

## **Attitudes toward English Language Legislation: Predictors and Rationales**

Robert T. Schatz  
*Metropolitan State College  
of Denver*

Nancy Sullivan  
*Texas A&M University-  
Corpus Christi*

Beverly Flanigan  
*Ohio University*

Autumn Black  
*Metropolitan State College  
of Denver*

### Abstract

The research investigated predictors of and reasons for people's attitudes toward English Language Legislation (ELL) in the United States. Survey responses of 660 participants from South Texas, Colorado, and Ohio were examined. Regression analysis of demographic/background factors indicated that Hispanic ethnicity, Spanish-English bilingual language background, and political conservatism were independent predictors of ELL support. The relationship between strength of ethnic identification and ELL attitudes was mediated by respondents' ethnicity: Increased ethnic identification was associated with support for ELL among European-Americans but with opposition to ELL among Hispanic-Americans. National (U.S.) attachment, most notably concern for the U.S. flag, also predicted pro-ELL attitudes. Further, in support of the "backlash hypothesis," higher levels of ELL support among European-Americans were found in the region with the highest proportion of Hispanic residents (South Texas) than in the region with the lowest (Ohio). Pro- and anti-ELL respondents' importance ratings of reasons for their position roughly paralleled the findings of previous research by Sullivan and Schatz (1999). In addition, ethnic differences in these ratings were more pronounced among ELL opponents than among ELL proponents. These findings are discussed within the context of the predictors and underlying motivations of people's attitudes toward ELL.

The status of English in the United States has been debated for over a century. Historically, the push for national adoption of the English language has paralleled the rise of patriotic and nationalistic sentiments in the United States (Curti, 1946; Ricento, 1995). For example, in the early 1900s, immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe fomented xenophobic feelings and an Americanization movement that resulted in restrictive language laws including the passage of legislation in 15 states making English the sole language of instruction in the schools (Citrin et al., 1990b). Additionally, during World War I anti-German sentiment resulted in attempts to prohibit the German language from being taught in schools and even from being spoken in public (Schiffman, 1998). With increased immigration in the 1980s and 1990s, preceded by liberal language policies of the 1960s and 1970s that focused on language rights (e.g., bilingual education and bilingual ballots), it is not surprising that a national debate over language legislation surfaced once again.

The current national debate centers around whether English should be made the official language of the United States government. A powerful and well-financed lobbying group, U.S. English, is spearheading the movement to do so. For almost 20 years, U.S. English has lobbied for federal legislation, which to-date has not been successful. Whereas the House of Representatives passed H.R. 123, the "English Language Empowerment Act" in 1996, the measure was not acted upon by the Senate and therefore did not become law. At the state level, however, English language legislation (ELL) has been more successful with 22 states having passed various forms of ELL (Crawford, 1999). U.S. English claims a role in subsidizing successful language campaigns efforts in Alaska, Georgia, Montana, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Missouri within the last few years (U.S. English, 1999a).

U.S. English argues that making English the official language in the United States is necessary for the following reasons: a) it will promote unity rather than the divisiveness that is encouraged by multilingual government services; b) it will empower immigrants to realize the American dream and become more productive members of society in contrast to the "linguistic welfare" created by multi-lingual services; and c) it is common sense government as a single language will eliminate the expense of providing services in different languages (U.S. English, 1999b). ELL opponents have questioned the agenda of U.S. English, especially when direct ties to immigration restrictionist groups were uncovered in the 1980s (see Crawford, 1992, for a detailed discussion). They maintain that ELL is insidious legislation directed at non-European immigrants (King, 1997; Padilla et al., 1991; Zentella, 1997) and targeted at the Hispanic population in particular (Crawford, 1992; Zentella, 1997). Rather than being inclusive, critics claim that ELL disenfranchises non-English speaking immigrants, who according to census data, shift rapidly to English (Amastae, 1990; Garcia, 1995; Veltman, 1983, 1988).

Many organizations have voiced opposition to ELL and have published resolutions on language rights (e.g., Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, American Association of Applied Linguistics, League of United Latin American Citizens, Linguistic Society of America, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, National Council of Teachers of English, National Education Association). Further, the formation of the English Plus language advocacy coalition has provided an organization not only to respond to language legislation issues, but also to advocate a language policy that would provide U.S. residents with opportunities to learn other languages. English Plus has achieved some success, particularly in states with large numbers of Hispanic voters. In the Southwest, many Republicans (a traditionally conservative and pro-ELL party) have opposed ELL rather than alienate Spanish speakers. For example, during his run for the Republican nomination in the 1996 Presidential campaign, Senator Phil Graham (R-TX) stated that he would not support ELL. In May 1998, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) introduced to the Senate an English-Plus resolution (S667) that recognizes the importance of knowing another language in the global economy, while also acknowledging that fluency in English is important for success in American society. Then Governor George Bush (R-TX) also voiced support for English Plus and opposition to ELL. In contrast, the state with the largest number of Hispanics, California, has passed several controversial measures that legislate language policy (e.g., Proposition O ending bilingual ballots in San Francisco, 1983; Proposition 38, "Voting Materials in English Only" for all of California, 1984; Proposition 63, the first official English measure by ballot initiative, 1986; and, Proposition 227 an anti-bilingual education initiative, 1998).

#### *Previous Research on Attitudes toward English Language Legislation*

Extant empirical research on ELL has focused primarily on demographic and other background factors that predict peoples' attitudes toward ELL. Polls and other survey studies have found consistently that European-Americans are much more likely to support ELL than are Hispanics who generally oppose it (Citrin et al., 1990a, 1990b; Ray & Tinsley, 1995; Schmid, 1992; Sears, Citrin, Cheleden, & van Laar, 1999; Sullivan, Cuevas, Renaud, & Salazar, 1995, Sullivan & Schatz, 1999; Tatalovich, 1995; Zentella, 1997). Higher levels of ELL support have also been found for monolingual English speakers even when controlling for respondents' ethnic background (Sullivan & Schatz, 1999), political conservatives (Citrin et al., 1990b; Sullivan & Schatz, 1999; see also Tatalovich, 1995), and less educated respondents (Citrin et al., 1990b).

Pro-ELL attitudes have also been linked to feelings of American nationalism. For example, as discussed above, language restriction laws paralleled the Americanization movement of the early 1900s. Analyses of survey data also suggest that feelings of American nationalism predict pro-ELL attitudes. For

example, the vast majority of respondents in a 1988 California poll agreed that speaking and writing English is important in “making someone a true American” (Citrin et al., 1990b, p. 549).

Whereas a number of studies have investigated predictors of ELL attitudes, little research has examined people’s *reasons* for their attitudes (although the research on nationalism summarized above may be construed in this light). The most notable exception is a recent study conducted by Sullivan and Schatz (1999). In this study, respondents from a South Texas university (Texas A&M-Corpus Christi) indicated their position on ELL (favor, oppose, or unsure) and then provided reasons for their position in a free-response format. The researchers sorted these responses into eight pro-ELL and seven anti-ELL categories. An additional rater was employed to examine inter rater reliability: 92% agreement was found for both the pro- and anti-ELL reasons. The resulting pro- and anti-ELL categories are presented in Figure 1 in order of frequency, together with an example statement from each category. (See Sullivan & Schatz, 1999, for a more detailed description of the methodology and results.)

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Figure 1. Pro-ELL and Anti-ELL Categories and Example of Reasons

*Pro-ELL*

**Communication:** Description--English will allow people to communicate better. Americans will understand each other and not run into any speaking problems.

**Majority Language:** Description--English is the primary language spoken in the US.

If foreigners come to the US they should be willing to learn English which the majority speaks and writes.

**When in Rome...:** Description--Learn the language of the country you want to live in or visit.

Before I visited Mexico the first thing I did was learn Spanish. It only makes sense.

**America=English:** Description--The English language is linked with being an American.

...this is the US--America not Mexico

**Hostility to Foreign Influences:** Description--Overt expressions of enmity toward foreigners.

No one should be able to come into our country and take our pride away from us.

**National Unity:** Description--One language helps to unify a people.

It will bring Americans closer together as a unit. One Nation, One Language.

**Expense/Logistics:** Description--Concern with the cost/problems of bilingual forms/facilities.

It will make education less expensive if everyone understands the same language.

**International Language:** Description--English is a world language.

English is spoken world-wide--it's a universal language.

*Anti-ELL*

**Freedom/Rights:** Description--An appeal to the American tradition of freedom of speech.

...it would preclude rights set forth in the Constitution.

**Melting Pot/Diversity:** Description--The US is made up of people from many different cultures.

To enact [ELL] legislation would not allow for the cultural diversity that makes this country great.

**Disadvantage/Difficulty:** Description--Non-English speakers would be at a disadvantage.

Many people do not know English and they should not be at a disadvantage.

**Bilingualism is Important:** Description--Bilingualism should be seen as an asset.

[ELL] legislation will have a negative effect on international relationships due to the lack of bilingual education.

**Cultural Preservation:** Description--Language is an integral part of one's culture/heritage.

Language is part of a person's culture which should not be denied.

**Prejudice/Discrimination:** Description--This legislation would discriminate and alienate.

It alienates a large portion of the American Republic.

**Unnecessary/Ineffective:** Description--Why bother?

It is unnecessary--English is the official language--everyone is well aware of this.

In addition to eliciting respondents' reasons for their ELL attitudes, Sullivan and Schatz (1999) also examined whether European-Americans and Mexican-Americans (who constituted virtually the entire sample of Hispanic respondents) differed in their reasons for supporting or opposing ELL. The only significant differences were that European-Americans' pro-ELL reasons were more likely to fall into the *When in Rome* and *Hostility to Foreign Influences* categories, and that Mexican-Americans' anti-ELL reasons were more likely to fall into the *Freedom/Rights* and *Disadvantaged/Difficulty* categories (the latter difference was only marginally significant,  $p = .08$ ). Thus, whereas Mexican-Americans and European-Americans held vastly divergent attitudes toward ELL, the differences in their reasons for these attitudes were less pronounced.

*Overview of the Present Research*

The present study examined both predictors of and reasons for respondents' ELL attitudes. The primary goals of this research were fivefold: a) to test whether

relationships between demographic/background factors and ELL attitudes replicate findings from previous research; b) to examine the relationships between strength of ethnic identification and ELL attitudes for Hispanic- and European-American respondents; c) to examine more closely the relationship between national (U.S.) attachment and ELL attitudes; d) to examine whether ELL attitudes vary as a function of location: South Texas, Colorado, and Ohio; and e) to examine respondents' reasons for their ELL attitudes and potential differences between Hispanic- and European-Americans' reasons, using a more quantitative methodology than was used by Sullivan and Schatz (1999).

Based on previous research findings, we expected that European-American ethnicity, monolingual English background, and political conservatism would predict pro-ELL attitudes. In addition, given the relationship between ethnicity and ELL attitudes found in these studies (European-Americans in favor and Hispanic-Americans opposed), we expected that strength of ethnic identification would be positively related to pro-ELL attitudes for European-Americans but negatively related to pro-ELL attitudes for Hispanic-Americans. With regard to national attachment, two predictions were advanced. First, based on the positive associations between U.S. nationalism and pro-ELL attitudes found by Citrin et al. (1990a, 1990b), as well as the nationalistic pro-ELL reasons elicited in Sullivan and Schatz's (1999) study (most notably the *America=English* and *National Unity* categories), we expected that strength of national identification and feelings of U.S. patriotism would predict pro-ELL attitudes. Second, we expected that the relationship between national attachment and ELL attitudes would differ as a function of the type of national involvement. In particular, we pursued a distinction between "symbolic" and "instrumental" national involvement proposed by Schatz and Lavine (1999). Symbolic national involvement refers to concern for national symbols (e.g., the flag) and ritualistic-ceremonial activities that typically involve national symbols (e.g., the Pledge of Allegiance); in contrast, instrumental involvement refers to concern for the functionality of the group (e.g., the effectiveness of its social and political systems) and the participation of group members in the management of group life (e.g., voting). (See Kelman, 1969, 1997; Kelman & Hamilton, 1986 for a related distinction.) Although pro-ELL proponents often make instrumentally-based arguments for supporting ELL (e.g., a common language will make it easier for U.S. citizens to communicate with each other; a common language will reduce taxpayer expenditures used to support multilingual documents and facilities), we propose that the link between national attachment and pro-ELL attitudes is more symbolic than instrumental in nature. In particular, we argue that pro-ELL attitudes stem largely from peoples' psychological group identity or "social identity" (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) as Americans (see Citrin, 1990; Citrin et al., 1990a, 1990b for a similar argument). Further, as was found by Schatz and Lavine (1999), we contend that American social identity is linked more strongly

to concern for national symbols than to concern for national functionality. Therefore, we expected that pro-ELL attitudes would be more strongly (positively) associated with symbolic than with instrumental national involvement.

We also examined whether ELL attitudes differ as a function of respondents' geographical location: South Texas, Colorado, and Ohio. According to the "backlash" hypothesis, immigration and the presence of Hispanics engender feelings of threat which are expressed as heightened support for ELL (see, for example, Baron, 1990; Padilla et al. 1991; Zentella, 1997). Previous studies have provided mixed support for the backlash hypothesis. Two studies of voting behavior failed to confirm the hypothesis: Tatalovich (1995) found that counties with higher percentages of Spanish-speakers were not more likely to cast pro-ELL votes in state referenda; Sanotoro (1999) found that Hispanic population growth did not predict the adoption of ELL by state legislatures. However, Sanotoro (1999) also noted that only the inability of citizens to initiate amendments in Texas blocked ELL in that state. Moreover, according to Citrin et al. (1990b), the four states in which voters passed ELL amendments by initiative after their state legislators failed to pass ELL legislation had "...as a group, the highest proportions of non-English speakers, immigrants, Hispanics, and Asians...[and]...experienced the highest rate of growth in their Hispanic and foreign-born populations between 1970-1980." (pp. 540-541). Of the three locations examined in the present study, South Texas has the largest percentage of Hispanics whereas Ohio has the lowest. Thus, the backlash hypothesis predicts that European-Americans (and perhaps members of non-Hispanic minority groups) from South Texas and Ohio will report the highest and lowest levels of ELL support respectively.

Finally, in order to examine respondents' reasons for their attitudes, we constructed eight pro-ELL and seven anti-ELL statements that were derived from the pro- and anti-ELL categories found by Sullivan and Schatz (1999). Respondents who indicated that they were in favor of or opposed to ELL rated the importance of each of these pro- or anti-ELL reasons. Whereas no specific predictions were advanced, we examined whether the mean importance ratings for these reasons paralleled the category frequencies found by Sullivan and Schatz (1999), and whether the differences between Hispanic- and European-American respondents' importance ratings paralleled the differences between Mexican- and European-American respondents' reasons found in their study. Similar results across the two studies would support the reliability and validity of these findings, especially given the different methodologies used in the two studies and additional locations examined in the present study. Further, due to the relatively small cell sizes that resulted when Sullivan and Schatz (1999) compared Mexican- and European-Americans' reasons, and the fact the nonparametric tests used by Sullivan and Schatz (1999) are less powerful than the parametric tests that could be employed here, we suspected that a greater number

of significant differences between Hispanic- and European-American respondents' reasons would be found in the present study.

#### *Method*

##### *Respondents*

Six hundred sixty college students (459 females, 191 males and 10 that did not indicate their sex) completed a survey. Two-hundred fifteen of the respondents (32.6%) were from Texas A&M-Corpus Christi and Del Mar College, both in Corpus Christi, Texas; 204 (30.9%) were from three different colleges in the Denver metro area of Colorado (Metropolitan State College of Denver, Red Rocks Community College, and Community College of Aurora); and 241 (36.5%) were from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. The South Texas and Colorado samples were limited to respondents who indicated on the survey that they were instate residents for the majority of their lives. This information not was obtained from the Ohio University sample (otherwise the surveys used in the three states were identical). Therefore, residency status was obtained from a separate sample of 131 Ohio University students: One hundred eleven (84.7%) of this sample indicated that they were instate residents for the majority of their lives; in addition, most of the remaining students resided in the neighboring states of Pennsylvania, Kentucky, or West Virginia.

Of the total sample, 425 (64.4%) identified themselves as White/European-American, 145 (22.0%) as Hispanic-American, 29 (4.4%) as African-American, 18 (2.7%) as Native American, 17 (2.6%) as Asian-American, 15 (2.3%) as "Other," and 11 (1.7%) of the respondents did not identify their ethnicity. Four hundred sixty-eight (70.9%) claimed a monolingual English background, 135 (20.5%) a bilingual Spanish-English background, 48 (7.3%) "other" (typically some proficiency in one or more languages besides Spanish), and nine respondents did not indicate their language background. The mean age of this sample was 22.19 years.

##### *Materials and procedure*

The survey, entitled "Language Legislation Survey," was completed during a regular class period. At the top of the first page, respondents indicated whether or not they were "aware that there is currently legislation to make English the one official language of the United States government." Respondents then indicated whether they were in favor of this legislation, opposed, or unsure. After indicating their position, respondents who favored ELL rated the importance of eight pro-ELL reasons, and respondents who opposed ELL rated the importance of seven anti-ELL reasons; respondents who were unsure did not complete this portion of the survey. These reasons, derived from Sullivan and Schatz's (1999) pro- and anti-ELL categories discussed above (see Figure 1), were presented as one-sentence statements. For example, the statement "English is the language of the majority in the U.S." was derived from the pro-ELL *Majority Language*

category; the statement “Freedom of speech includes the right to speak a language other than English” was derived from the anti-ELL *Freedom/Rights* category. (See Appendix for a list of all statements used in this study.) Respondents rated the importance of each pro- or anti-ELL reason on a 5-point scale where 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important.

All respondents then completed the following demographic/background items: age, sex, ethnicity/race, education (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate; coded to range from 1 to 5 respectively), language background, political ideology (very liberal, somewhat liberal, middle of the road, somewhat conservative, very conservative; coded to range from 1 to 5 respectively), and, for the South Texas and Colorado samples, the city/state in which the respondent has “spent most of [his/her] life.” Strength of ethnic identification was assessed by the item “How strongly do you identify yourself as a member of the ethnic/race group you checked above?” (where 1 = not at all and 5 = very strongly) which appeared directly below the ethnicity/race background item. Respondents then completed four national attachment items. Strength of national identification was assessed by the item “How strongly do you identify yourself as an American?” (where 1 = not at all and 5 = very strongly); U.S. patriotism was assessed by the item “How would you characterize your feelings of patriotism towards the United States?” (where 1 = not at all patriotic and 5 = very patriotic). Symbolic and instrumental national involvement were assessed by the following two items, respectively: “How important is it to you that the United States flag be treated with honor and respect?” and “How important is it to you that American social and political systems improve people’s everyday lives?” (where 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important for both measures).

### *Results*

#### *Awareness of and position on English language legislation*

Over a half of the sample (59.2%) claimed not to be aware of ELL. Chi-square analyses were used to test for differences in respondents’ awareness of ELL as a function of location, language background (English monolingual vs. Spanish-English bilingual), and Hispanic- vs. European-American ethnicity. A significant difference was found for language background such that bilingual respondents were more aware of ELL (49.2% aware, 50.8% unaware) than were monolingual respondents (37.3% aware, 62.7% unaware),  $X^2 (df = 1) = 6.07, p < .05$ . As has been found in previous research, more respondents favored ELL (51.4%) than opposed ELL (20.5%); 27.6% were unsure of their position (four respondents did not indicate their position).

#### *Predictors of position on English language legislation*

*Demographic/background variables.* Chi-square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedures were used to examine differences in respondents’ positions

on ELL as a function of the individual demographic/background variables included in the study. As expected, European-Americans were more likely to favor ELL (59.3% favor, 14.2% oppose, 26.5% unsure) than were Hispanic Americans (28.0% favor, 39.9% oppose, 32.2% unsure),  $X^2 (df = 2) = 55.77, p < .0001$ , and monolingual respondents were more likely to favor ELL (55.9% favor, 15.3% oppose, 28.8% unsure) than were bilingual respondents (32.8% favor, 41.8% oppose, 25.4% unsure),  $X^2 (df = 2) = 45.87, p < .0001$ . Those in favor of the legislation were also more conservative ( $M = 3.06$ ) than were those opposed ( $M = 2.43$ ) or unsure ( $M = 2.69$ ),  $F(2, 626) = 19.93, p < .0001$ . In addition, respondents who were aware of ELL were more likely to oppose it (52.8% favor, 26.2% oppose, 21.3% unsure) than were those who were unaware of ELL who were more unsure of their position (51.2% favor, 16.9% oppose, 32.0% unsure),  $X^2 (df = 2) = 13.20, p < .001$ . Respondents' location also predicted ELL position: South Texas and Colorado respondents were more likely to support ELL (53.3% favor, 21.7% oppose, 25.0% unsure for South Texas; 59.1% favor, 18.7% oppose, 27.2% unsure for Colorado) than were Ohio respondents who were the most likely to be unsure of their position (44.0% favor, 21.2% oppose, 34.9% unsure),  $X^2 (df = 4) = 12.79, p < .05$ . In addition, respondents who opposed ELL tended to be older ( $M = 24.06$ ) than respondents who favored ELL ( $M = 22.11$ ) or were unsure ( $M = 20.96$ ),  $F(2, 648) = 10.21, p < .0001$ . Finally, respondents who opposed ELL also tended to be more educated ( $M = 2.54$ ) than respondents who favored ELL ( $M = 2.08$ ) or were unsure ( $M = 1.91$ ),  $F(2, 640) = 11.33, p < .0001$ . The only demographic/background variable included in the survey that was unrelated to ELL support was respondents' sex.

To test for the unique contribution of each predictor to respondents' attitudes toward ELL, ethnicity (Hispanic-American, European-American), language background (English monolingual, Spanish-English bilingual), political ideology, location, awareness, age, and education level were entered simultaneously in a multiple regression equation predicting ELL attitudes coded as a three-point variable (where 1 = oppose, 2 = unsure, and 3 = favor). Ethnicity ( $Beta = .21, p < .0001$ ), language background ( $Beta = -.17, p < .001$ ), and political ideology ( $Beta = .22, p < .0001$ ) emerged as significant predictors of ELL support,  $F(7, 511) = 15.81, p < .0001$ , total adjusted  $R^2 = .17$ . Thus, the results of the regression analysis indicate that ethnicity, language background, and political ideology each had independent effects on ELL attitudes such that European-Americans, English monolinguals, and more conservative respondents were more likely to support ELL than were Hispanic-Americans, Spanish-English bilinguals, and more liberal respondents. These are the same three variables that predicted ELL attitudes in a similar regression analysis conducted by Sullivan and Schatz (1999).

*Ethnic identification.* Recall that degree of ethnic identification was expected to be positively related to ELL support for European-Americans but negatively

related to ELL support for Hispanic-Americans. In order to test this prediction, bivariate correlations between degree of ethnic identification and ELL attitudes (coded as the three-point variable described above) were computed separately for the European-American and Hispanic-American samples. As expected, ethnic identification was positively correlated with support for ELL among European-Americans ( $r = .15, p < .01$ ) but negatively correlated with support for ELL among Hispanic-Americans ( $r = -.22, p < .01$ ). Thus, the more strongly European-American respondents identified with their ethnic background, the stronger their support for ELL; whereas the more strongly Hispanic-American respondents identified with their ethnic background, the stronger their opposition to ELL. No significant correlations between ethnic identification and ELL attitudes were found for members of any non-Hispanic minority groups.

*National attachment.* Bivariate correlations were then computed for the entire sample between scores on the four national attachment items and ELL support. As expected, ELL support was positively correlated with strength of American identification ( $r = .20, p < .001$ ) and with feelings of U.S. patriotism ( $r = .23, p < .001$ ). Moreover, whereas ELL support was positively correlated with symbolic national involvement ( $r = .22, p < .001$ ), it was uncorrelated with instrumental national involvement ( $r = -.06, p = .13$ ). These findings suggest that the positive relationship between national attachment and ELL support found here and in other research (Citrin et al., 1990b) stems more from concerns about national symbolism than from concerns about national functionality.

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was then conducted to examine whether the relationship between national attachment and ELL support was independent of the demographic/background factors discussed above. Ethnicity (Hispanic-American, European-American), language background (English monolingual, Spanish-English bilingual), and political ideology were entered together on the first step of the analysis; and American identification, patriotism, and symbolic involvement were entered together on the second step of the analysis. Of the three national attachment items only symbolic national involvement emerged as a significant predictor of ELL support ( $Beta = .23, p < .0001$ ),  $F(7, 511) = 21.52$ , total adjusted  $R^2 = .22$ . Thus, the results of this regression analysis lend additional support to the contention that respondents' attachment to national symbols (in this case the U.S. flag) drive the relationship between national attachment and ELL support.

*Examination of the backlash hypothesis.* The backlash hypothesis predicts greater support for ELL among European-Americans, and perhaps among non-Hispanic minorities as well, that reside in areas with higher percentages of Hispanic residents. As noted above, South Texas has the highest percentage of Hispanic residents, followed by Colorado and then Ohio, which has the lowest

percentage of Hispanic residents. Thus, support for the backlash hypothesis would be obtained if higher levels of support for ELL were found among European-Americans, and perhaps among non-Hispanic minorities, in the South Texas sample than in the Ohio sample.

As predicted by the backlash hypothesis, European-Americans' support for ELL was highest in South Texas (76.0% favor, 8.3% oppose, 15.6% unsure) and lowest in Ohio (46.7% favor, 15.0% oppose, 38.3% unsure); levels of support in Colorado fell between these two extremes (63.9% favor, 17.0% oppose, 19.0% unsure),  $\chi^2 (df = 4) = 30.28, p < .0001$ . A similar chi-square analysis conducted on the responses of non-Hispanic minority respondents was not significant ( $p = .55$ ). Thus, support for the backlash hypothesis was obtained for European-American respondents but not for non-Hispanic minority respondents.

In order to examine the relationship between location and European-Americans' ELL attitudes more closely, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted predicting ELL attitudes again coded as a three-point variable (where 1 = oppose, 2 = unsure, and 3 = favor) as a function of location. This analysis was highly significant ( $M_s = 2.68, 2.50, 2.32$  for South Texas, Colorado, and Ohio respectively),  $F(2, 420) = 7.96, p < .0001$ . The Scheffé procedure revealed that ELL attitudes were significantly more positive in South Texas than in Ohio. Finally, because the Texas respondents were more politically conservative ( $M = 3.31$ ) than respondents from Colorado ( $M = 2.82$ ) and Ohio ( $M = 2.73$ ),  $F(2, 420) = 10.41, p < .001$ , we examined whether regional differences in ELL attitudes could be explained by differences in respondents' political ideology by performing an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) that predicted ELL attitudes from location with political ideology entered as a co-variate. Location remained a significant predictor of European-Americans' ELL attitudes in this analysis,  $F(2, 415) = 4.57, p < .05$ . Thus, the relationship between location and ELL attitudes could not be explained solely by regional differences in political ideology.

#### *Reasons for position on English language legislation*

Pro-ELL ( $n = 339$ ) and anti-ELL ( $n = 135$ ) respondents' reasons for their position were then examined. Mean importance ratings and ranks for the eight pro-ELL reasons and seven anti-ELL reasons are presented in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, for the pro-ELL reasons, the highest scores were found for *Communication* and *Majority Language*. These same reasons also had the two highest obtained frequencies in Sullivan & Schatz's (1999) study. The two lowest mean importance ratings in Table 1 are for *Expense/Logistics* and *Hostility to Foreign Influences*. Whereas *Expense/Logistics* also fell near the bottom in Sullivan and Schatz's (1999) study (ranked seventh), *Hostility to Foreign Influences* was ranked a bit higher (fifth). Importance ratings for the categories that most clearly express nationalistic concerns (*National Unity* and *America =*

*English*) fell approximately midway (fourth and sixth) which are also similar to the frequency rankings found in Sullivan and Schatz (1999) except that the relative ordering of these categories was reversed. Perhaps the most notable difference between the two studies is that *International Language* was ranked last in Sullivan and Schatz (1999) but was ranked third here.

Table 1. Means and Ranks for Pro- and Anti-ELL Reasons

Category	Mean	Rank
<i>Pro-ELL</i>		
Communication	4.51	1
Majority Language	4.42	2
International Language	4.26	3
National Unity	4.22	4
When in Rome	4.15	5
America=English	3.49	6
Hostility to Foreign Influences	3.16	7
Expense/Logistics	3.05	8
<i>Anti-ELL</i>		
Freedom/Rights	4.61	1
Cultural Preservation	4.58	2
Bilingualism is Important	4.53	3
Disadvantage/Difficulty	4.31	4
Prejudice/Discrimination	4.25	5
Melting Pot/Diversity	4.18	6
Unnecessary/Ineffective	3.93	7

As for the importance ratings of the anti-ELL category reasons, the two highest scores were found for *Freedom/Rights* and *Cultural Preservation*, followed closely by *Bilingualism is Important*, whereas the lowest scores were found for *Unnecessary/Ineffective* and *Melting Pot/Diversity*, followed closely by *Prejudice Discrimination*. Again, these ratings roughly parallel those obtained by Sullivan and Schatz (1999) in that *Freedom/Rights* and *Unnecessary/Ineffective* were ranked first and last respectively in both studies. Perhaps the most notable differences in the anti-ELL categories between the two studies were found for *Cultural Preservation* which ranked near the top (second) here but near the middle (fifth) in Sullivan and Schatz (1999), and for *Melting Pot/Diversity* which was ranked near the top (second) in Sullivan and Schatz (1999) but near the bottom (sixth) here.

Mean importance ratings were then calculated separately for Hispanic- and European-American respondents. These scores are presented in Table 2.

Independent-groups t-tests were used to examine whether these scores differed for Hispanic- and European-American respondents. As can be seen in Table 2, only one significant difference was found for the pro-ELL reasons: European-Americans rated *National Unity* as a more important reason for supporting ELL compared to Hispanic-Americans. For the anti-ELL reasons, significant differences were found for five of the seven reasons: Hispanic-Americans rated *Cultural Preservation*, *Freedom/Rights*, *Bilingualism is Important*, *Disadvantage/Difficulty*, and *Unnecessary/Ineffective* as more important reasons for opposing ELL compared to European-Americans. These findings may reflect stronger anti-ELL sentiment among Hispanic- vs. European-American ELL opponents. In addition, they suggest that Hispanic- and European-Americans differ more in the importance they attach to their reasons for opposing ELL than their reasons for supporting ELL.

Table 2. Means and Ranks for Pro- and Anti-ELL Reasons as Function of Ethnic Group Membership

Category	Hispanic-American		European-American		p-value
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	
<i>Pro-ELL categories:</i>					
Majority Language	4.38	1	4.43	2	<i>ns</i>
Communication	4.36	2	4.53	1	<i>ns</i>
International Language	4.23	3	4.25	4	<i>ns</i>
When in Rome	3.92	4	4.20	5	<i>ns</i>
National Unity	3.87	5	4.31	3	.006
America=English	3.67	6	3.46	6	<i>ns</i>
Hostility to Foreign Influence	3.18	7	3.19	7	<i>ns</i>
Expense/Logistics	2.74	8	3.08	8	<i>ns</i>
<i>Anti-ELL categories:</i>					
Cultural Preservation	4.82	1	4.38	2	.004
Freedom/Rights	4.81	2	4.43	1	.008
Bilingualism is Important	4.77	3	4.33	3	.003
Disadvantage/Difficulty	4.51	4	4.07	6	.01
Prejudice/Discrimination	4.28	5	4.10	4	<i>ns</i>
Melting Pot/Diversity	4.18	6	4.08	5	<i>ns</i>
Unnecessary/Ineffective	4.18	6	3.78	7	.04

Note. *ns* = not significant. All *p*-values are two-tailed. For the pro-ELL reasons, *ns* range from 38-40 for Hispanic-Americans and from 250-251 for European-Americans. For the anti-ELL reasons, *ns* range from 56-57 for

Hispanic-Americans and from 59-60 for European-Americans. When familywise Bonferroni adjustments of  $p < .0063$  for the pro-ELL reasons and  $p < .0071$  for the anti-ELL reasons are used, the differences between Hispanic- and European-American scores for *Freedom/Rights*, *Disadvantage/Difficulty*, and *Unnecessary/Ineffective* are no longer statistically significant.

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### *Summary and Conclusions*

The findings with regard to demographic/background predictors of ELL position generally replicate those obtained in previous research: When examined individually, European-American ethnicity, monolingual English language background, political conservatism, and lower levels of education each predicted heightened support for ELL. In addition, greater support for ELL was found for younger respondents, respondents who were unaware of the legislation, and for respondents from South Texas and Colorado compared to Ohio. However, when these variables were entered into a regression equation, only ethnicity, language background, and political ideology had independent effects on ELL attitudes. The results of this regression analysis are noteworthy for two reasons: First, the finding that ethnicity and political ideology have independent effects on ELL attitudes replicates the findings of a number of previous studies and suggests that these variables are two of the most reliable demographic/background predictors of ELL. Second, the finding that language background has an independent effect on ELL support is significant because it suggests that language background and ethnicity should be treated as separate variables. This finding was also obtained by Sullivan and Schatz (1999) which, as far as we know, is the only other study to examine the independent effects of ethnicity and language background on ELL position.

Ethnic identity and national attachment also predicted ELL support. For ethnic identity, the direction of the relationship differed as a function of respondents' ethnic background: For European-American respondents, stronger ethnic identification predicted heightened support for ELL whereas for Hispanic-American respondents, stronger ethnic identification predicted heightened opposition to ELL. Our findings that feelings of U.S. patriotism, strength of American identity, and concern for the U.S. flag predict pro-ELL attitudes support Citrin et al.'s (1990b) findings linking ELL support to American nationalism. That concern for the U.S. flag was the only national attachment item that predicted ELL support beyond the contribution of ethnicity, political ideology, and language background highlights the special significance of national symbolism. Further, the finding that concern for the U.S. flag predicts pro-ELL support whereas concern for the functionality of U.S. social and political systems does not suggests that the link between nationalism and ELL support is driven more by identity-based, symbolic concerns than by instrumental, utilitarian

concerns. This finding is significant for a number of reasons. For one, it supports the validity of Schatz and Lavine's (1999) distinction between symbolic and instrumental forms of national involvement. Second, it extends Citrin et al.'s (1990a, 1990b) claim that ELL attitudes are independent of utilitarian considerations. Whereas Citrin et al.'s (1990a, 1990b) findings suggest that ELL attitudes are unrelated to utilitarian concerns at the individual level, the present finding suggests that ELL attitudes are independent of utilitarian concerns at the group (national) level as well. Moreover, this finding also suggests that pro-ELL arguments that invoke nationalistic concerns (e.g., national unity) are driven more by individuals' desire for positive group-based identification than by their concern for the functionality of the group.

Finally, with regard to predictors of ELL attitudes, the finding of higher levels of ELL support among European-Americans in South Texas than in Ohio supports the backlash hypothesis which predicts greater ELL support in areas with higher concentrations of Hispanics. Further, these differences in support could not be explained by differences in political ideology. At the same time, support for the backlash hypothesis was not obtained for non-Hispanic minorities, as location did not predict ELL attitudes for these respondents.

The importance ratings of the pro- and anti-ELL reasons roughly parallel Sullivan and Schatz's (1999) findings in that reasons with the highest and lowest mean importance scores also had the highest and lowest (or second lowest) frequencies in Sullivan and Schatz's (1999) study. However, comparisons of Hispanic- and European-Americans' scores yielded different patterns of results in the two studies. For the pro-ELL reasons, higher scores were found among European-Americans for *Hostility to Foreign Influences* and *When in Rome* by Sullivan and Schatz (1999) but for *National Unity* here. At the same time, the findings of both studies arguably suggest that European-Americans are more likely than Hispanic-Americans to invoke nationalistic arguments for supporting ELL. With regard to the anti-ELL reasons, the differences between Hispanic- and European-Americans were much more pronounced here than in Sullivan and Schatz's (1999) study where Hispanic-Americans were more likely than European-Americans to invoke only *Freedom/Rights* and *Disadvantage/Difficulty*. We suspect that the differences between the findings of these two studies result at least in part from the larger cell sizes and more powerful statistical tests that could be used in the present study. If so, then Schatz and Sullivan's (1999) findings probably understate the greater importance that Hispanic-Americans attach to their reasons for opposing ELL relative to European-Americans.

In conclusion, the present findings replicate and extend those of previous research concerning predictors of and reasons for people's attitudes toward ELL. As a whole, they suggest that attitudes toward ELL are driven largely by group identification at both the ethnic and national levels. In addition, they provide

support for the backlash hypothesis which to date has received only limited empirical study yielding inconsistent results. Finally, our findings shed light on why people support or oppose ELL and highlight differences between Hispanic- and European-Americans' reasons for their position.

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Appendix: Pro-ELL and Anti-ELL Statements*Pro-ELL*

<u>Category</u>	<u>Statement</u>
Majority Language Communication America=English	English is the language of the majority in the U.S. Everyone will be able to communicate more easily. Speaking English is part of what it means to be an American.
International Language National Unity	English is an important international language. Having a single common language promotes national unity.
Expense/Logistics	Printing documents and providing services in other languages is too expensive and difficult.
When in Rome...	If I went to another country, I would learn the language and customs of that country, and so people should learn English if they want to live here.
Hostility	Immigrants are not assimilating enough and should not be able to take advantage of Americans.

*Anti-ELL*

<u>Category</u>	<u>Statement</u>
Freedom/Rights	Freedom of speech includes the right to speak a language other than English.
Melting Pot/Diversity	English language legislation would deny the rich diversity of the U.S.
Disadvantage/Difficulty	People who do not speak or write English well would be put at a serious disadvantage.
Cultural Preservation	Denying non-English speakers the use of their language deprives them of their heritage and culture.
Bilingualism is Important	Bilingualism is important because it enhances knowledge and opportunities.
Prejudice/Discrimination	Language legislation is racist and promotes discrimination against minorities.
Unnecessary/Ineffective	Language legislation is unnecessary and would be ineffective.