2. White, monolingual English voters who vote on a bilingual ballot will feel increased conservative policy preferences.

3. Non-Hispanic racial minorities will also perceive a higher threat when voting on a monolingual English ballot, but to a lesser degree than white voters.

Methods: MTurk and Qualtrics

We conducted our study using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online survey platform. Participants from MTurk were directed to a survey hosted on Qualtrics and paid $0.50 for their participation.

Participants were randomly assigned to either the monolingual English condition (Figure 1) or the bilingual Spanish/English conditions (Figure 2).

Analyses were run to detect the impact ballot language had on:
1. Perceived threat to racial status (Scale of 1 to 7)
2. Political preference for mayor candidate (Republican or Democrat)
3. Political preference for protecting DACA recipients (Yes or No)

Results: Significant for Some Groups

Threat perception: White self-identified conservatives voting on bilingual ballots expressed threat at a notably higher level (M = 3.93) than those voting on monolingual English ballots (M = 3.69); this result was significant at the 0.1 level (x² = 11.052; df = 6; p = 0.08678).

DACA: There was a 14.47% difference in support for DACA between white self-described moderates in the bilingual condition and those in the monolingual condition (M₁ = 21.15%; M₂ = 35.59%; p = 0.0915).

Mayoral race: We did not find any significant effect for preferences in the mayoral race.

Discussion

Only the policy preferences of moderates were affected by the presence of Spanish, perhaps due to less rigid party identification than conservatives or liberals.

While moderates exposed to bilingual ballots expressed less support for DACA, there was no shift in preferences for the mayoral race. Voter preferences for policy may be more flexible than on partisanship.

We did not observe group status threat among racial minorities exposed to the bilingual ballot, in line with previous literature which indicates that majority groups are most susceptible to threat.

Implications and Further Research

Though our results were only significant at the p=0.10 level, the risk of small changes in an election due to voting materials should be closely scrutinized.

Further research should explore these questions with more of a focus on specific groups (e.g., moderates in a larger sample) in environments which more closely mimic the real world (e.g., an in-person experiment).

Finally, the incorporation of languages other than Spanish could reveal interesting insights about biases and election outcomes.

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