Replication of "The Upside of Accents: Language, Inter-group Difference, and Attitudes toward Immigration"

Kevin Wang

4/25/2020

Contents

1 Abstract

Hopkins (2015) finds that exposing a nationally representative sample of Americans to video of an immigrant speaking accented English causes the respondents to adopt more inclusionary attitudes. I successfully replicated Hopkins's results, except for a minor manipulation check and the composite immigration index. As an extension, I modified the original regression by adding respondents' self-reported familiarity with Spanish in real life. I found that respondents who reported more frequent encounters with Spanish tended to hold more restrictionist views. This result suggests the difficulty of changing exclusionary attitudes developed through long-term contact with culturally distinctive traits in daily life.

2 Introduction

Hopkins (2015) tests prior hypotheses about natives' responses to culturally distinctive immigrants. Hopkins shows two nationally representative samples of non-Hispanic Americans video, adapted from an ABC news clip, of an undocumented Hispanic immigrant expressing support for assimilation and a path to citizenship. The video is edited such that the immigrant is visibly either dark- or light-skinned and speaks either fluent Spanish, fluent English, or heavily accented English. Afterwards, respondents are surveyed about a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, as well as other immigration-related questions. Hopkins runs OLS and logistic regressions on responses to these questions using indicators for treatment as well as conservatism, gender, and other respondent traits. Contrary to prior results like Blair, Judd, and Fallman (2004) suggesting the primacy of skin tone, Hopkins finds that skin tone does not meaningfully shift attitudes. Moreover, there is no difference between responses to fluent English or Spanish, but significantly more pro-immigrant

responses to broken English. Hopkins theorizes that rather than heightening perceptions of cultural difference, a broken English speaker reinforces positive stereotypes about norms of hard work and assimilation.

I replicated Hopkins's results in R.[1]

3   Literature Review

Previous literature develops several theories to predict and explain responses to culturally distinctive traits. The ethnocentrism-based approach, outlined in Kinder and Kam (2009), holds that individuals are predisposed to divide society into in-groups and out-groups. On the other hand, other hypotheses, like Weber and Crocker (1983), propound the primacy of skin-tone and argue that darker skin tone is determinative of more exclusionary attitudes.

4   Replication Progress

The replication is based on King (2006). I was able to replicate all but three charts and tables from Hopkins (2015). I am not able to replicate Appendix A, Figure 1 because it is not entirely clear where that data is in the dataset and how to process it, but I anticipate coming up with a method soon. I can only partially replicate Figure 4 and Appendix C, Table 4 because the method for calculating the six-question index is not specified anywhere in the paper; I may have to email Hopkins and ask. The only additional aspect I am unable to replicate is the "free step-down resampling method" for generating the appropriate corrected p-values for Figure 3.

5   Extension

In both the August 2010 and January 2011 surveys, all respondents were asked the following question: "In your day-to-day life, how frequently do you hear Spanish spoken? Never or almost never, less than once a month, 1-3 times each month, at least once a week, or every day?" I extend Hopkins (2015) by incorporating responses to this question in the regression models for immigration-related questions.

This "familiarity with Spanish" question could be reasonably expected to be an important explainer of immigration attitudes. In each survey, approximately 35 percent of respondents heard Spanish spoken every day, and about another 30 percent heard Spanish spoken at least once a week. Therefore, the apparent lack of exclusionary responses to "culturally distinctive" traits may be influenced by such widespread familiarity with Spanish among respondents, whereas other respondents less familiar with Spanish in their daily lives may exhibit more exclusionary responses for which the current analysis is not accounting. There is evidence for hostile responses to specifically *non-familiar* culturally distinctive traits in an experimental setting. For example, Enos (2014) finds that when Spanish speakers were introduced to a predominantly white, upper-income subway commute route, overall attitudes toward immigration become more exclusionary. It might similarly be the case in Hopkins (2015) that the only reason why fluent Spanish and broken English treatments do not prompt hostility is because the vast majority of respondents were already familiar with Spanish.

---

[1] R Core Team (2019)
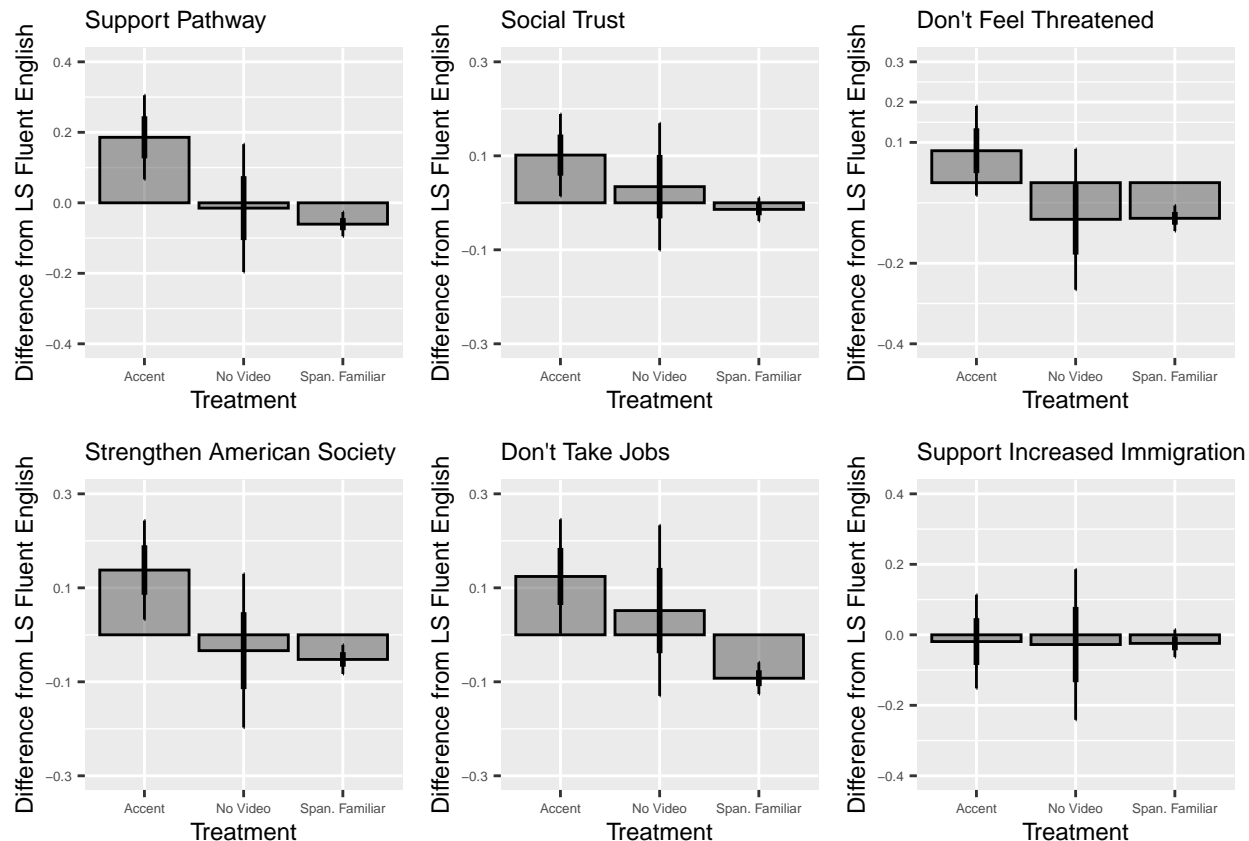
I modified the regressions on all six original questions from Hopkins (2015) to include familiarity with Spanish. The question is coded on a numerical scale from 1 to 5 with 5 as hearing Spanish "every day". The results of the analysis are surprising and run counter to expectations. Since Hopkins (2015) finds that responses to the "increased legal immigration" question are correlated differently than the other questions, we will set aside that question as similarly anomalous. As the figure above shows, on all four remaining immigration-related questions, the effect of familarity with Spanish is exactly opposite that of accented English. Respondents who are more familiar with Spanish in daily life tend to record more exclusionary responses. For most questions, the familiarity coefficient is significantly smaller than the coefficient of accented English, but the associated uncertainty is also significantly smaller, indicating that the effect is likely to be consistent.

This extension of the model does not necessarily change the fundamental conclusions of Hopkins (2015). The chief finding, that accented English elicits inclusionary rather than exclusionary responses, remains valid and the effect is unchanged by the new model. Rather, the extension raises questions about the preconditions that would cause positive or negative reactions in response to "culturally distinctive" traits. Contrary to Enos (2014), the data from Hopkins (2015) suggest that lack of familiarity does not necessarily result in hostility, nor does prolonged familiarity abate hostility. Further inquiry is needed on the effects of long-term exposure to cultural diversity.

A Appendix

A.1 Replication of Table 1, Hopkins (2015)

TABLE 1 *OLS Regression of Support for a Pathway to Naturalization on Indicators of Treatment Group Status and Other Independent Variables*

	β	SE
Intercept	2.475	0.162
Dark Skin Tone	0.044	0.0454
Accented English	0.185	0.056
Fluent Spanish	0.041	0.055
No Video	0.000	0.089
Years of Educ.	0.058	0.009
Cons. Ideology	-0.147	0.019
Rep. Partisanship	-0.070	0.014
Black	0.039	0.076
Male	-0.149	0.044
Degrees of Freedom	1,825	

Note: Dependent variable: support for a pathway to naturalization, measured from 1 ('strongly oppose') to 4 ('strongly support'). The baseline respondent heard fluent English and saw a light-skinned immigrant.

References

Blair, Irene V., Charles M. Judd, and Jennifer L. Fallman. 2004. "The Automaticity of Race and Afrocentric Facial Features in Social Judgments." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87 (6): 763–78. http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1037/0022-3514.87.6.763.

Enos, Ryan D. 2014. "Causal Effect of Intergroup Contact on Exclusionary Attitudes." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111 (10). National Academy of Sciences: 3699–3704. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1317670111.

Hopkins, Daniel J. 2015. "The Upside of Accents: Language, Inter-Group Difference, and Attitudes Toward Immigration." *British Journal of Political Science* 45 (3): 531–57. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123413000483.

Kinder, Donald R., and Cindy D. Kam. 2009. *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion.* University of Chicago Press.

King, Gary. 2006. "Publication, Publication." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39 (1). American Political Science Association, Cambridge University Press: 119–25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451691.

R Core Team. 2019. *R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing.* Vienna, Austria: R Foundation for Statistical Computing. https://www.R-project.org/.

Weber, Renee, and Jennifer Crocker. 1983. "Cognitive Processes in the Revision of Stereotypic Beliefs." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45 (5): 961–77.

Table 1: OLS Regression of Support for a Pathway to Naturalization on Indicators of Treatment Group Status and Other Independent Variables

	Dependent variable:
	q7
dark	0.045
	(0.046)
accented	0.184***
	(0.060)
spanish	0.039
	(0.055)
no_video	0.001
	(0.090)
years_educ	0.057***
	(0.010)
conservative	−0.146***
	(0.019)
republican	−0.070***
	(0.014)
black	0.030
	(0.076)
male	−0.148***
	(0.044)
Constant	2.476***
	(0.161)
Observations	1,835
R^2	0.147
Adjusted R^2	0.143
Residual Std. Error	0.931 (df = 1825)
F Statistic	34.875*** (df = 9; 1825)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01