



Immigrating from Facts to Values: Political Rhetoric in the US Immigration Debate

Drew Westen, Ph.D.

Westen Strategies and Emory University



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I. Executive Summary

Voters' brains connect words, phrases, images, values, and emotions, and these connections — known as networks of association — influence their receptiveness to political messages, often far more strongly than facts and rational arguments. To reach those who have not yet made up their mind on a particular issue, advocates and leaders need to understand the associations a term such as “immigrant” spark in the mind of the electorate and strengthen positive associations while weakening negative ones.

Successful messages use “everyday language” (rather than the often-inaccessible language of activists), avoid euphemisms such as “undocumented workers,” and emphasize values and principles rather than trying to swamp voters with a litany of facts and figures. While the messages may contain language that can often feel uncomfortable to some advocates, an issue such as immigration will require multiple different messages that point toward the same policy — because messages that are not true to the messenger's values will neither be, nor come across as, sincere; and not all advocates or their constituents share the same networks or values. Voters can respond to a nuanced position as long as it encapsulates their core values, addresses their ambivalence, and appeals to their pragmatism and desire for leadership. These lessons apply to countries on both sides of the Atlantic, not just the United States.

II. Introduction

Every “hot” political issue is, by definition, one on which public opinion is split. This polarization means that voters toward the center, known as swing voters, are often ambivalent — that is, of two (or more) minds — and can be swayed in one direction or the other. Voter ambivalence makes elected representatives wary of taking a decisive stand, knowing that their opponents could use their words against them in the next race. The result is often both bad policy and bad politics, as politicians dodge issues on which they could — and should — lead effectively. Understanding and addressing ambivalence is thus central to developing successful messaging strategies on issues ranging from immigration to health care to climate change.

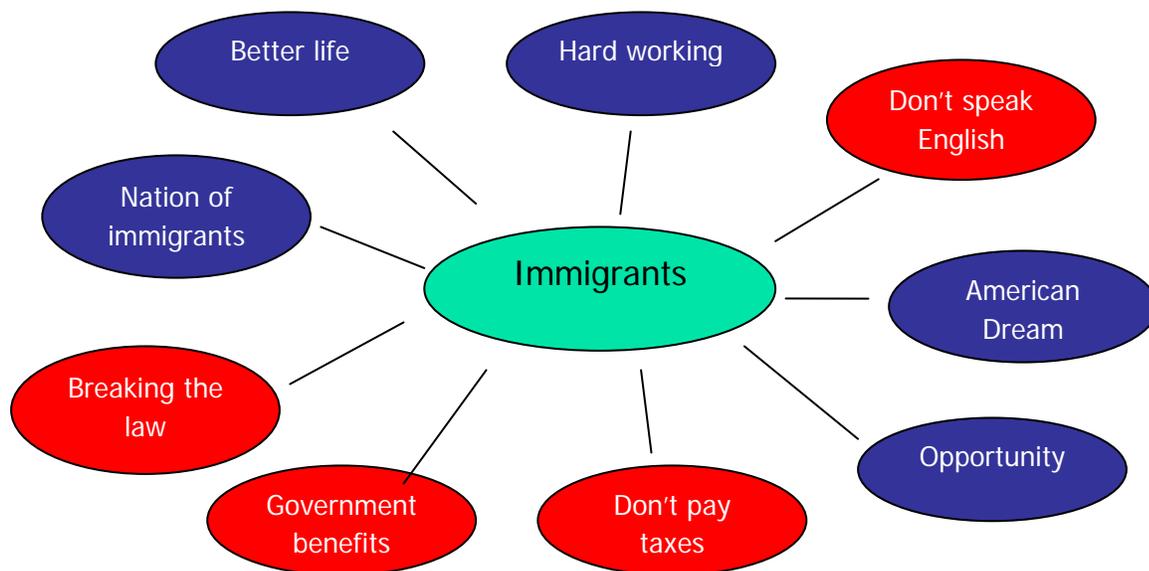
A useful way to think about ambivalence lies in what neuroscientists call *networks of association*. Networks of association are sets of thoughts, feelings, images, memories, metaphors, values, and emotions that have become connected through time and experience, so that activating one part of the network unconsciously activates the rest. How networks of association get activated in the minds of swing voters — who make the difference between public support or opposition — is central to talking effectively with the public. I will argue that certain words, phrases, images, and metaphors — the effectiveness of which can be refined and tested over successive efforts with large samples of voters — are essential so that leaders can speak genuinely and effectively with ambivalent voters on the controversial issue of immigration reform.

III. Dissecting a Political Message

Understanding Networks of Associations

Associations are crucial in politics because they create emotional connotations to ideas like “immigrant,” and these connotations influence the way voters hear every subsequent word in a political message. Whether a particular set of associations has been activated or “primed” at the beginning of a message, for example, can be the difference between winning or losing by 30 points on exactly the same policy position. Figure 1 illustrates the network that is unconsciously activated in many voters’ minds whenever political discourse turns to “immigrants” in the United States.

Figure 1. Associations to Immigrants among US Swing Voters



Source: Westen Strategies, 2008.

This diagram represents the most common responses we received when we asked swing voters around the country to tell us the first thing that came to their minds when they thought about immigrants.¹ Perhaps most striking about this figure is that it paints a neurological portrait of ambivalence. The same people whose first association to immigrants was that they came here in search of a “better life” were likely to say five seconds later, “they don’t speak English,” “they don’t pay taxes,” or “they use government services without paying for them.” Because voters have multiple and often competing associations to “immigrants,” successful messaging on immigration

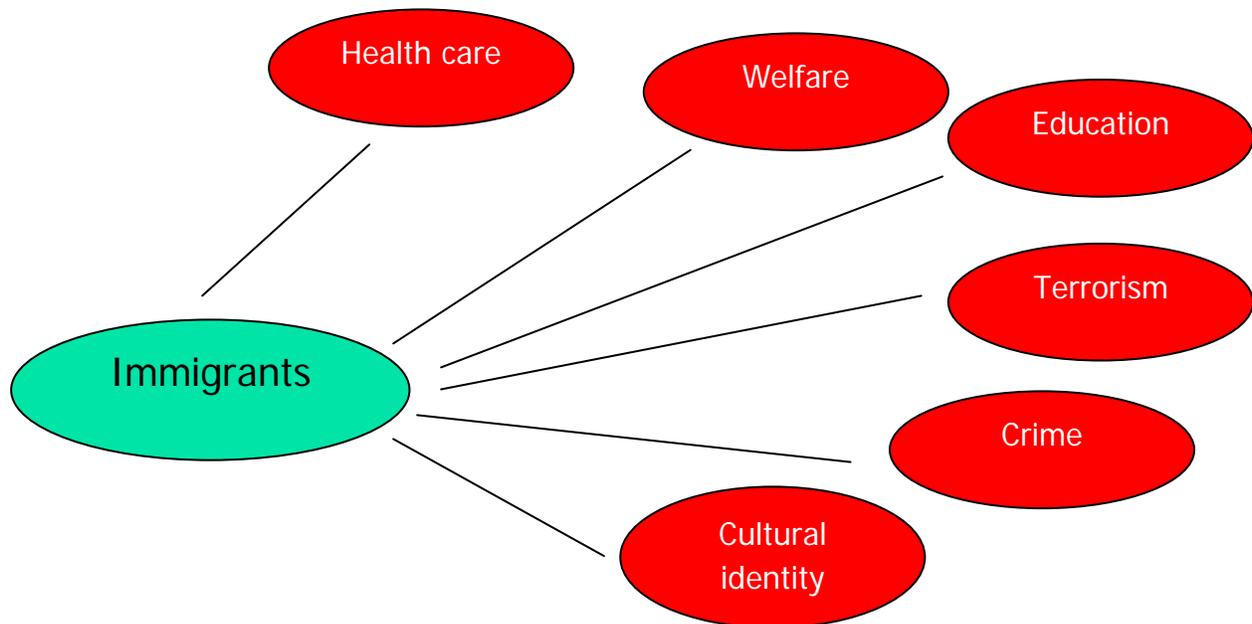
¹ This technique is used intuitively by some public opinion research firms, and interestingly, was first developed a century ago by Sigmund Freud to get past people’s conscious attitudes and identify their underlying associations.

reform requires deactivating or uncoupling associations that make people hostile toward immigration, and instead linking “immigrant” to networks associated with positive values and emotions. This ensures that voters will be receptive to the message of an elected official or candidate.

Although the concept of networks is relatively new to politics,² the political right in the United States has long understood that voters respond less to facts, figures, policy positions, and rational arguments than to the *emotions* associations create. In the debate over illegal immigration in the United States, politicians have employed phrases and images designed to elicit an emotional reaction. For example, “illegal alien” makes illegal immigrants not only “law breakers” but less human, in light of the connotations and alternative meanings of “alien.” Also effective are infrared pictures that show Mexicans crossing the border illegally in the middle of the night.

Opponents of immigration reform also understand that an effective way to kill legislation is to link it to (and stoke people’s fears and anger about) illegal immigration. The *immigrant* network is itself readily associated with health care, education, and welfare, among other issues (see Figure 2). Politicians have made a number of claims linking the “illegal immigrant” network to a range of issues, which were mirrored in the language of many of our focus group respondents (e.g., “Illegals are going to get free health care they don’t deserve” if we reform the health care system; immigration incurs added costs as schools must provide bilingual teachers until children of immigrants are fluent in English; and “illegals are just coming here to collect social services paid for by hard-working American citizens”).

Figure 2. Connections between Immigration and Other Networks



Source: Westen Strategies, 2008.

² Drew Westen, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* (New York: PublicAffairs Press, 2007).

IV. Common Messaging Mistakes

Understanding networks can help advocates and activists avoid moving public opinion in unintended directions, as when they inadvertently fought fire with gasoline by using the term “undocumented workers.” Counterintuitively, that phrase actually polls worse with the public than “illegal immigrants” in messages designed to advance immigration reform because not only do many voters view it as a euphemism, but if undocumented workers do have documents they are generally *forged documents*. Thus “undocumented workers” unconsciously activates the association to lawbreaking and costs immigrant advocates credibility with swing voters.³

Voters in the center can be moved by messages from both sides, depending on who does a better job of speaking to their core values and concerns. However, arguments that begin with “immigrants’ rights” often trip the wrong neural wires for voters in the political center, as a large number of Americans are turned off by claims of rights for people who came into the country without permission, just as they are often turned off by assertions of “rights” until those rights have been established for many years (as was the case with the civil-rights movement in the United States for African-Americans). A far better strategy is to start by acknowledging the rights and values of *American citizens* and speaking about what the United States may or may not want to offer or require of people who entered the country illegally, often years or generations ago. As our research and that of many others has shown, voters are much more likely to listen to a message on how to reform the US immigration system if they trust that the messenger shares their core beliefs.⁴ These core beliefs include citizens having the right to make policies based on their own interests and values — values that make immigration reform sensible on both sides of the Atlantic.

Another mistake immigrant advocates would do well to avoid is to allow the debate to center around *illegal immigrants* rather than *comprehensive immigration reform* or *fixing a broken immigration system*. The focus on illegality starts the battle on losing terrain, as it paints a picture of people who broke the law as their first act on US territory. It also suggests that immigrants cross the border illegally because they do not *want* to “stand in line” and “wait their turn” (two phrases often used by opponents and swing voters alike). Yet the US immigration system provides few legal options for most of those who enter the United States illegally; in other words, there *is* no line to stand in. Many immigrant advocates also argue that the system for admitting *legal immigrants and their families* (another, more human phrase worth using) does not adequately serve the interests of American citizens or would-be citizens.

V. How to Develop Strong Messages on Immigration

With an understanding of networks of association, it becomes possible to outline a pragmatic strategy for how leaders and advocates can speak clearly with the public about immigration reform. This approach involves a mixture of “intelligent design” (developing draft messages in everyday language designed to activate and deactivate networks in ways that allow the public to “hear” them) and “natural selection” (winnowing out those messages that are unlikely to survive in the court of

³ Indeed, forgery is a more serious offense than *crossing the border without permission*, a more descriptive and more useful phrase for advocates, as our polling has documented.

⁴ Unpublished poll results.

public opinion, and refining effective messages by successive approximation until they soundly beat an anti-immigrant position). The goal is to give leaders words and phrases, sentences, and paragraph-length narratives (as well as concepts that can be used in ads, because visual images and words both activate networks) they can use with confidence because they know in advance that these words and images resonate with swing voters. The method we have been using is as follows:

- Study the existing polls to understand and identify the complex networks surrounding the issue.
- Design first-draft messages based on this understanding and refine them in focus groups. In creating the messages, it is important to use the language of everyday citizens, particularly those in the political center, rather than the language of activists and policy experts.
- Poll and dial-test the messages online using large representative samples, to observe people's responses not only to the messages as a whole but to every phrase used in them. This can help identify which networks the messages are successfully or inadvertently triggering.
- Refine and test the messages again until the resulting messages beat the strongest counter-messages used by opponents (including misleading ones) by double digits in a large national sample, particularly with swing voters.
- Identify a range of messages that are both successful and reflective of the values of the range of advocates or elected officials who will employ them.

This process can be quite sobering, because it can show just how high a hill leaders and advocates have to climb, particularly when prejudice is part of the equation. But it also can reveal precisely what bothers voters on an issue, and how to address voters' concerns, appeal to their values, and turn down the volume on their prejudices, allowing leaders and advocates to offer an emotionally compelling, values-based, *principled stand* on the issue. In this context, *principled stand* means a brief narrative that incorporates a principle or set of principles most voters share, rather than an amalgam of policies and positions that fail to inspire them.

This method also requires two additional attributes to be both effective and ethical. The first is a commitment to truth. That does not mean exclusively using the precise language of social scientists or policy experts, but it does mean avoiding messages one knows to be inaccurate. It does mean that leaders and advocates should avoid any language inconsistent with their values, and that messaging consultants offer leaders and advocates a *range* of messages they can use, depending on what they believe and who their audience is.

Second, those in the business of developing and refining messages need to have the courage to tell their clients the truth (e.g., that the client's preferred words and phrases will only lead to electoral defeat and set back the cause for which they are fighting). Advocates on an issue such as immigration may not like the words that work best, but sticking with "activist" language that resonates with 15 to 20 percent of the public who already agree will not help them accomplish their goals.

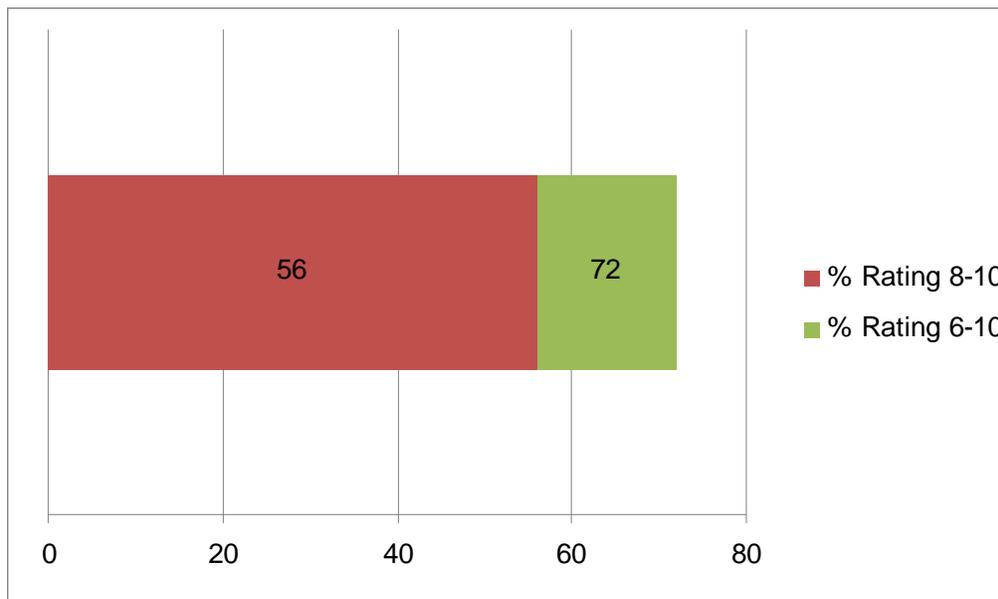
VI. Empirical Case Studies: Messages That Work in the United States

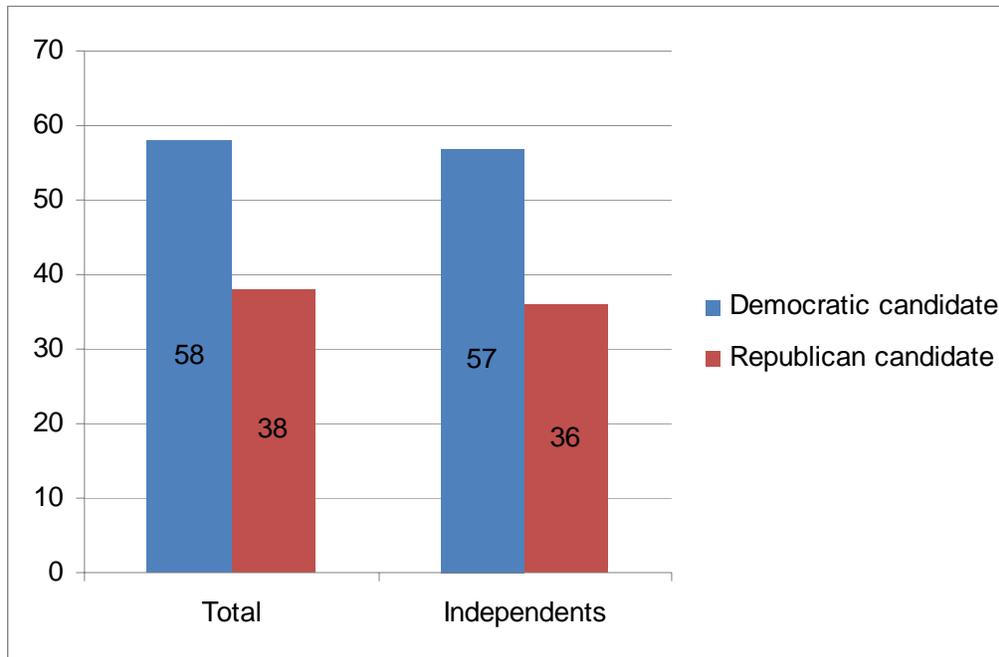
Here I provide two examples of “messages that work” from research conducted in 2008 with my colleagues Brian Bocian and Stan Greenberg at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. The first is a “tough love” message, with which not all activists will feel comfortable, particularly those who work directly with illegal immigrants, and therefore may have a level of empathy that their fellow citizens do not share. However, it is one of the two strongest messages we identified, winning by roughly 20 points with both the general electorate and swing voters against a strong anti-immigration position defined as the position of a Republican candidate for Congress. This message led the majority of sampled voters to rate themselves as “strongly likely” to vote for a candidate who spoke this way about immigration in a scale from 0-10 (where 10 is the highest possible rating, and 8-10 is high-intensity support) (see Figure 3).

The text of this message is as follows:

The first and most important job of government is to protect its people, and you can't protect your people if you can't protect your borders. It's amazing that eight years after 9/11, we still haven't protected either our borders or our ports. We need to get our borders under control and to crack down on employers who violate the law and undercut American jobs with cheap labor. But politicians who say we can find and deport 12 million illegal immigrants aren't being honest. Leadership isn't about scoring political points, it's about solving problems, and we need to solve this one now. That means taking tough measures to secure our borders, cracking down on illegal employers, and requiring those who came here without our permission to get in line, work hard, obey our laws, and learn our language.

Figure 3. A Strong, “Tough” Progressive Message on Immigration Reform





Source: Westen Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, *Message Handbook for Progressives from Center to Left: How to Talk about Immigration*, February 2009. Data are from a large random national sample of likely voters surveyed in October 2008.

Why is this message effective, particularly with voters in the center? First, it does not cede core American values to the political right. The first two sentences represent a straightforward description of fact with clear policy implications, with which no one — left, right, or center — could disagree, particularly in an era of stateless terrorists who know no borders. Second, it starts right and moves left, eliminating from the outset the “slippery slope” of the candidate described as a Democrat being labeled as “soft” on security or citizens’ rights — common critiques from the right (e.g., “my opponent is for open borders,” “my opponent is for law-breaking”). Instead, this opening line immediately signals to voters in the center and center-right that the messenger understands their legitimate concerns. Third, it begins to transform the problem from illegal immigrants to illegal employers who undercut American jobs with cheap labor. Fourth, it appeals to Americans’ pragmatism while turning down the volume on their prejudices. Most Americans know it would be impossible to find and deport 12 million people as many have lived in the United States for years, are married to US citizens, and/or have US citizen children. Therefore, they are receptive to pragmatic strategies to reform the existing system.

Finally, this message addresses the core of people’s legitimate concerns about illegal immigrants — which often are exaggerated or based on misinformation or half-truths — by laying out what illegal immigrants need to do to become legal immigrants. In other effective versions of messages of this sort, we have used phrases such as “turning illegal immigrants into productive, law-abiding, tax-paying American citizens.” Although illegal immigrants already pay sales taxes and many pay income taxes and social security taxes, arguing that point leads to nothing but hardening of false beliefs as everyday citizens simply do not — and will not — believe that most illegal immigrants pay taxes. The reason is associative, not logical: The concept of illegal immigrants “in the shadows” (a phrase

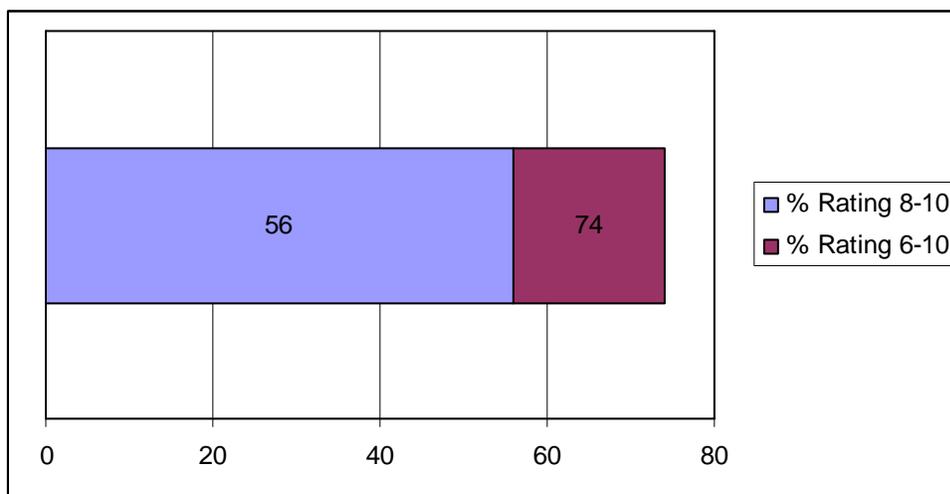
that probably amplifies the sense of danger surrounding them) immediately brings to mind an underground economy. Fighting with voters about ingrained beliefs never works, but appealing to their values and pragmatism can be much more effective.

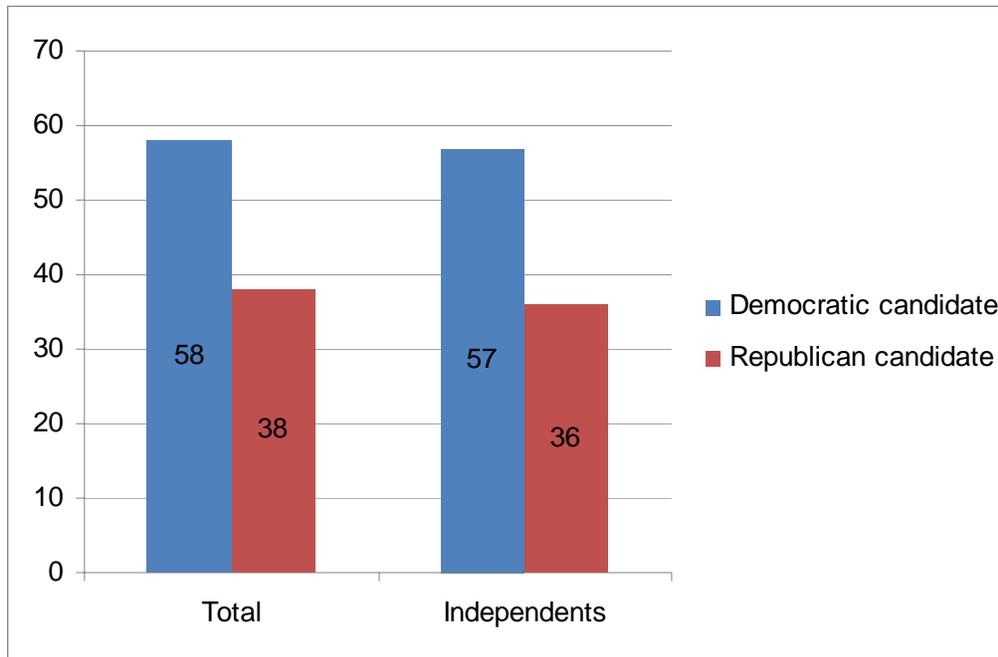
As noted above, this is a “tough” message. It never says that the humane thing to do is to offer citizenship to illegal immigrants. In fact, it uses a term found to be far more effective than *offering* an earned path to citizenship, namely *requiring* that immigrants do what it takes to become citizens legally. Since US citizens, like the citizens of most countries, want to decide the terms of membership to their nation, the word *requiring* reassures them because it means they have control over this process. It also reinforces a commitment to *law and order*, a core US value.

By illustration, consider now a very different message, one with which most advocates would feel much more comfortable. This message also wins by nearly 20 points with the US public, but it only breaks even with independents (see Figure 4). That means it would be an effective message in some parts of the country, and could likely form the core of an immigration narrative by a powerful orator, but it is not a strong message for legislators from conservative districts:

We need leadership on immigration, not more of the politics that have prevented us from solving this problem. A nation can't be secure if its borders aren't secure. In the wake of September 11th, it's unbelievable that we've lost control over who is in our country and where they are. And in an era of declining wages, we can't afford to let employers undercut American jobs by exploiting cheap labor. But we need to treat this as a problem to be solved, not as an opportunity for politicians to score political points by preying on both our legitimate concerns and our prejudices. We are a nation of laws, but we're also a nation of immigrants. Most of the people who came across our southern border looking for work are hard-working people who just want a job to feed their families. It's time to secure our borders, crack down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and require those who came here without our permission to get in line, obey our laws, learn our language, and pay our taxes.

Figure 4. A Strong, Direct Progressive Message on Immigration Reform





Source: Westen Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, *Message Handbook for Progressives from Center to Left: How to Talk about Immigration*, February 2009. Data are from a large random national sample of likely voters surveyed in October 2008.

So why is this message effective? Like the first, it turns people’s anger away from underpaid, exploited immigrants (both legal and illegal) and toward politicians who prefer to demagogue rather than solve the problem. And similar to the first message, it addresses voters’ legitimate concerns about national security, but this time includes their concerns about the economy.⁵ This message, however, goes much further than the first message in appealing to voters’ empathy for illegal immigrants, which is only effective because that empathy is paired with a reference to a set of core American values: hard work, family, and law and order. It also reminds people that the United States is a nation of immigrants — a phrase Barack Obama used in his presidential campaign.

The second message also speaks a truth about voters’ ambivalence — that the immigration issue involves both legitimate concerns and prejudices — without saying that anyone who does not embrace turning illegal immigrants into American citizens is a racist. The sequence of words is crucial. If we had mentioned prejudice *before* legitimate concerns, the message would have failed, because people would have heard “you’re a racist” and ignored the words that followed. The message also concludes with a sentence that once again suggests that US citizens expect specific actions from those who came without permission, rather than using the language of rights.

⁵ This message was tested in early October 2008, when the severity of the US recession was becoming apparent. It could poll better or worse with independents depending on the status of the economy at the time of polling.

These are not the only examples of messages that appeal to American voters. The recent US campaign, “Reform Immigration for America,”⁶ provides a real-world case study using many of these principles. The title alone reflects the strategy of emphasizing the concerns and values of *America* first, as does the tagline: “If you want a common-sense solution to our broken immigration system that strengthens equal opportunity and the rule of law, treats hardworking immigrant families with respect and dignity, and moves all communities and families in America forward together... join us.” As outlined above, this statement emphasizes pragmatism, underscores Americans’ core values, uses language that paints immigrants and their families in a positive light, and develops a narrative about working together to move the country forward.

In conclusion, the following set of principles has proven effective in speaking to the US public, and many of these principles are valid on both sides of the Atlantic:

- Appeal to their voters’ values, their pragmatism, and their desire for leadership
- Address their ambivalence
- Emphasize principles, not policy specifics
- Avoid euphemisms
- Start right and move left, so that people from the center “hear you out”
- Speak in everyday language and avoid the language of activists unless that language happens to coincide with the language of swing voters, which is usually not the case.

VII. A Comparative Analysis: Effective Messages across the Atlantic

Issues of commitment, loyalty, shared values, and “joining” are central to the immigration debate everywhere. The following examples from Europe further reinforce the idea that immigrant advocates should emphasize those values but also make the commitment between immigrants and the host country *reciprocal* if they want to win over public opinion.

In the United Kingdom, for example, voters understand they have a large population of South Asian Muslims, and that most are law-abiding citizens who came in search of a better life. However, there is always the possibility that someone from within this community will become the next train bomber. Any attempt to skirt that reality loses credibility with the public.

The Danish government was in a similar position of having to address reality during the Danish cartoon controversy in 2005. In this instance, the government had the right and duty to respond aggressively to the threats many in the Muslim world made against the cartoonist and editors who published a critical portrait of the prophet Mohammed. A strong response to these kinds of threats both reassures those in the center and reinforces the values at the heart of Western democracies: “If you want to be a member of our society, we will not discriminate against you or anyone else based

⁶ This campaign identifies itself as “a united national effort that brings together individuals and grassroots organizations with the mission to build support for workable comprehensive immigration reform.” See Reform Immigration for America, “About,” <http://www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org/blog/about/>.

on your race, ethnicity, or religion. But if you cannot abide by our *nonnegotiable* values, most importantly freedom of speech and freedom of religion, you cannot be a citizen of our country.”

In Germany, the dominant concern is not security or illegal immigration but the integration of multiple generations of Turkish immigrants. “Imported” into Germany as guest workers in the 1950s and 1960s along with workers from Italy and Spain (with the full expectation all would eventually return “home”), this population now has children and grandchildren who know no other homeland. Whereas Germans are generally comfortable with Western and Southern European immigrants, those of Turkish origin do not share their culture, language, or appearance. Making matters more complicated, they often live in Turkish enclaves, which reinforce (but also reflect) many Germans’ ambivalence. Indeed, most native Germans do not like the idea of a non-German society within their nation (a legitimate concern), but they also are not sure they fully want to integrate those of Turkish descent.

Integration advocates in Germany might do well to do two things in talking with the public. The first is to avoid “us versus them” distinctions. Phrases like “the Turks” only highlight their differences, whereas “Germans of Turkish ancestry who know no homeland but Germany” is more inclusive and fosters identification and empathy. The second is to focus first on the needs and concerns of *Germany*, not immigrants in Germany — an approach advocates on both sides of the Atlantic would do well to adopt. Given the initial aversion people often have to others who do not look or sound like them, beginning a coherent, emotionally compelling narrative with the needs and values of the *host* society *first* is a far more effective way to get voters in the middle to listen and respond sympathetically than starting with positive messages about ethnic groups about whom many people are consciously or unconsciously ambivalent. The reality is that Germany, like the United States and most Western nations, has an economic interest in bringing in workers at different socioeconomic levels for different reasons, values that support allowing immigration for political refugees, and reasons for not wanting to foster inadvertently distinct societies within their societies, particularly with alienated youth with high unemployment rates.

A decade ago, Germany came to a compromise on dual citizenship, which many Germans strongly opposed even though those of Turkish descent had been unable to naturalize due to Germany’s restrictive laws.⁷ Dual citizenship is not permitted, but children with German citizenship and a second citizenship can keep both until adulthood, when they must choose between them. As Germans of Turkish descent arrive at the age where they must decide, integration advocates should give careful thought to their strategy. Do they want to emphasize discrimination against German Turks, contrasting their treatment on the issue of dual citizenship with the handful of other Germans whose dual citizenship (usually with other European Union nations) is tolerated? Or do they want to accept the public’s concerns about someone who has grown up in Germany but has split loyalties? Ultimately, whether or not the fight for dual citizenship is winnable is an empirical question. But at its heart lies an equally important question of values. Is it realistic to ask second- and third-generation immigrants to declare their loyalty to the nation that has, slowly and steadily, moved toward accepting them? A third strategy is to speak openly about native Germans’ ambivalence toward integration.

⁷ For a discussion of public opinion on dual citizenship, see Oya S. Abali, “German Public Opinion on Immigration and Integration” (working paper, Transatlantic Council on Migration, Bellagio, Italy, May 6-8, 2009)

Issues of commitment, loyalty, shared values, and “joining” are central to the immigration debate everywhere. Immigrant advocates do well both to point out those values and to make the commitment reciprocal. In the United States, messages that include “learning our language” often win popular support, whereas those that do not virtually always lose. Of course, most immigrants understand the link between learning their host country’s language and prospering in society, and their children tend to learn English as a first if not a strong second language, though their parents may want their children to maintain their cultural roots, including linguistic roots. Advocating for equal use of immigrants’ languages alongside the dominant language in the society only emphasizes immigrants’ differentness, however, and it makes natives feel like foreigners in their own land.

VIII. Conclusion

This paper recommends a way of thinking and speaking about immigration that is sometimes counterintuitive and may even appear to be at odds with the goals of progressive immigration reform. In conclusion, I will address four of the most common concerns raised by advocates.

The first is whether words matter compared with images, personal experiences, intonation, or the messenger. As the research described here has shown, words make a strong difference between winning or losing on immigration reform. But networks of association work the same way with images, personal experiences, messengers, and intonation as they do with words. Advocates and leaders do not have to choose between moving words and moving images. The most powerful campaigns for the humane treatment of immigrants are multimodal and multimedia. In fact, messaging efforts that identify the most effective words and concepts are generally highly successful in generating scripts and multimedia messages, because they identify the broader ways of addressing the public that fit their values and interests.

The second concern is whether helping advocates or elected officials identify the most effective language affects their ability to speak genuinely. My answer to advocates, elected officials, and candidates who raise questions about testing language to identify the most effective ways of conveying a point of view: The first step is always to know what you believe. The second step is to convey those beliefs well.

The third is the false choice between using specific, well-tested language and emphasizing general principles. Both are important. It matters tremendously to get the words right, because as we have seen, even the order of statements can make an enormous difference in how people hear a message (e.g., whether you first address the ambivalence or concerns of those in the center and move left or first try to elicit empathy in people not primed for it). In the heat of political battle, however, understanding some basic principles — such as addressing ambivalence, speaking to people’s values, avoiding euphemisms, and avoiding getting “caught in the weeds” of policy facts and figures — is essential. Candidates should not have to rely on a teleprompter or note cards when speaking about immigration. But they should also come to the public forum prepared.

Fourth, it is all too easy to dismiss legitimate concerns as prejudices or, conversely, for demagogues to disguise prejudices in the language of legitimate concerns. Making this problem trickier is that unconscious or implicit prejudices and negative associations are more widespread than the conscious, explicit prejudices that dominated the last century. Unconscious prejudices, however, present the greatest challenges to humane, effective public policy. Voters often feel uncomfortable

with immigrants but do not know why, presenting an opportunity for anti-immigrant groups to supply explicit reasons that rationalize a gut-level negative feeling. Reform-minded advocates should recognize that attitudes toward immigrants combine prejudices and legitimate concerns. Those in the political center who often express both should not be branded as “prejudiced.” Their prejudices are often unconscious and do not reflect their conscious values, which effective messages bring to the fore.

This leads to a final point. Public opinion mixes knowledge, ignorance, values, firmly held beliefs (including misbeliefs), and prejudices. On an issue such as immigration, partial knowledge, misinformation, and prejudice are the norm in virtually every nation. Humans do not naturally feel tolerance and empathy toward those perceived as “other,” particularly when those others do not speak their language or share their culture.

At times, however, we underestimate what political scientist Samuel Popkin called the “low information rationality” of the public. By listening for the underlying values and concerns of their constituents, leaders can often learn from public sentiments that they may be initially tempted to discount as uninformed (and that may have many elements of misinformation but some kernels of common sense). For example, immigrant advocate Frank Sharry has argued that sound public policy on immigration in the United States needs to include four components:⁸

- 1) Enforcement (both at the borders and the workplace) so that a country has “control” over whom it allows in and so that employers do not exploit cheap labor (thus undercutting American jobs and norms of worker protection that Americans have fought for years to obtain).
- 2) Creation of a market-sensitive mechanism for legal immigration that addresses the labor market needs of businesses and employers, while also preserving humanitarian policies (e.g., continuing to welcome refugees and asylum seekers).
- 3) Addressing the problem of the 12 million illegal immigrants in a way that is fair to American citizens, fair and humane to those immigrants, and practical.
- 4) Integration of immigrants into communities, including making sure they have the means to learn English.

Sharry’s narrative is strikingly similar to the messages described in this chapter, and which we came to after extensive dialogue with swing voters. Voters have plenty of prejudices, but they also have a range of values and concerns that their elected officials and those seeking their support would be wise to take into account. Those concerns start with some simple questions that advocates do well to answer, both for themselves and in their efforts to reach voters, such as, “Why do we want or need immigrants? What kind of immigrants do we want or need? And how do we implement policies that make it possible for those we invite to come here, prosper, contribute to our society, and become integrated into it without leaving everything — including their culture and heritage — behind? Those questions are at the heart of the immigration debate in virtually every society, and advocates generally would be advised to bring them to the fore rather than leaving them in the shadows.

⁸ See America’s Voice, the organization led by Frank Sharry, “Reform Agenda: Our Plan for Comprehensive Reform,” http://www.americasvoiceonline.org/pages/reform_agenda/.

IX. About the Author

Drew Westen is a clinical, personality, and political psychologist and neuroscientist; Professor in the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at Emory University; and Founder of Westen Strategies, a political and corporate consulting firm. He formerly taught at the University of Michigan and Harvard Medical School. Dr. Westen is the author of three books and over 150 articles, including *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*. He frequently comments on political and psychological issues on radio, television, and in print. He has advised a range of candidates and organizations, from presidential and congressional campaigns to major nonprofit organizations and Fortune 500 companies.

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