteer for an organization, as the treatment estimates fail to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. In the final column (Model 4), I present results for the Participation Scale (which combines the marching, talking and volunteering outcomes), and here we see the positive effect of the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition still holds. Thus, relative to the Control Condition, the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition yields greater participation rates among subjects. Results in Table 3 provide the first direct evidence that highlighting both the threat-and-opportunity cues can foster greater levels of political participation relative to those in the non-political Control Condition, supporting Hypothesis 1.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

In Table 4, I focus on electoral political behavior, specifically the likelihood of turning out to vote. Much like conventional wisdom might expect (Miller et al. 2002), the negative and statistically significant coefficient for the Opportunity Condition suggests that cues of this sort actually inhibit political action (Kahneman and Tversky 1976; Latané 1981). People in the Opportunity Condition indicate an intention to vote in the upcoming general election at about 5 percent lower rates than comparable study participants in the control group. This finding supports Hypothesis 4, where I expected lone opportunity cues to discourage participation. This is the only treatment with an effect that is statistically distinguishable from zero. I expected the Coupled Condition to have a positive effect on the likelihood to vote, but findings from Table 4 do not support this hypothesis. This may not necessarily be because the coupled message is not effective in spurring electoral behavior, but respondents in self-reported measures of the intent to vote

instead tend to exhibit ceiling effects (averaging a preponderance rate of .845), thus providing little room for treatment effects.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Finally, instead of only relying on intended measures of political participation, I turn to an observed measure of political behavior in Table 5. In some respects, this is the toughest test for my argument as an intention to participate might represent “cheap talk,” but an actual measure of participation might represent a more genuine indicator of the concept I have chosen to study. Whether I compare the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition to the non-political Control Condition or to the Threat Condition, we see that the combined approach has a positive effect on one’s willingness to send a postcard to their U.S. Senators. This is consistent with my expectations in Hypotheses 1 and 2, and so far provides the strongest support that not only is the coupled approach yielding greater rates of participation, but also that the effect of this condition is decidedly different from either the Threat (Model 2) or Opportunity Conditions (Model 3). Upon computing the odds-ratio of the reported logistic coefficients in Table 5, I find that the odds of sending a postcard are 1.555 times greater for those in the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition relative to those in the Control Condition. The substantive impact of this condition is of comparable size when the Threat Condition is the baseline. The Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition generates 1.604 times greater odds of sending a postcard relative to those in the Opportunity Condition. This is consistent with my expectations in Hypotheses 1 and 2, the Coupled Condition was more mobilizing relative to the control or single-cue messaging strategies.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

To more easily interpret the results from Table 5, Figure 1 provides the predicted probabilities based on the logit coefficient estimates. As we can see, relative to the control (or

other single cue conditions), the coupled threat-and-opportunity messages boost the probability of having sent a postcard by approximately 10 percentage points. This effect is significant at the .05 level, a pattern that was consistent whether the referent category was the non-political control condition or if it was either of the single cue conditions. In fact, we see that the threat and opportunity conditions on their own are not statistically distinguishable from the non-political control conditions; thus, the effect of the single message approach is flat and neither mobilizing or demobilizing for participants when it comes to sending a postcard (Hypothesis 3). To explore more of the “black box” behind the mobilizing effects of the coupled threat-and-opportunity strategy observed in Study 1, I turn to Study 2’s emotion-induction design.

Experiment 2

What are the causal mechanisms behind Study 1’s external vignettes? Respondents are randomized to external action alerts, or fictional policy vignettes, that are intended to trigger a sense of threat and opportunity (sometimes one or both). Are fear and hope driving my results? To test whether a combined sense of fear or hope are the triggers behind the effectiveness of the coupled message, I focus on inducing these emotions in Study 2. Aside from political psychology scholars who consider the effects of more positive emotional appeals (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000; Brader, 2005), we understand very little about the attitudinal and behavioral responses of individuals exposed to both threatening and opportunity-based appeals revolving political activism (Mattes and Redlawsk, 2015; Soroka and McAdams, 2015).

Feelings towards these policy consequences and policy benefits will be prompted by an emotion-induction question, which allow the participant to write an open-responded response regarding future immigration policy debates. The emotion-induction experiment was fielded with an online

sample with YouGov from October 31st through November 15th 2017. The sample consisted of 1,351 Latino adults (1,050 in English, 301 in Spanish). The sampling frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2010 American Community Survey, and matched cases were then weighted using a propensity score function that included census region, parental nativity, ideology, interest in politics, party identification, age, gender and education (based on the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey and 2016 Current Population Survey supplement). I have dropped outliers who did not identify any Latin American country as part of their family's origin. I also dropped participants who identified with Spain alone, given that this group has typically aligned themselves more with a European identity.

It is worth noting the polarized nature of the time frame in which Study 2 was fielded in 2017, including the highly salient coverage of President Trump's decision to repeal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), fulfilling one of his many campaign promises to deploy a heavy hand on immigration enforcement (Carsey, Layman and Brockway, 2017; Johnson 2016; Hohmann 2017). Because of the emphasis of policy threats from the right, I also provide split-sample analyses among those who identify as Democrats, Republicans or Independents. The partisan groups including strong, moderate and leaning Democrats/Republicans. The sample distribution for this and other relevant demographics for Study 2 are available in Table A.1 in the Online Appendix.

Treatments

Because there is no universal policy message capable of triggering anxiety and/or enthusiasm among respondents, it is important to run alternative studies where the randomization does not involve external stimuli (as seen in Study 1)(Albertson and Gadarian 2015). The existing study allows me to test varied approaches of manipulating political anxiety and political

enthusiasm. In Study 2, respondents are randomized to a prompt asking them to think about the immigration policy debate and what about the pending state of affairs triggers aspects of negative or positive emotions (and sometimes both), and this type of treatment allows the participant to provide insights on policies that induce threat, opportunity or coupled cues of both threat and opportunity in their own words.

More specifically, the treatment prompts randomized whether the respondent was asked to recall and write about a time the immigration debate has either made them feel: 1) fearful, 2) hopeful, 3) a combination of fear and hope, 4) a combination of pride and hope, 5) a combination of hope and fear (reversing the order of cell 3), 6) or a combination of fear and pride. There non-political control condition asked them to recall a situation that made them feel relaxed (cell 7), and this served as the referent category for each of my models. For readability purposes, I show abbreviated versions of the results and only highlight the primary conditions of interest: fearful, hopeful and a combination of fear and hope (full results are available in the Online Appendix).

To test alternative explanations about the combined approach potentially tapping two emotions and that alone being the driving force behind greater forms of political activism, I include additional randomized conditions to address this (as seen in cells 4 and 6). This also addresses concerns that simply writing more (or writing about more than one emotion) could explain away my results behind the mobilizing effect of the coupled fear and hope approach. By randomizing participants to write about fear before hope (in cell 3), and vice versa (in cell 5), I am able to test whether the ordering of the triggered emotions matter. By first being alerted to a crisis, does this more attentive state help us channel our anxieties more intentionally into the hope or opportunity we seek? I expect the coupled effect is most successful at mobilizing action when exposed to fear first and hope second.

Though the sample (n=1,351) was evenly distributed across the 7 treatment conditions, I use word count screeners to limit my analyses to those who responded with at least more than 2 words in their open-ended text prompt. This guarded against participants who wrote “don’t know,” “N/A,” “none,” and other unintelligible text (my 3 intercoder-reliability coders qualified these meaningless responses and strings of text as “0” for word count). After dropping outliers with very minimal word counts, the total sample size for my analyses in this paper amounts to n=978. As with Study 1, cell distributions by treatment condition are available in the Online Appendix (Table A.11).

Manipulation Checks

In the post-treatment questionnaire, respondents answer a question about whether they perceive current immigration policies make life easier or harder for undocumented immigrants (categorical measure consisting of 8 categories). This is intended to capture the cognitive perception of the randomized treatment and serves as a manipulation check of the randomized treatments (Lerner 2001; Leventhal 1970).

As another form of a manipulation check, the open-ended responses were coded by three bilingual research assistants who were blind to my hypotheses. Intercoder-reliability is still being established (will be updating this after mid-April). By keeping my coders blind to my hypotheses, I can verify that those randomized to write about the emotion specified in their condition prompt complied with the directions.

Dependent Variables

Immediately following the cognitive assessment of threat or opportunity, I ask participants about various forms of political activism—intend and observed. The intended political outcome measures in the post-test include the intent to join a protest, volunteer time to an organization, talk about immigration

policies with family or friends or donate money to an immigrant organization. To tap into more confrontational behaviors people would be inclined to engage in to cope with the stress or frustration associated with immigration policies they might disagree with and wrote about, I also ask participants if given the opportunity, would they join a pro-immigrant boycott.²³ The observed outcome measure in the post-test includes sending an electronic postcard to their U.S. Senator. The observed postcard measure was designed in the same way as seen in Study 1.

Hypothesis:

The primary testable hypothesis in Study 2 involves the combined effects of feeling both fear and hope. When both emotions are present, the coupled message will lead to heightened levels of political participation. Thus, I hypothesize that compared to the group in the “fear-only” or “hope-only” message, those in the coupled “fear and hope” condition will exhibit higher levels of political activism. As a secondary hypothesis, relative to their Republican counterparts, I expect the mobilizing effects of the coupled fear-and-hope condition to be driven by Democrats.

Results

[Insert Table 6 about here]

In Table 6, we see the results for each of the non-electoral forms of political participation and sending a postcard (observed) for the full sample. The analyses include demographic variables for gender, education, income, age, immigrant generation status, subnational origin groups (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and other Latino) and partisanship measures as controls. Full results for these abbreviated models are available in the Online Appendix. The omitted condition

²³ In order to capture a potential “paralysis” or abstention response, I ask respondents about their willingness to stay home, report crime to police, seek medical or health-related benefits they are eligible for, drop their children off at school (asked of parents only), and travel outside the country, but this part of a separate manuscript.

is the control condition that prompted them to write about something that makes them feel relaxed.

The 5 intended forms of participation (which are dummy variables), are then combined into a participation scale including all 5 activities (see Model 6). Model 7 includes results for sending an electronic postcard to one's senators. At a quick glance, the coupled fear-and-hope condition does not appear predict greater likelihoods in marching, volunteering, talking, donating and boycotting. We see that the effects are in the expected positive direction for marching, boycotting and sending a postcard, but these effects do not reach statistical significance. Effects from the other conditions are also not distinguishable from zero. However, as we move on to Model 7, we see that the effects of the fear-only condition are statistically significant and indicate a mobilizing effect for sending a postcard message increase ($b = 0.72, p < .050$). Based on these initial analyses, the coupled fear-and-hope condition does not yield greater participation rates among respondents (for either the intended or observed measures). However, I move on to presenting split-sample analyses among Democrats, Republicans and Independents in Table 7. As explained before, Study 2 was fielded during the fall of 2017, well into the first year of President Trump's first year in office, and shortly after his announcement to repeal DACA. Given the policy promises Trump made on the campaign trail, and the more forceful signal based on his DACA decision, it is easy to expect immigration attitudes to be interwoven with one's partisan ties.

[Insert Table 7 about here]

As expected in the secondary hypothesis of Study 2, I find respondents were more likely to be mobilized by the coupled fear-and-hope condition, but only among Democrats (Table 7a). The coupled fear-and-hope condition had positive effects on the reported likelihood to engage in volunteering ($b = .63, p < .10$), talking about politics ($b = .88, p < .05$) and the overall participation scale ($b = .63, p <$

.10). These positive effects did not hold for the postcard measure among Democrats. Interestingly, the fear-alone condition still had a positive effect on sending a postcard ($b = 1.45, p < .10$). Moving on to Table 7b for results among Republicans, those exposed to the hope-alone condition report greater levels of sending a postcard relative to those in the control condition. The coupled fear-and-hope condition actually has a negative effect on this subset of the sample. It is possible that these respondents are not following immigration issues as closely as Democratic respondents. Again, this is why I ran split-sample analyses so as to disentangle the polarized nature and issue priorities that vary across partisan groups. Among Independents, few results emerge that are distinguishable from zero. However, the fear-alone condition has a negative effect on donations, and the coupled fear-and-hope condition also has a deterring effect but only for volunteering.

Discussion

Overall, my findings provide some support for my argument regarding the mobilizing effects of the combined threat and opportunity appeals. Unlike the threat or opportunity strategies alone, when both approaches are adopted respondents were more likely to engage in non-electoral forms of participation and were more likely to contact their elected representatives through the use of a postcard. With respect to sending a postcard to one's senators, the coupled strategy was effective relative to a non-political control group and relative to the threat and opportunity appeals alone (Study 1's baselines). Expanding on findings from sociology and psychology work, this conclusion is consistent with the implications of Vasi and Macy (2003) and Rogers and Mewborn (1976) suggest that providing a promising goal with the urgent threat of a potential loss motivates respondents to take action.

A potential alternative explanation is that the Coupled Threat-and-Opportunity Condition might be more mobilizing because it is providing more information for participants to learn from. Along the same lines, respondents may be more mobilized by the Coupled Condition because there are two issues in this experimental condition, and only one issue for the other conditions. To test whether the longer length of the coupled condition determines the results in my current study, I have run separate robustness checks with a Mechanical Turk example in May of 2017. The results still hold for the mobilizing effect behind the Coupled condition, even when the Threat-only and Opportunity-only conditions also contain two issues and are equal in word length with the Coupled Condition. Thus, the fact that there are two issues in the current Coupled Condition is not an alternative explanation for my results. We also know through Lupia's (1994) work that more information is more cognitively taxing for individuals. As busy as people are, more information should turn them away from politics, and not towards it (Lupia 1994).

Interestingly, my treatment's mobilizing effects were not driven by issue salience (Miller and Krosnick 2004; Valentino, Hutchings, Davis and Banks 2008) or a primed racial group identification (Gurin, Miller and Gurin 1980; Garcia 2003). With regards to issue salience, the literature would expect those who follow the immigration debate most closely to be the most mobilized by a call to action. Furthermore, minority group members with an elevated sense of racial group consciousness and/or panethnic identification should be motivated to overcome the collective action problem (Gurin, Miller and Gurin, 1980; Garcia, 2003; Garcia Bedolla 2005). Previous scholars have demonstrated the role of group consciousness may be leveraged as a resource for those who are appraising risk and benefits of taking political action (Sanchez, 2006a, 2006b; Garcia Bedolla 2006), and some have found that a strong sense of Latino linked fate may be particularly relevant to counteract political cynicism (Lavariega Monforti and Michelson 2014,

Chap. 4). In order to have more trust in government and foster greater levels of political engagement, Okamoto et al. (2010) and Lavariega Monforti and Michelson (2014) also point to the important contributing (though not sufficient) factor of acculturation and integrative policies in one's environment. Those with greater group consciousness might be more optimistic as they contextualize the threat in terms of the group and not just as individual matter (Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Smith et al. 2007; Groenendyk and Banks 2014). However, neither issue salience nor racial group consciousness emerged as reliable explanations (or moderating effects) for the treatment's mobilizing effects, though this is not to say that these considerations do not weigh in on people's willingness to take political action. This may in part be due to the prevalence of immigration topics in this presidential campaign cycle. Thus, the lack of moderating effects based on issue salience and racial group identification in my study may be due to ceiling effects of both these factors at the time of the study.

Conclusion

This project questions the causal link between threat and individual mobilization, and whether threat is the only catalyst Latinos respond to. My results shed further light into the nuance of policy threat and policy opportunity messages and the ways in which they work hand in hand in people's environments. Specifically, previous work has not directly examined whether threatening anti-immigrant appeals alone lead to greater levels of political participation among Latino participants. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I find messages focusing solely on such threats do not mobilize Latinos into action. This narrow focus on threat has also prevented scholars from delving into the more complex messaging environments people are exposed to when facing threats in their environment, especially for a highly contested topic area like immigration policy.

As is, researchers have not explored whether additional messages, such as competing policy opportunities, provide alternative explanations for observed levels of issue activism, in part because previous scholars have largely expected competing message—such as gains and policy opportunities—to foster free-riding behavior among the masses (Latané 1981; Olson 1965; Miller and Krosnick 2004). The focus on the catalyzing effect of threat, particularly dominant in the Latino “sleeping giant” narrative in the 1990s and 2006, has been one-sided, focusing only on the mobilizing effect of threat alone. We know the role of threat is complex, but what this project shows is that it is not the only way to shake the masses out of their political apathy. Instead, we see that coupling a sense of peril with promise evokes a more participatory public, at least among Latinos regarding the immigration policy debate.

The novel combination of being exposed to both policy threat and policy opportunities cues, as seen in Study 1, is distinct from the presence or absence of threatening policies seen in previous threat appraisal studies. Also, by including separate conditions for threat and opportunity cues as single cues, this provides more baseline comparisons previous studies have been unable to leverage. In Study 2, thoughts about immigration policy consequences and policy benefits are prompted by an emotion-induction experiment design, allowing the participant to write an open-responded response about an immigration policy that either improves or worsens the status quo of Latinos, prompting feelings of fear, hope, or both hope and fear. Study 2 allows me to begin to delve into the causal mechanism—or inside the “black box”—of the emotional states potentially triggered by the vignettes seen in Study 1.

I believe there are three additional conclusions one can cautiously draw from my results. First, consistent with the work of Vasi and Macy (2003) and Rogers and Mewborn (1976), simply exposing Latinos to a looming crisis without a reassuring policy alternative can be less mobilizing

and counterproductive than using a coupled approach. I find the coupled strategy of threat and opportunity encourages people to send a postcard at higher rates than simply using lone messages that emphasize threat or opportunity appeals. My project also carries implications for the health of our democracy. The use of threat and fear tactics creates a more anxious citizenry (Valentino et al. 2008, 2011; Albertson and Gadarian 2015). While we know anxious citizens cope with the discomfort of anxiety by seeking news (Valentino et al. 2008, 2011) and deferring to more authoritarian leaders (Albertson and Gadarian 2015), these responses are not necessarily promoting a healthy democracy. Instead, political elites are crafting a political environment that only heightens the “politics of fear,” leaving society and the government more willing to enlarge its surveillance state (Robin 2006). This heightened state of fear and anxiety creates a citizenry that stops paying attention to new threats posed before them. In fact, “anxiety leads citizens to support policies that deny others rights in times of crisis and to support leaders who may continually provoke anxiety to maintain power” for such policies (Albertson and Gadarian 2015). This is particularly problematic as the nation attempts to handle the increasingly racial and ethnic diversity (Huntington 2004; Dahl 1973).

Furthermore, the focus in the Latino politics literature on crisis and threat, and the limited attention devoted to opportunity appeals, is not simply an academic issue. By focusing on negative cues, scholars may have unwittingly encouraged political activists to adopt one strategy for mobilization to the exclusion of other strategies. Moreover, if mobilizers and their calls to action (or crisis communication) are only based on making threat appeals salient, they risk having it immobilize people or having the general public experience “battle fatigue” from the volume and oversaturation of such urgent appeals (Vasi and Macy 2003; Miller and Krosnick 2004). Threats often paint a grim political outlook and may stall efforts to create a more engaged citizenry in the

polity, leading more people to be “scared stiff” (Henik 2008; Azab and Santoro 2017), or in crippling despair, to partake in other forms of civic engagement as well (Pedraza, Cruz Nichols and LeBrón 2017; Cruz Nichols, Pedraza and Lebrón 2018). The delicate balance between alerting an individual to take action against a threat and not allowing them to be “scared stiff” can be alleviated through persuasive communication techniques (Vasi and Macy 2003; Klandermans 1992; Fireman and Gamson 1979; Van Vught 1999; Miller 2005). As political elites define what the public is supposed to fear (Robin, 2006), politicians and whistle-blowers often overlook offering policy alternatives to provide relief from the provoked threat. This latter portion of the threat appraisal narrative and the political communication tactics surrounding it, which provides hope and relief, is missing in the existing scholarship on what spurs political behavior under contentious environments (Zepeda-Millán 2014a, 2014b; Okamoto and Ebert 2010; Barreto et al. 2009; Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013; Garcia Bedolla 2005). Thus, an ideal form of political communication will alert an audience to potential threats without demobilizing them. My findings suggest that coupling an impending threat with more appealing policy alternatives could better mobilize some to rise, and not succumb, to the challenge.

Finally, in *The Semi-sovereign People*, Schattschneider concluded that a democracy entailed “a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process” (as cited in Druckman, Peterson and Slothus 2013). A democracy that consists of more effective mobilizing strategies will provide people with the means and motivation to participate more fully. Without properly motivating the masses, we may fail to create a more engaged citizenry to keep our elected officials more accountable (Hutchings 2003). The coupled threat-

and-opportunity approach may be especially critical to effectively mobilize a heavily sought after group, particularly one of the fastest growing portions of the electorate (Latinos) (File 2013).

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Table 1: Study 1, Text Description of Randomized Action Alerts

Description	Control	Threat	Opportunity	Coupled Message
Headline	"Mobile Messaging and Social Media 2015 By Maeva Duggan"	"Warning! Ending birthright citizenship is the wrong move!"	"Our time is now! A pathway to citizenship is the best move!"	"Warning! Ending birthright citizenship is the wrong move!"
Photograph	No images	Two identical images of a scared and crying little girl. She is standing in the middle of a line in a detention center with her mother. There is a small American flag hanging out of mother's backpack.	Two identical images of a happy and smiling little girl. She is standing in a naturalization ceremony celebration with mother. Mother and daughter are holding a small American flag.	Two images: One copy of the frightened girl and one copy of the happy little girl from the "Threat" and "Opportunity" conditions.
First Paragraph	"In today's world, people are adopting new ways of communicating. According to a Pew Research Center study in 2015, they asked specifically about mobile messaging apps. They found that 36% of smartphone owners report using messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Kik or iMessage, and 17% use apps that automatically delete sent messages such as Snapchat or Wickr."	"This week the Senate is going to vote on a bill to end the U.S.-citizenship for children born of immigrant parents who do not have legal U.S. status. Before it is too late, let your Senators know that ending birthright citizenship would be an attack for American and immigrant families everywhere!"	"This week the Senate is going to vote on a bill to provide a pathway to citizenship for immigrants living in the U.S. without legal status. Before it is too late, let your Senators know that providing a pathway to citizenship would be a win for American and immigrant families everywhere!"	"This week the Senate is going to vote on a bill to end the U.S.-citizenship for children born of immigrant parents who do not have legal U.S. status. Let your Senators know that ending birthright citizenship would be an attack for American and immigrant families everywhere!"
Second Paragraph				"...Meanwhile, another bill in the Senate provides a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who are living in the U.S. without legal status. Before it is too late, let your Senators know that providing a pathway to citizenship for these immigrants would be a win for American and immigrant families everywhere!"
Closing Caption		"Let's take action today!"	"Let's take action today!"	"Our time is now! Providing a pathway to citizenship is the best move!"

Let's take action on both of these bills today!"

Note: Differences across conditions indicated in bold text

Table 2a. Study 1, Means of Dependent Variable Outcomes by Experimental Condition

	Control	Threat	Opportunity	Coupled
Participation Scale (13 categories, 0 -1) <i>Items within the standardized participation scale:</i>	0.40	0.37	0.41	0.36
March (5 categories, 0-1)	0.30	0.34	0.31	0.35
Volunteer (5 categories, 0-1)	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.37
Talk (5 categories, 0-1)	0.45	0.48	0.47	0.52
Intent to Vote (5 categories, 0-1)	0.84	0.82	0.85	0.87
Frequency Distribution of Observed Postcard Measure Outcome (n)				
0 =No Postcard Sent	(95)	(93)	(98)	(71)
1 =Postcard Sent	(154)	(157)	(154)	(179)

Table 2b. Study 2, Means of Dependent Variable Outcomes by Experimental Condition

	Control	Coupled Fear and Hope	Coupled Fear and Pride	Coupled Hope and Pride	Coupled Fear and Pride and Hope
Participation Scale (6 categories, 0-5) <i>Items within the participation scale:</i>	2.12	2.16	2.00	2.21	2.18
March	0.30	0.31	0.29	0.31	0.28
Volunteer	0.33	0.32	0.31	0.32	0.30
Talk	0.47	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.45
Donate	0.33	0.34	0.31	0.34	0.32
Boycott	0.29	0.32	0.26	0.32	0.27
Frequency Distribution of Observed Postcard Measure Outcome (n)					
0 =No Postcard Sent	(44)	(30)	(44)	(42)	(55)
1 =Postcard Sent	(145)	(153)	(137)	(140)	(126)

Table 3: Study 1, OLS Regressions, Main Effects of Treatments Estimating Non-Electoral Forms of Political Participation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Join a March (Baseline = Control)	Talk About Politics (Baseline = Control)	Volunteer for an Organization (Baseline = Control)	Participation Scale (Baseline = Control)
Threat Condition	0.046 (0.030)	0.037 (0.030)	0.030 (0.030)	0.038 (0.026)
Opportunity Condition	0.011 (0.030)	0.018 (0.030)	0.001 (0.030)	0.010 (0.030)
Coupled Condition	0.051* (0.030)	0.068** (0.030)	0.027 (0.030)	0.049* (0.026)
Constant	0.297*** (0.021)	0.449*** (0.021)	0.340*** (0.021)	0.362*** (0.018)
Observations	1,001	1,001	1,001	1,001
R-squared	0.004	0.006	0.002	0.002

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. All estimates are based on the following p-values using a two-tailed test: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Sample sizes for each cell were as follows: Control = 249, Coupled = 250, Threat = 250, and Opportunity = 252. Results still hold after sensitivity tests with added demographic variables gender, education, income, age, immigrant generation status and partisanship measures as controls. These additional models are available in the Online Appendix.

Table 4: Study 1, OLS Regressions, Main Effects of Treatments Estimating Electoral Form of Political Participation – Intent to Vote in Upcoming General Election

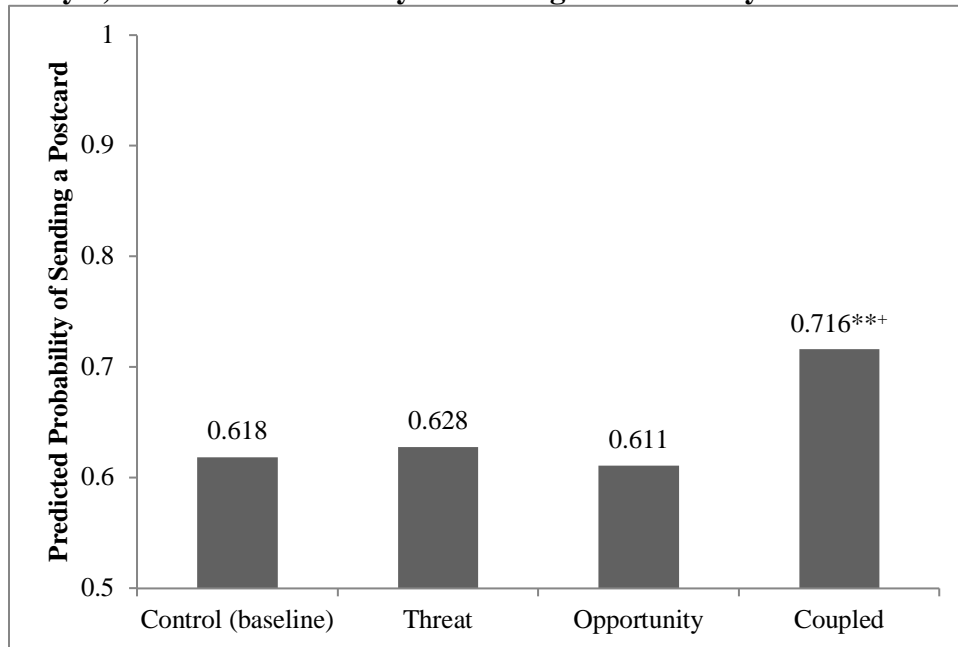
Model 1	
Intent to Vote (Baseline = Control)	
Threat Condition	-0.028 (0.025)
Opportunity Condition	-0.052** (0.025)
Coupled Condition	-0.020 (0.025)
Constant	0.868*** (0.018)
Observations	789
R-squared	0.006

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. All estimates are based on the following p-values using a two-tailed test: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Sample sizes for each cell were as follows: Control = 249, Coupled = 250, Threat = 250, and Opportunity = 252. The Intent to Vote outcome was limited to those who reported being registered vote or intending to register, and it did not include those who said they were ineligible to register to vote or who said they did not plan to register. Results do not vary when controlling for gender, education, income, age, immigrant generation status and partisanship measures as controls. These additional models are available in the Online Appendix.

Table 5: Study 1, Logit Models, Main Effects of Treatments Estimating Sent Postcard

	Model 1	Model 2
	Sent	Sent
	Postcard	Postcard
	(Baseline =	(Baseline =
	Control)	Threat)
Threat	0.041	-
Condition	(0.185)	-
Opportunity	-0.031	-0.072
Condition	(0.184)	(0.184)
Coupled	0.442**	0.401**
Condition	(0.192)	(0.192)
Control	-	-0.041
Condition	-	(0.185)
Constant	0.483***	0.52***
	(0.130)	(0.13)
Observations	1,001	1,001

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. All estimates are based on the following p-values using a two-tailed test: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Sample sizes for each cell were as follows: Control = 249, Coupled = 250, Threat = 250, and Opportunity = 252. Results still hold after sensitivity tests with added demographic variables gender, education, income, age, immigrant generation status and partisanship measures as controls. These additional models are available in the Online Appendix.

Figure 2: Study 1, Predicted Probability of Sending a Postcard by Treatment

Notes: Predicted probabilities are derived from logit estimates from Table 3.5 (n=1,001). The referent category is the non-political control condition. Relative to the non-political control condition, all probabilities are based on the following p-values using a two-tailed test: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. +Signifies that the predicted probabilities are statistically distinguishable from the threat condition (Model 3).

Table 6: Study 2, Main Effects of Treatments Estimating Non-Electoral Forms of Political Participation with Full Sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	March (logit)	Volunteer (logit)	Talk (logit)	Donate (logit)	Boycott (logit)	Participation Scale (OLS)	Sent Postcard (logit)
Fear Condition	0.23 (0.27)	0.05 (0.27)	-0.01 (0.27)	-0.17 (0.26)	0.44 (0.27)	0.09 (0.24)	0.72** (0.34)
Hope Condition	-0.20 (0.28)	-0.40 (0.27)	-0.42 (0.28)	-0.28 (0.27)	-0.36 (0.29)	-0.38 (0.25)	0.14 (0.32)
Fear and Hope Condition	0.09 (0.27)	-0.07 (0.26)	-0.12 (0.27)	-0.18 (0.26)	0.28 (0.27)	-0.03 (0.24)	0.13 (0.31)
<i>Party ID</i> (Baseline =Strong, Mod, Lean Republicans)							
Independents	1.12*** (0.27)	0.35 (0.24)	0.47** (0.22)	0.86*** (0.25)	0.86*** (0.26)	0.65*** (0.21)	-0.44* (0.26)
Democrats (Strong/Mod/Lean)	1.76*** (0.25)	1.08*** (0.22)	1.36*** (0.21)	1.46*** (0.22)	1.57*** (0.24)	1.49*** (0.18)	0.66*** (0.25)
Constant	-0.33 (0.62)	1.16* (0.60)	1.25** (0.60)	-0.87 (0.58)	-0.92 (0.62)	2.50*** (0.53)	1.26* (0.69)
Observations	850	846	844	847	839	826	847
R-squared						0.13	

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. All estimates are based on the following p-values using a two-tailed test: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Sample sizes for each cell were as follows: Control = 175, Fear = 166, Hope = 154, Coupled Fear-and-Hope = 162, Coupled Hope-and-Fear = 159, Coupled Fear-and-Pride = 162, and Coupled Pride-and-Hope = 152. Results still hold after sensitivity tests with added demographic variables gender, education, income, age, immigrant generation status, subnational origin groups (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and other Latino) and partisanship measures as controls. Full results for these abbreviated models are available in the Online Appendix.

Table 7a: Study 2, Main Effects of Treatments Estimating Participation (Democrats)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	March (logit)	Volunteer (logit)	Talk (logit)	Donate (logit)	Boycott (logit)	Participati on Scale	Postcard (logit)
Fear Condition	0.47 (0.37)	0.26 (0.38)	0.55 (0.42)	0.48 (0.37)	0.50 (0.37)	0.53 (0.35)	1.45* (0.81)
Hope Condition	-0.03 (0.37)	0.05 (0.37)	-0.11 (0.40)	-0.16 (0.36)	-0.47 (0.37)	-0.19 (0.35)	-0.34 (0.53)
Fear and Hope Condition	0.44 (0.37)	0.63* (0.38)	0.88** (0.44)	0.44 (0.36)	0.50 (0.37)	0.63* (0.35)	-0.39 (0.51)
Constant	1.53* (0.83)	2.46*** (0.85)	2.11** (0.90)	0.31 (0.81)	0.85 (0.82)	3.97*** (0.79)	2.48** (1.04)
Observations	430	428	426	429	425	419	430
R-squared						0.08	

Table 7b: Study 2, Main Effects of Treatments Estimating Participation (Republicans)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	March (logit)	Volunteer (logit)	Talk (logit)	Donate (logit)	Boycott (logit)	Participati on Scale	Postcard (logit)
Fear Condition	-0.19 (0.89)	0.33 (0.62)	-0.62 (0.57)	-0.73 (0.67)	0.73 (0.83)	-0.18 (0.44)	1.09 (0.69)
Hope Condition	0.10 (0.93)	-0.75 (0.74)	-1.10* (0.63)	-0.13 (0.66)	0.55 (0.94)	-0.36 (0.48)	1.99** (0.91)
Fear and Hope Condition	0.17 (0.80)	-0.69 (0.67)	-1.33** (0.62)	-1.55** (0.77)	0.82 (0.80)	-0.56 (0.45)	1.15 (0.71)
Constant	14.57 (1,782.09)	15.65 (968.16)	3.27** (1.42)	1.28 (1.71)	13.66 (1,583.9 1)	3.87*** (1.07)	1.29 (1.53)
Observations	166	165	166	166	165	164	164
R-squared						0.12	

Table 7c: Study 2, Main Effects of Treatments Estimating Participation (Independents)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	March (logit)	Volunteer (logit)	Talk (logit)	Donate (logit)	Boycott (logit)	Participation Scale	Postcard (logit)
Fear Condition	0.09 (0.48)	-0.28 (0.48)	-0.18 (0.49)	-0.93* (0.51)	0.44 (0.49)	-0.29 (0.47)	0.60 (0.52)
Hope Condition	-0.68 (0.55)	-1.17** (0.57)	-0.46 (0.53)	-0.57 (0.53)	-0.34 (0.56)	-0.74 (0.51)	-0.13 (0.55)
Fear and Hope Condition	-0.51 (0.48)	-0.87* (0.48)	-0.67 (0.47)	-0.65 (0.47)	-0.26 (0.50)	-0.74 (0.46)	0.21 (0.52)
Constant	0.56 (0.92)	0.50 (0.92)	1.84** (0.93)	0.32 (0.93)	-0.67 (0.93)	2.92*** (0.89)	0.47 (1.21)
Observations	254	253	252	252	249	243	253
R-squared						0.05	

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses. All estimates are based on the following p-values using a two-tailed test: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Sample sizes for each cell were as follows: Control = 175, Fear = 166, Hope = 154, Coupled Fear-and-Hope = 162, Coupled Hope-and-Fear = 159, Coupled Fear-and-Pride = 162, and Coupled Pride-and-Hope = 152. Results still hold after sensitivity tests with added demographic variables gender, education, income, age, immigrant generation status, subnational origin groups (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban and other Latino) and partisanship measures as controls. Full results for these abbreviated models are available in the Online Appendix.