# Social Protest and Policy Attitudes: The Case of the 2006 Immigrant Rallies

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Do protests sway public opinion? If so, why and how? To address these questions, we examine the impact of the 2006 immigration protests on immigration policy preferences. We use the 2006 Latino National Survey coupled with protest data to examine whether temporal and spatial exposure to the protests are associated with policy preferences. Our findings lend evidence that protest activity influences Latinos' immigration policy preferences. However, the findings suggest the effect of protest on immigration policy preferences is not uniform across the population, but rather contingent on generational status and the intensity of protest activity at the local level.

ass demonstration has been characterized as the "defining trope of our times" (Andersen 2011). The scope and number of protests in one year alone were so exceptional that "The Protester" was recognized as the 2011 Person of the Year by *Time* magazine. Protests are usually collective expressions of objection to particular actions or situations. It is assumed individuals participate in political protests for the purpose of making their opinion heard, in an attempt to influence public opinion and, ultimately, government actions (Amenta and Young 1999; Burstein 1999).<sup>1</sup>

The bulk of prior research has examined the policy consequences of social protests. In particular, numerous studies have asked whether social movements matter to policy changes, yet the findings are, at best, mixed (for a review, see Amenta et al. 2010). Using legislative

activities and outcomes as a measure of the consequences, those studies often show that the influence of protests is contingent on a variety of circumstances, such as public support.

Considerably less attention has been paid to the effect of social movements or protests on public opinion. While the literature suggests that social movements and public opinion together affect the legislative process, the linkage between them has not been systematically examined. Giugni (1998, 370) notes that "it seems rather obvious protest activities raise the awareness of the population over certain political issues." Yet, to our knowledge, no one has developed a systematic explanation for the effect of protest on public opinion or shown evidence of the size and direction of its effect.

Do protests sway public opinion? If so, why and how? To answer these questions, we exploit a natural

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<sup>1</sup>Amenta et al. (2010) identify protest activity as one component of political social movements.

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experiment<sup>2</sup> that occurred in the spring of 2006 when activists staged rallies across the United States in protest of H.R. 4437 (Border Protection and Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005), a bill that would have increased penalties on undocumented immigrants and anyone who employed or assisted them. While these protests were occurring, the Latino National Survey (LNS) was in the field. Approximately 37% of the 8,634 LNS respondents were surveyed prior to the protests, and the rest were surveyed afterward. Notably, these respondents were in essence randomly assigned to the treatment group (i.e., after the protest began) and control group (i.e., before the protest began), which allows us to make a causal argument about the relationship between the protest and public opinion.

Recent research has examined the impact of the 2006 protests on Latino feelings about themselves. Silber Mohamed (2013) examined the impact of the protests on group identity and found exposure to the 2006 protests heightened the likelihood of identifying as Americans. Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, and Jones-Correa (2014) examined the impact of exposure to the protests on efficacy. They found that Latinos with exposure to the 2006 protests—particularly smaller protests—demonstrated higher efficacy compared to those with less exposure.

In our recent work, Carey, Branton, and Martinez (2014), we examined how the protests influenced Latino attitudes about issue salience. We found that respondents surveyed in the postprotest period and those with spatial exposure to the rallies were more likely to identify immigration as the most important problem facing the Latino community (Carey, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2014).<sup>3</sup> This research demonstrates that temporal and spatial exposure to the protests heightened the

<sup>2</sup>Some researchers use the terms *natural experiment* and *quasi-experiment* interchangeably; however, research suggests there are distinct differences between the two designs (Remler and Van Ryzin 2011). Nonrandom assignment of participants is a key component of a quasi-experiment (Achen 1986; Dunning 2008; Remler and Van Ryzin 2011). Furthermore, researchers conducting a quasi-experiment consciously implement the treatment. Natural experiments take advantage of a naturally occurring phenomenon. Natural experiments are premised on the idea that participants are randomly or "as if" randomly assigned to pre- and posttreatments (Dunning 2008). While we had no control over the manipulation, the participants were assigned to pre- and posttreatments "as if" randomly. Thus, we refer to our study as a natural experiment.

<sup>3</sup>Carey et al. (2014) address a substantively different research question and not only examine a different outcome, but also offer a different theoretical argument and empirical model. The work presented here focuses solely on how exposure to protest influences policy preferences. Carey et al. (2014) focus singularly on how exposure to protest influences issue saliency. Footnote 10 in Carey et al. (2014) acknowledges that immigration can be salient to people for different reasons. In other words, heightened saliency can

salience—the perceived importance—of immigration issues among Latinos. Yet, this work does not lend insight into whether exposure to protest influenced attitudes regarding the policy issue of contention: immigration.

We seek to build on our earlier work by considering whether and how temporal and spatial exposure to the 2006 protests influenced immigration policy preferences among Latinos. More importantly, this endeavor will address a lingering question regarding whether and how exposure to protest influences policy preferences. First, using the LNS data, we examine the effect of temporal exposure to protest on Latinos' immigration policy preferences. Our analysis shows that respondents interviewed after the rallies began reported higher support for less restrictive immigration policy options than those surveyed before. We propose that the effect of exposure to protest is conditioned on the level of threat presented by the proposed legislation. Indeed, we show that exposure to protest leads to increased support for less restrictive policy options among those who are most immediately affected: immigrants.

Second, using Bada and colleagues' (2006) protest data, we examine whether and how spatial exposure to rallies is associated with policy preferences.<sup>4</sup> We utilize the theory of modified sociotropism to develop expectations regarding how immigration attitudes are influenced by spatial exposure to protest activity. We argue exposure to protests serves to amplify support for less restrictive immigration policy reform. The results indicate that spatial exposure to protest leads to increased support for less restrictive policy options among those who are immigrants.

Our research contributes to both social protest and Latino politics literatures. The relationship between protest activity and public opinion has received little attention, yet it likely constitutes an important link to connect social protests with policy changes (see Burstein 1999; Lohmann 1994). Herein, our findings lend evidence that protest activity influences opinion of the population most directly affected by the contentious issue. Further, the models of temporal *and* spatial exposure to protest suggest the effect of protest is not uniform across the population, but rather contingent on individuals' characteristics and the intensity of protest activity at the local level.

be due to sympathetic attitudes toward immigration or negative attitudes toward immigration.

<sup>4</sup>We verified each protest using Newsbank, a web-based newspaper database. Additional cases were discovered via this verification process and were added to the Bada et al. (2006) data set.

## **Temporal Exposure to Protest**

Giugni (2004) argues protests generate a two-way information flow, one to power brokers in the government and the other to the general public. The information intended to pressure government officials to address critical social problems is also important for making the public more aware of these problems. While we acknowledge the role of social protest in shaping elite behavior, here we are concerned with the influence of social protest on mass public opinion. Using the case of the 2006 immigration protests, we argue exposure to protests influences policy preferences.<sup>5</sup>

In December 2005, the U.S. House passed H.R. 4437. The key provisions of the bill were to (1) increase penalties for undocumented immigrants and (2) make it a felony to assist an undocumented person in entering or staying in the United States. If signed into law, the punitive implications of the bill would be felt by multiple constituencies: undocumented, documented, and even U.S. citizens. Barreto et al. (2009) contend the bill served as a "powerful external threat" to Latinos, as a majority of undocumented immigrants are from Latin American countries. Across the country, civic/community organizations and Catholic churches worked to mobilize opposition to H.R. 4437 (Barreto et al. 2009; Benjamin-Alvarado, DeSipio, and Montoya 2009; Félix, González, and Ramírez 2008; Silber Mohamed 2013).

Over a span of four months in the spring of 2006, an estimated 3.5 to 5.1 million people, largely of Latino descent, took to the streets of over 160 cities across 43 states (Bada et al. 2006). The primary purpose of the protests was to convey opposition to H.R. 4437 and support for a policy with an earned pathway to citizenship (Barreto et al. 2009).

We argue exposure to the protest period (temporal exposure) served to increase Latinos' awareness of immigration issues (see Carey et al. 2014) and influence policy preferences. During the protest period, information about punitive immigration policies and the more general anti-immigrant context was prevalent. The debate over immigration was often tethered to Latinos (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Branton et al. 2011). As such, we contend that for many Latinos, the protests conveyed the threat posed by restrictive immigration reforms and made the issue of immigration more salient. In essence, when made aware of the threat posed by punitive

immigration reforms, Latinos would become more likely to support less restrictive immigration policy options. Explicitly stated:

H1: Respondents surveyed after the protests began are more likely to support less restrictive immigration policy positions than those surveyed before the protests began.

## **Conditioning Effect of Threat**

Nevertheless, we anticipate that the impact of the protest environment is not uniform across Latinos. We argue the effect of protest on policy attitudes is conditioned by the level of direct threat posed by punitive immigration reforms. Specifically, we propose that the effect of exposure to protests on immigration attitudes is conditioned on one's generational status.

Previous work suggests threatening conditions motivate greater political awareness. These threats may concern one's material self-interests, one's well-being, or one's political interests. Within the political domain, threat is believed to heighten anxiety, which encourages citizens to seek information within their political environment (Pantoja and Segura 2003). Furthermore, the social psychological literature shows that external threats make group identities more salient and increase in-group solidarity (Flippen et al. 1996; Grant and Brown 1995). Additionally, threatening conditions serve as a motivator for political activism (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000; Miller and Krosnick 2004). Ultimately, Barreto et al. (2009) find the political threat of restrictive immigration reforms motivated many Latinos to evaluate information from their political context and coalesce as a group.

Yet, some groups of Latinos should feel more threatened than others. From a purely self-interested perspective, we would expect first-generation Latinos were more likely to respond to the threat conveyed by the protests than later-generation Latinos. Thus, we employ generational status as a proxy measure of threat and expect firstgeneration immigrants to be least supportive of punitive immigration reforms. Further, we propose generational status conditions the effect of exposure to the protest context such that the impact of exposure to protest should be more amplified for first-generation Latinos than for second-plus-generation Latinos. It seems reasonable to expect the threat conveyed by the protests would be most immediate for first-generation Latinos. Although H.R. 4437 included a provision that could have potentially distributed costs to those who assist undocumented

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Scholars have debated whether protests influence public opinion or whether public opinion ignites protest. Recent work finds that protests influence public opinion, whereas public opinion has little influence on protests (Banaszak and Ondercin 2009).

individuals, we argue that the threat conveyed by the protests is not as direct for second-plus-generation Latinos.<sup>6</sup> As such, we propose the following:

*H2*: The impact of exposure to the protests will be greater among first-generation Latinos, whereas the impact of exposure will be diminished among later-generation Latinos.

## **Spatial Exposure to Protest Activity**

We now consider how spatial exposure to the 2006 protest affected Latino immigration policy preferences. Spatial exposure is captured by determining whether respondents resided in a locale with protest activities. It seems reasonable to expect that in areas with a protest event, the amount of information about the threat to the Latino community posed by restrictive immigration reforms may be heightened.

To motivate our argument regarding the impact of spatial exposure to local protest on Latino policy preferences, we rely on the theory of modified sociotropism (Gartner and Segura 2000; Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997). Importantly, this modification of the theory of sociotropism recognizes variability in the dispersion of information. Gartner and Segura (2000, 117) argue that "individuals are affected by societal experience with an issue, but their perceptions of that experience are shaped by available proximate information—salient information about how the issue affects those one knows and cares about the most." They also contend opinion formation is not simply driven by the saliency of information, but also by how readily accessible the information is to an individual. When individuals have a social connection with an issue, it can affect one's opinion on that issue. Further, these social connections make abstractions about an issue much more prevalent.

<sup>6</sup>We acknowledge that the impact of exposure to protest among second-plus-generation Latinos may be triggered by factors other than direct threat. For instance, Barreto et al. (2009) argue that the threat posed by H.R. 4437 to undocumented Latinos promoted group solidarity—even among native-born Latinos—in the fight to protect immigrant rights. As such, the impact of the protests on native-born Latinos' policy preferences may have been a result of group solidarity. Additionally, at least a majority of Latinos have family and/or friends who are undocumented (Latino Decisions 2013, 2; 2014, 4–5). As such, the impact of exposure to protest among native-born Latinos may be due to sympathetic feelings for their friends or family who would be directly threatened by the bill. The models presented here also control for some alternative factors, including respondents' perceived commonalities with other Latinos.

Accordingly, we propose Latino attitudes toward immigration policy may be influenced by spatial exposure to protest activity. Although the protests occurred across the nation, it is not the case that every locale experienced immigration rallies. As such, information about the threat is not evenly distributed. We argue individuals residing in areas with protest activity have greater exposure to information conveyed by the rallies than individuals residing in areas with no protest activity. The modified sociotropism perspective suggests the "proximate experience" of exposure to local protest(s) will weigh more heavily in the formation of attitudes toward immigration. Given that the protests focused on the threat posed by restrictive immigration reforms and on promoting a policy with a path to legalization (Barreto et al. 2009; Benjamin-Alvarado et al. 2009), it is reasonable to expect exposure to local protests is associated with immigration policy preferences. We propose that support for less restrictive forms of immigration will be amplified among respondents residing in areas with protest activities.

*H3*: Respondents residing in areas with protest activities are more likely to support less restrictive immigration policies than those residing in areas with no protest activity.

On a related point, we propose that for those who reside in communities *with* protest activities, support for immigration will vary as a function of the number of protests. Again, modified sociotropism would lend theoretical support for the expectation that heightened local protest activity can lead to amplified support for less restrictive immigration policy. The "proximate experience" of the protests and the message being forwarded by the protests should lead to greater support for an immigration policy that is more beneficial to the Latino community. Explicitly stated:

*H4*: As the number of protests in local areas increases, the likelihood of supporting less restrictive immigration policy increases.

Finally, consistent with the temporal exposure hypotheses, we propose the impact of exposure to local protest activities is conditioned on one's generational status.

#### **Data and Methods**

To test the hypotheses, we utilize the 2006 LNS. As noted, the LNS is unique in that it serves as a "natural

experiment."7 Several months after the LNS went into the field, millions of people nationwide participated in protests and rallies in response to H.R. 4437. These unanticipated events provide the opportunity to examine whether and how protest influences public opinion toward the issue of contention: immigration policy. Latinos surveyed prior to the protests serve as our control group, and those surveyed after the protests began serve as our treatment group. Our dependent variable measures attitudes toward U.S. immigration policy. The respondents are asked: "What is your preferred policy on undocumented or illegal immigration?": (1) immediate legalization of current undocumented immigrants, (2) a guest worker program leading to legalization eventually, (3) a guest worker program permitting immigrants to be in the country, but only temporarily, (4) an effort to seal or close off the border to stop illegal immigration, and (5) none of the above.<sup>8</sup>

The independent variables of primary interest reflect the temporal and spatial exposure to protest. Temporal exposure to *Protest* is measured by a binary variable coded 1 if the respondent is surveyed after the protests began and 0 otherwise. This variable is included to tease out the difference between the control group and treatment group. 10 Spatial exposure to protest is measured by two variables: Local Protest and Number of Protests. To generate the spatial exposure measures, we use data compiled by Bada et al. (2006) that denote the city in which each protest occurred and the date of the protest. Using geographic information systems, we identified the county location of each protest denoted in Bada et al. (2006). Next, we aggregated the protest data to the "corebased statistical area," which is composed of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas. 11 This more aggregated geographic unit recognizes that in densely populated areas, multiple counties are socially or economically connected. For instance, counties in densely populated areas typically share the same media market. Thus, if a protest is occurring in the area, but not in the specific county in which a respondent resides, this approach accounts for exposure to the activity. For rural areas, areas not located in a metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area, we utilize the county-level data. We then merged the protest data with the LNS survey data. Local Protest is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the respondent resided in an area with a prior protest event and 0 if the respondent resided in an area with no prior protest event. This variable allows us to compare immigration attitudes between the two groups (local protest event versus no local protest event). Number of Protests is a count of the number of local protests that occurred before the respondent was surveyed. 12 This variable allows us to compare immigration attitudes as a function of the number of protest events to which one was exposed.

The other key independent variable of interest is generational status. *Generation* ranges from 0 to 4, where 0 reflects noncitizen, 1 reflects foreign-born citizen, 2 reflects second generation, 3 reflects third generation, and 4 reflects fourth-plus generation. We split the foreign-born respondents into two categories—noncitizen and citizen—as noncitizens may perceive a heightened level of threat as a result of their lack of citizenship. In general, extant research indicates first-generation Latinos are less supportive of restrictive immigration policies than later-generation Latinos (Branton 2007; Garcia Bedolla 2005; Hood, Morris, and Shirkey 1997). As such, we expect greater support for more beneficial immigration policy options among first-generation Latinos than later-generation Latinos.

In addition to the above variables of interest, the models include five sets of variables that measure respondents' socioeconomic status, perceived commonalities with Latinos, group identification, religious indicators, political knowledge, basic demographics, and contextual indicators. Extant research commonly notes Latino immigration attitudes are associated with these factors (Binder, Polinard, and Wrinkle 1997; Branton 2007; Carey, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2013; Citrin et al.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Recent works have treated the protest events that occurred while the LNS was in the field as a natural or quasi-experiment (Silber Mohamed 2013; Wallace et al. 2014; Zepeda-Millán and Wallace 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Distribution on the immigration item: (1) 41.56%, (2) 33.02%, (3) 12.26%, (4) 4.97%, and (5) 8.19%.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>A handful of protests occurred in February 2006, but the number of protests increased throughout March and continued through May. Here we use March 1, 2006, as the beginning of the protest period. We also estimated the models using March 31 and April 10 as the start date. The substantive findings of the auxiliary analysis are consistent with the results presented herein.

 $<sup>^{10}</sup>$ A  $\chi^2$  difference of means test (47.03 with a p-value of .000) indicates there is a significant difference in immigration attitudes when comparing the pre- and postprotest respondents.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>The U.S. Office of Management and Budget defines this geographic unit as follows: "Each metro or micro area consists of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area, as well as any adjacent counties that have a high degree of

social and economic integration (as measured by commuting to work) with the urban core" (U.S. Census Bureau 2012, 5).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>This measure includes only the respondents who lived in an area where at least one protest occurred before the respondent was surveyed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Summary statistics for all the independent variables are presented in Table A of the online supporting information (SI).

1997; Hood et al. 1997; Rocha et al. 2011; Sanchez 2006). These variables are important in controlling the demographic and political differences of respondents between the treatment and control groups. The assignment of the respondents to the treatment and control groups was almost random, yet the respondents' decision to participate in the survey might be influenced by their personal characteristics and exposure to the rallies. Indeed, we find significant differences in the demographic and political features of the respondents in the treatment and control groups. <sup>14</sup> Accordingly, these control variables play an important role in isolating the effects of the rallies on the outcome variable. <sup>15</sup>

Respondents' socioeconomic status is measured by their educational background, income level, and personal financial situation. Education is measured by an 8-point scale ranging from 0 to 7. Respondents' income is measured by four variables that equal 1 if respondents belong to one of the quartiles on the scale of income and 0 otherwise. The lowest quartile serves as the baseline category. Additionally, we include an indicator variable that equals 1 if respondents refused to report their income status and 0 otherwise. Respondents' assessment of their personal financial situation is measured by a 3-point scale ranging from (1) gotten worse, (2) stays about the same, and (3) gotten better.

Respondents' perceived commonalities with other Latinos is measured by an item asking, "Thinking about issues like job opportunities, education or income, how much do [ethnic subgroup] have in common with other Latinos or Hispanics? Would you say [ethnic subgroup] share a lot in common, some things in common, little in common, or nothing in common with other Latinos?" The measure is coded (1) nothing, (2) little, (3) some, and (4) lot.

To measure group identity, we use a survey item that asks respondents to choose the category that best describes them: Latino/Hispanic, American, their national-origin group, and none of these. We created two measures

to capture their primary group identity. For the first measure, a value of 1 was assigned to respondents who chose their national-origin group and 0 otherwise. The second measure assigns a value of 1 to respondents who identified more strongly with their American identity and 0 otherwise. The baseline category reflects a Latino/Hispanic primary identification.

To measure a respondent's political knowledge, we rely on an additive measure based on responses to three survey items. Respondents were asked to identify the party that had a majority in the House of Representatives, the presidential candidate who won the 2004 election in their state, and the political party that is more conservative than the other. The responses were coded 1 if a response was correct and 0 otherwise. Scores range from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of political knowledge.

To account for the impact of religion and civic participation, the models include three measures: *Catholic, Attend Church*, and *Civic Participation. Catholic* is a dichotomous measure that indicates whether a respondent is Catholic. *Attend Church* represents regular church attendance, which is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if a respondent indicates she attends religious services once a week or more. *Civic Participation* is a dichotomous measure that indicates whether a respondent is involved in a civic organization. Given the importance of the Catholic Church and civic organizations in activist efforts—not only with regard to the 2006 rallies but also more generally (Schmidt et al. 2008)—we include this to account for the potential influence of involvement in the church and civic organizations on immigration attitudes.

We control for differences in national origin using dummy variables for country or region of origin/descent. The dummy variables equal 1 if respondents descend from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Central America, and South America. Mexican respondents serve as the baseline category. Further, we control for differences in age measured by years and gender, which equals 1 if the respondent is female and 0 otherwise. Finally, our model includes aggregate-level measures of the socioeconomic and ethnic context. Socioeconomic context is measured by tract-level percent high school educated. Ethnic context is measured by the percentage of Latinos at the tract level. These measures are included to account for variance in immigration attitudes attributable to the context in which one resides.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>A simple t-test for all of the variables in the right-hand side of the model indicates that most variables show a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control groups.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>We conducted two different robustness checks. First, we utilize coarsened exact matching (CEM) to match the treatment and control groups on several demographics: age, education, generation, group identification, perceived commonalities, country of origin, political knowledge, religious indicators, and financial indicators. We estimated the temporal model using the matched observations. The results regarding temporal exposure are substantively and statistically consistent with those for the nonmatched sample. Second, we divided the full sample into nine treatment-control subsamples and reestimated the model (see Silber Mohamed 2013). The results are generally consistent with the results using the full sample.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Central American countries include Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama; South American countries include Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Our analysis excluded respondents who reported they are from Spain.

Table 1	Predicted	l Proba	bilities:	Pre- and	Postprotest
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	Preprotest	Postprotest	$\Delta$ Prob.
Pr Y = Amnesty	.34 (.02)	.44 (.01)	.10 (.02)**
Pr Y = Guest Worker Legalization	.37 (.01)	.35 (.01)	02 (.02)
Pr Y = Guest Worker Temporary	.16 (.01)	.12 (.01)	04 (.01)*

*Note:* The estimates represent predicted probabilities with standard errors in parentheses. \*\* $p \le .01$ ; \* $p \le .05$ .

#### **Results**

#### **Temporal Exposure**

First, we estimate a "main effect" model that compares Latino attitudes on immigration before and after the rallies began. The dependent variable is a nominal measure; thus, we estimate multinomial logit models.<sup>17</sup> The baseline category indicates support for immediate legalization. Given that it is difficult to directly interpret multinomial logit results, we present predicted probabilities in Table 1 (the full set of results appears in Table B of the SI). The predicted probabilities indicate the effect of temporal exposure to the protest environment is significant across two of the three policy options. 18 Respondents surveyed prior to the protests had a .10 lower probability of supporting amnesty compared to those surveyed in the protest context. Further, the probability of supporting a guest worker program with a temporary residency requirement is .04 lower among Latinos surveyed after the protests began compared to those surveyed before the protests began. These results imply there is a strong, uniform effect of exposure to protest, such that those surveyed after the protests began were more likely to support the less restrictive policy option—amnesty—compared to respondents surveyed before the protest began (Hypothesis 1).

Next, we consider whether the effect of temporal exposure to the protest period is conditioned on generational status. The model presented below includes an interaction between the protest measure and generation. The parameter estimates and standard errors on the interactions are conditional; thus, the size and significance

of the conditional effect cannot be determined based on the parameter estimates and standard errors presented in the results tables (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006). As such, we estimate the marginal effect of exposure to protest conditioned on generational status and the associated standard errors as outlined by Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006).

Again, to facilitate the interpretation of the results, we present the predicted probabilities in Table 2 (see Table C in the SI for the results). The predicted probabilities highlight the conditional nature of the relationship between temporal exposure to the protests and immigration attitudes, specifically the conditioning effect of generational status.

First, foreign-born noncitizens surveyed after the protests began have a .11 higher probability of supporting amnesty than those surveyed before the protests began. Further, the probability of supporting a guest worker program with a temporary residency requirement is .06 lower among noncitizens surveyed after the protests began compared to those surveyed before the protests began. Among respondents who have the most to lose (or gain) from immigration reform, temporal exposure to the protest period elicited an expected response: heightened support for the most favorable policy and muted support for the more punitive option.

Second, a similar pattern emerges among foreignborn citizens and second-generation Latinos. The probability of a foreign-born citizen supporting amnesty increases by .09 when comparing those surveyed prior to the protests and those surveyed in the protest period. Yet, there is a significant decrease in support among foreign-born citizens for immigration reform that includes a guest worker program (–.06). For a second-generation Latino surveyed prior to the protest, the probability of supporting amnesty is .08 lower compared to a second-generation Latino surveyed after the protests began. Finally, there is no significant difference in support for amnesty as a function of temporal exposure to protest among third-plus-generation Latinos.

Together, these results lend evidence that temporal exposure to the protest period impacts immigration

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Standard errors are clustered by the core-based statistical area (and county for those areas outside of a core-based statistical area). The data are weighted to be nationally representative. Finally, we include state-fixed effects to control for the impact of differences across states.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>All other covariates are set to the mean in each predicted probability table presented herein. For brevity and clarity, we present predicted probabilities for only the amnesty and the guest worker options for each of the models. The full sets of predicted probabilities are presented in Tables F–I in the SI.

TABLE 2 Predicted Probabilities: Exposure to Protest Conditioned on Generation

Generation	First Noncitizen	First Citizen	<b>Second Generation</b>	Third Generation	Fourth Generation
Pr Y = Amnesty					
Preprotest	.40	.35	.30	.26	.21
Postprotest	.51	.44	.38	.32	.26
Δ	.11 (.03)**	.09 (.02)**	.08 (.03)*	.06 (.04)	.05 (.05)
Pr Y = Guest Wor	rker Legalization				
Preprotest	.33	.36	.39	.40	.41
Postprotest	.30	.34	.38	.41	.44
Δ	03 (.02)	02(.02)	01 (.12)	.01 (.03)	.03 (.04)
Pr Y = Guest Wor	rker Temporary				
Preprotest	.17	.16	.15	.13	.12
Postprotest	.11	.12	.13	.14	.15
Δ	06 (.02)**	04 (.01)**	02(.02)	.01 (.02)	.03 (.03)

*Note:* The estimates represent predicted probabilities with delta method– derived standard errors in parentheses. \*\* $p \le .01$ ; \* $p \le .05$ .

attitudes (Hypothesis 1). Furthermore, the effect of protest is most demonstrable among more recent-generation Latinos (Hypothesis 2). For first-generation respondents, immigration is likely an issue that has directly impacted either their lives or the lives of those close to them. Further, these results suggest temporal exposure to protest exerts some level of influence even among those less likely to personally lose (or gain) from H.R. 4437 due to their citizenship status. The results demonstrate the conditional nature of the impact of exposure to protest. Failing to account for the moderating effect of one's generational status, one would conclude there is a uniform

### **Spatial Exposure: Local Protest Events**

effect of exposure to protest on Latino immigration atti-

tudes (see Table 1).

Next, we consider how spatial exposure to local protest activity affects immigration policy preferences. The predicted probabilities presented in Table 3 are based on a model (see Table D in the SI for results) that includes only those respondents surveyed after the start of the social protests (i.e., the treatment groups).<sup>19</sup>

First, among first-generation noncitizens, exposure to a local protest event serves to increase the probability of supporting amnesty and decreases the probability of supporting both guest worker options. The probability of a noncitizen who resides in an area with no protest event supporting amnesty is .39, whereas the probability

for a noncitizen residing in an area with a protest event increases to .50. Further, the results indicate the probability of supporting a guest worker program with a path to legalization is lower among first-generation noncitizens residing in areas with a protest event compared to their counterparts residing in areas with no protest event. Finally, the probability of a first-generation noncitizen supporting a guest worker program with a temporary residency requirement is .05 lower among those residing in areas with a protest event compared to those residing in areas with no protest event. Again, we find evidence that among those for whom H.R. 4437 poses the most direct threat, exposure to local protest elicited an expected response: heightened support for the most favorable policy position and muted support for the more punitive option.

Second, we see a similar pattern among foreign-born citizens. The probability of supporting amnesty increases by .11 when comparing those residing in areas with local protests and those residing in areas with no prior protests. Further, the probability of supporting a guest worker program with a path to legalization is .07 lower among those residing in areas with protest activity compared to those residing in areas with no protest activity. Finally, the probability of a foreign-born citizen supporting a guest worker program with a temporary residency requirement is .04 lower among those residing in areas with protest activity compared to those residing in areas with no protest activity. Together, these results suggest that for foreignborn citizens living in areas with protest activities, there is a shift from supporting the guest worker options to supporting amnesty.

Third, the results indicate there is also a significant difference in immigration policy preferences among

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Sixty-three percent of respondents lived in areas that experienced protest activities, whereas 37% resided in areas that experienced no protest activities.

TABLE 3 Predicted Probabilities: Local Protest Conditioned on Generation

Generation	First Noncitizen	First Citizen	Second Generation	Third Generation	Fourth Generation
Pr Y = Amnesty					
No Protest	.39	.33	.27	.22	.18
Local Protest	.50	.44	.37	.32	.27
$\Delta$	.11 (.03)**	.11 (.03)**	.10 (.03)**	.10 (.04)*	.09 (.05)
Pr Y = Guest Wor	ker Legalization				
No Protest	.37	.42	.45	.49	.52
Local Protest	.31	.35	.39	.41	.44
$\Delta$	$06 (.03)^*$	$07(.02)^{**}$	07 (.03)**	$07 (.04)^*$	08(.05)
Pr Y = Guest Wor	ker Temporary				
No Protest	.15	.15	.15	.15	.14
Local Protest	.10	.11	.13	.14	.16
Δ	05 (.02)*	04 (.02)*	02 (.02)	01 (.03)	.02 (.02)

Note: The estimates represent predicted probabilities with delta method-derived standard errors in parentheses.

second- and third-generation Latinos as a function of exposure to local protest events. This suggests that for second- and third-generation Latinos surveyed in the protest period, proximate exposure to protest events served to attenuate support for a guest worker program with a path to legalization and heighten support for reform that promotes amnesty. For example, for a secondgeneration Latino who resides in an area with a protest event, the probability of supporting amnesty is .10 higher and the probability of supporting a guest worker program with a path to citizenship is .07 lower compared to a second-generation Latino who resides in an area with no protest events. Finally, the impact of exposure to local protest does not reach a conventional level of statistical significance among fourth-plus-generation Latinos, suggesting the conditioning effect diminishes among more assimilated Latinos.

Together, these results lend evidence to support our expectation that exposure to local protest activity should impact immigration attitudes (Hypothesis 3). Again, we see the effect of exposure to protest is conditioned on one's generational status (Hypothesis 2).

#### Spatial Exposure: Number of Local Protest Events

Now we examine whether and how the number of local protest events affects immigration preferences.<sup>20</sup> The predicted probabilities presented in Table 4 are based on a model that includes a measure of the number of local protests that occurred before the respondent was surveyed, which ranges from 1 to 13 (see Table E in the SI for the results). Again, the analysis presented here includes only those respondents who resided in an area with a prior protest event.

First, the predicted probabilities indicate the immigration preferences among first-generation noncitizen Latinos do not vary as a function of the number of prior local protests. Among this subgroup, support for amnesty is obviously high, and increasing the number of protests does not result in greater support for this policy position or movement on the other policy options. In the protest period, first-generation noncitizens' proximate exposure to one protest or 13 protests makes little difference. For this group, the threat of restrictive immigration policy reform for themselves and their community is likely already salient.

Second, there are significant differences in immigration attitudes as a function of the number of local protests among first-generation citizens and second-plusgeneration Latinos. The starkest findings emerge on the amnesty option. Here we see among Latinos who are citizens—by naturalization or birth—that there is a sizable shift in support for amnesty as the number of local protests increases from the minimum to the maximum, thus lending support for Hypothesis 4. Among first-generation citizens, the probability of supporting amnesty increases by .16 as the number of protests increases from the minimum to the maximum, whereas among second-generation Latinos, the probability increases by .24 as the number increases from the minimum to the maximum.

<sup>\*\*</sup> $p \le .01$ ; \* $p \le .05$ .

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>We also estimated a model with a measure of the estimated logged number of protesters per capita. The results are substantively consistent with results presented in Table E in the SI. We chose to omit the results due to space constraints.

TABLE 4 Predicted Probabilities: Number of Local Protests Conditioned on Generation

Generation	First Noncitizen	First Citizen	Second Generation	Third Generation	Fourth Generation
Pr Y = Amnesty					
One Protest	.46	.37	.28	.21	.15
13 Protests	.53	.53	.52	.50	.49
$\Delta$	.07 (.07)	.16 (.05)**	.24 (.05)**	.30 (.08)**	.34 (.10)**
Pr Y = Guest Wor	rker Legalization				
One Protest	.35	.40	.45	.48	.50
13 Protests	.27	.30	.33	.35	.37
$\Delta$	08 (.07)	$10 (.04)^*$	12 (.04)**	13 (.06)*	13 (.10)
Pr Y = Guest Wor	rker Temporary				
One Protest	.12	.15	.18	.22	.25
13 Protests	.06	.06	.05	.05	.04
$\Delta$	04(.04)	10 (.03)**	13 (.03)**	17 (.05)**	21 (.08)*

 $\it Note:$  The estimates represent predicted probabilities with delta method– derived standard errors in parentheses.

A consistent trend emerges among third- and fourthplus-generation Latinos.

Third, the results also highlight shifts in support for the guest worker program options. Among Latinos who are citizens—by naturalization or birth—there is a sizable shift in support for reform involving a guest worker option as the number of local protests increases from the minimum to the maximum As the number of local protests increases from one to 13, the probability of a first-generation Latino citizen supporting a guest worker program with an eventual path to legalization decreases from .40 to .30. Further, among first-generation Latino citizens, as the number of local protests increases from one to 13, the probability of supporting a guest worker program with a provision for temporary residency decreases from .15 to .06. Similar trends emerge for second-plus-generation Latinos. This suggests that in areas with higher volumes of protest activities, attitudes among more assimilated Latinos reveal a sizable decline in support for immigration reform that involves a guest worker program—with a path to legalization or with a provision for temporary residency.

Finally, the results demonstrate the conditional nature of the relationship between exposure to protest events and immigration attitudes. As the number of local protests increases, we see no significant difference in immigration attitudes among first-generation noncitizens, yet marked differences across the categories of generational status. Indeed, there is a significant difference in support for amnesty (.18) between first-generation noncitizens and second-generation Latinos in areas with a single protest; yet this difference disappears as the number of protests increases. This suggests that as the number of

protests increases, a second-generation Latino is as likely to support amnesty as a first-generation noncitizen. In the protest context, the proximate experience of local protest events has the greatest impact on those who are least directly threatened by restrictive immigration reform. We suspect increased protest activity diffused information about the threat of the policy and the anti-immigrant undertones, thus swaying support for less restrictive immigration policy.

Before considering the implications of these findings, we would like to offer a general discussion of the other covariates. The results for the country of origin/descent variables indicate a consistently significant difference in immigration preferences between Mexican and Puerto Rican respondents, as well as between Cuban and Puerto Rican respondents. For instance, in the model testing the difference in support pre- and postprotest (Table C in the SI), on average Mexican respondents have a .41 likelihood of supporting amnesty and Cubans have a .43 probability, whereas Puerto Ricans have a .31 probability. This is reflective of the differential citizenship status of Puerto Ricans when compared to these other Latino subgroups.

Additionally, the results indicate Catholic identification has no consistent impact on immigration preferences; however, Latinos who regularly attend church are significantly more likely to support amnesty than a guest worker program with a path to legalization. The results also suggest a consistent and positive relationship between language skills and support for amnesty. Substantively, the results indicate linguistically incorporated Latinos are more likely to support more restrictive immigration reform than less linguistically incorporated Latinos. Furthermore, heightened political knowledge is

<sup>\*\*</sup> $p \le .01$ ; \* $p \le .05$ .

associated with increased likelihood of supporting a guest worker program with a path to legalization rather than a policy promoting amnesty. Finally, civic participation appears to have no consistent relationship with Latino immigration policy preferences. Together, the findings suggest linguistic acculturation, church attendance, and political knowledge influence the structure of Latino attitudes toward immigration.

#### Conclusion

Here, we examine the impact of the 2006 immigration protests on immigration policy preferences. Fortuitously, the LNS was in the field before and after the protests began, creating a natural experiment. Utilizing these data, we find respondents surveyed after the protests began were, generally speaking, more likely to support amnesty than those surveyed before the protests began. We also find evidence among respondents interviewed after the protests began that those residing in areas where protest activities occurred are more likely to support amnesty than those living in areas with no protests. Additionally, the effect of temporal and spatial exposure to protest is conditioned on whether the focus of the protest, in this case H.R. 4437, represents a threat to the respondent. Perhaps not surprisingly, after exposure to a single local protest, the most threatened respondents (firstgeneration noncitizens) have the greatest likelihood of supporting the most lenient policy option, amnesty. However, as the number of local protests increased, those less directly affected by the proposed law also become more likely to support amnesty.

This research, we think, advances the literature focused on social protest in at least three ways. First, it demonstrates that temporal exposure and spatial exposure to protest influence policy preferences. It is important to recognize that differences in the distribution of information about an issue as a function of exposure to protest have consequences for public opinion. Second, it illustrates that the impact of temporal and spatial exposure to protest is conditioned on individual-level characteristics. The results presented in Table 1 offer a very different view of the impact of protest than the interactive results presented thereafter. When examining how protest may influence opinion, it is important to consider individual-level characteristics that may moderate the effect of the protest. Third, the analysis suggests a more nuanced idea of how protest influences attitudes among individuals within the group or groups tethered to the protest issue. The findings in this case suggest that social

protest had a coalescing effect among Latinos exposed, temporally and spatially, to the protest events.

If data are available, it would be fruitful to see whether the arguments developed about the influence of protest in this particular policy example can be generalized to other instances of protest—for example, what effect student demonstrations against college tuition increases and youth unemployment in the United Kingdom or Quebec had on the opinion of students who continue to attend classes or who have jobs. It would be reasonable to hypothesize that students in London and Montreal, cities at the center of the protest movements, are more aware of and affected by the protest events. Rising tuition costs would also threaten low-income families with aspirations for their children to attend college. These families may not be knowledgeable of the tuition hikes until they are made aware through the protests. Thus, a similar case study could be conducted using the theoretical framework we have laid out. Obtaining a more systematic understanding of the impact of protest on public opinion will ultimately provide greater insight into the success (or not) of social movements for policy change.

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## **Supporting Information**

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

**Table A:** Summary Statistics.

**Table B:** Attitudes Toward Immigration Policy: Pre-Post Protests.

**Table C:** Attitudes Toward Immigration Policy: Pre-Post Protests.

**Table D:** Attitudes Toward Immigration Policy: Local Protest(s).

**Table E:** Attitudes Toward Immigration Policy: Number of Local Protest(s).

Table F: Predicted Probabilities: Pre and Post-Protest.

**Table G:** Predicted Probabilities: Protest Conditioned on Generation.

**Table H:** Predicted Probabilities: Protest Local Conditioned on Generation and Media Use.

**Table I:** Predicted Probabilities: # Local Protest Conditioned on Generation and Media Use.