Implicit Expectations and Explicit Political Reasoning

We have learned that people’s minds are organized into two forms of reasoning that produce two types of attitudes, each with its own attributes. But our discussion to this point has been more psychological than political. We have gained a clearer understanding of the mind’s cognitive processes and attitudinal outputs. Yet we have a fuzzier sense about how these psychological insights apply to the politics of immigration: a prominent, group-centric issue that regularly captures the attention of political elites and members of the mass public (Brader et al. 2008; King 2000; Ngai 2004; Santa Ana 2002; Tichenor 2002). Sharpening this sense is crucial, for what we learn about the link between implicit attitudes and immigration politics can help us to understand how the former might affect the politics of other issues with similar features (e.g., antiterrorism, crime).

This chapter fully draws out the political implications of implicit attitudes by explaining why and how impulsive reasoning affects people’s more effortful political deliberations. To meet this objective, I draw primarily on Lodge and Taber’s (2013) political archetype of unconscious processing – John Q. Public (JQP). My goal here is to draw on and expand vital elements of this model to clarify how, exactly, implicit attitudes leave an imprint on people’s explicit judgments of US immigration policies. I augment my theory-building efforts here by drawing on some crucial insights from the Associative–Propositional Evaluation (APE) model and the Motivation and Opportunity as Determinants (MODE) model, which I discussed in the previous chapter. These latter frameworks allow me to anticipate the possibility that under some conditions, people’s implicit and explicit attitudes can pull in countervailing directions. In the case of immigration politics, for example, some people might be able to limit the influence of explicit attitude toward Latino immigrants, even as their implicit attitude toward this group boosts their opposition to immigration.
I dub my theoretical explanation “implicit expectations,” which refers to the mental process by which automatic attitudes structure citizens’ more effortful deliberations about immigration. More precisely, my framework explains how impulsive forms of thought can color people’s interpretation of information about a political issue, as well as how that information is deployed in the political judgments they ultimately make. This process begins with recurring patterns in political discourse, which enable citizens to develop implicit attitudes toward protagonists in political debates (cf. Gregg et al. 2006; Rydell and McConnell 2006). Once encoded to long-term memory (LTM), the broaching of political issues is said to spontaneously call forth people’s implicit attitudes toward a relevant political object (Lodge and Taber 2013: 17–20). As nonverbalized, affective evaluations, implicit attitudes rapidly inform citizens about how they view a political issue before they begin to actively consider relevant information about the political topic at hand. People can, and will, directly draw on these feelings to make a political judgment (Lodge and Taber 2013: 56–58). Moreover, these feelings can, and also will, bias the retrieval of additional considerations in the direction of the affect sparked by one’s implicit attitude (Lodge and Taber 2013: 58–59).

Each of these pathways, I argue, leads citizens to judge immigration policies in accordance with their implicit attitudes toward Latino immigrants, even when these subjective thoughts are contradicted by objective information before them. This occurs, I contend, because the interplay between implicit attitudes and explicit political reasoning is subconscious: citizens are unaware about how their implicit attitudes shape their explicit decision making (Gawronski et al. 2006: 491; Lodge and Taber 2013: 3; Pérez 2013: 288–289). In this way, the political mind gets what it implicitly expects—sometimes, despite what citizens explicitly strive toward.

Political Discourse, Associational Reasoning, and the Formation of Implicit Attitudes

Implicit expectations are said to be triggered when the broaching of a policy issue (e.g., immigration) spontaneously calls forth a citizen’s implicit attitude toward a relevant political object (e.g., Latino immigrants). But before we can understand how implicit attitudes affect explicit decisions, we must explain why these types of attitudes emerge in the first place. I claim that accumulated discourse on political topics enables citizens to form implicit attitudes through associational reasoning. In particular, systematic patterns in political discourse suggest how political issues should be understood and, most importantly, who the relevant political actors are.

By this view, how policy issues are publicly discussed, and the extent to which these views are disseminated, promote the development of implicit attitudes at the mass level. To be sure, public debate about policy issues can plausibly manifest itself in innumerable ways. It can touch on many, often esoteric,
aspects of an issue. It can also speak to an issue from various angles. Yet social and political institutions often serve to tame potentially unwieldy information about politics by narrowing its scope and packaging it into simpler themes with wider mass appeal. This is certainly true of news media. Newspaper stories. Television news segments. Political cartoons. It is through these and other communication media that “citizens are bombarded with suggestions about how issues should be understood” (Kinder 1998: 821). In particular, I contend that news discourse hones political objects while providing a context for their evaluation. That is, discourse makes salient political objects, ties them to policy issues, and implies a specific evaluation of them. Two mechanisms facilitate this sequence: priming and framing (see Iyengar and Kinder 1987).

Priming refers to the process by which political considerations are called forth and put within people’s mental reach. By calling attention to some considerations at the expense of others, priming establishes standards by which citizens make political decisions. In politics, news media often perform this priming role (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Stoker 1993). Gilens (1999), for example, has masterfully shown how news media have primed Americans to automatically associate African Americans with the issue of welfare by overwhelmingly focusing on this racial group more than others when reporting on poverty. As he explains: “From 1967 to 1992, blacks averaged 57 percent of the poor people pictured in…news magazines—about twice the true proportion of blacks among the nation’s poor” (Gilens 1999: 114; cf. Clawson and Trice 2000).

Framing, in contrast, helps to explain how citizens might evaluate salient political objects on the basis of this very same discourse. Frames provide “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events…” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987: 143; see also Druckman 2001: 227). Put differently, frames convey a sense of how political elites understand an issue and what aspects of the issue are deemed most relevant for its evaluation (e.g., Gamson 1992; Iyengar 1991). For instance, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) show how in the wake of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident in the Soviet Union, the majority of US television news stories framed discussions of nuclear energy in terms of either (1) officials’ overconfidence in harnessing nuclear power or (2) the hidden dangers of radiation effects in the long run. Yet frames emphasizing greater US energy independence through nuclear power received trivial media attention. This imbalance in frames was consequential. Opinion polls after Chernobyl revealed more negative attitudes toward nuclear facilities.

The success of priming and framing in promoting the development of implicit attitudes at the mass level hinges on the repetition of patterns produced by these processes. By continuously focusing public attention on a political object over others, and by repeatedly framing this object in a particular fashion, citizens are presented with more opportunities to develop and rehearse the evaluative associations of political objects implied by news discourse. As
Rydell and McConnell (2006: 1001) explain, implicit attitudes are rooted in “the totality of the evaluative information associated with an attitude object.” Indeed, recall that scholarship suggests people develop implicit attitudes about objects in the direction of the valenced information that attends those objects (Dijksterhuis 2004; Olson and Fazio 2001, 2002). This suggests that if individuals are exposed to information that chronically pairs objects with negative (positive) stimuli, then they will acquire negative (positive) implicit attitudes that reflect those information patterns.

Of course, I readily acknowledge that not all individuals within the mass public ingest information about social objects at similar rates or to the same degree. Some people simply pay more attention to their information environment than others (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Zaller 1992), with possible consequences for the strength of implicit attitudes, as well as the impact of those attitudes on political judgments. I consider these possibilities in later chapters. But for now, suffice it to say that priming and framing are theorized to influence the content and tone of information about social objects, thus helping to encourage the formation of implicit attitudes.

Contextual Triggers and the Spontaneous Activation of Implicit Attitudes

Through their capacity for associational reasoning, citizens learn to link specific political objects to certain policy domains. Given this connection, I claim that drawing attention to a policy issue will call forth people’s implicit attitude toward a relevant political object. This activation occurs automatically. In light of fitting stimuli, implicit attitudes spring to mind involuntarily, with minimal cognitive effort, and with little active direction.

For example, social psychologist Russell Fazio and his associates (1986) have shown that merely presenting an object spontaneously evokes one’s affective evaluation of that object (i.e., implicit attitude) (cf. Bargh et al. 1992; Fazio et al. 1995). In one set of studies, Fazio and his team examined how exposure to an object facilitated the speed with which adjectives were classified as having positive or negative connotation. If a person had a negative attitude toward, say, cockroach, she was expected to classify a negative word (terrible) more quickly than a positive one (wonderful) after encountering cockroach, because of the shared valence between object and adjective. Across three experiments, Fazio’s team found evidence supporting this “automatic activation” hypothesis.

Equally powerful, but more politically relevant evidence of “automatic activation” is furnished by Lodge and Taber (2013; cf. Burdein et al. 2006; Cassino and Lodge 2007). In one of their experiments, subjects read information about a hypothetical congressional candidate, William Lucas. Following this exercise,

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1 Specifically, Chapter 5 examines the extent to which education levels are associated (or not) with levels of implicit attitude. In turn, Chapter 7 investigates the degree to which higher education levels strengthen (or weaken) the link between implicit attitudes and political judgments.
subjects completed an attitude-priming task similar to the one employed by Fazio’s team, where the prime was the surname Lucas. Consistent with “automatic activation,” Lodge and Taber (2013: 79) found that Lucas supporters reacted more quickly to positive target words (e.g., proud) and more slowly to negative target words (e.g., weak), while Lucas opponents displayed the opposite pattern. These authors then show, through additional studies on additional political concepts, that such reaction time patterns emerge only when the interval between presentation of the prime and a target word is short (e.g., 300 milliseconds), but not when it is long (e.g., 1,000 milliseconds), as the former is too short a window for conscious expectations to develop (Lodge and Taber 2013: 85–86). Finally, and perhaps most crucially, Lodge and Taber (2013: 87–88) demonstrate this general pattern is robust to using target words that are “affectively unambiguous and semantically unrelated” to political concepts, thus cementing their hot cognition hypothesis – the notion that automatically activating a concept spontaneously triggers its affective evaluation, thereby infusing the processing of political information with affect from the start.

One additional point merits further attention before moving on. The accumulated work of Russell Fazio, Milton Lodge, Charles Taber, and other social and political psychologists establishes that “automatic activation” emerges when the triggering stimulus is presented subliminally (cf. Burdein et al. 2006; Fazio et al. 1995; Kam 2007; Lodge and Taber 2013) as well as supraliminally (cf. Asendorpf et al. 2002; Egloff and Schmukle 2002; Kim 2003). In jargonistic terms, an attitude can be spontaneously roused by either consciously unnoticed events (type 1 CUEs) or consciously unappreciated events (type 2 CUEs). Whereas the former is “seen, registered, but consciously unnoticed,” the latter is consciously recognized but “without realizing its influence on our thoughts, feelings, preferences, and choices (Lodge and Taber 2013: 3). This distinction is a conceptually useful one for my work, as I argue that implicit attitudes are automatically sparked when asking people to consider the issue of immigration. From this angle, then, entertaining the question of immigration reform is a consciously recognized act. What is not recognized, I argue, is the chain reaction that leads people’s implicit attitudes to structure their judgments of immigration policies. Let me explain how and why this sequence might unfold.

Mechanisms and Hypotheses: The Political Influence of Implicit Attitudes

I theorize that broaching the immigration issue triggers one’s implicit attitude toward Latino immigrants, which is stored in LTM as an object evaluation (Fazio 2007). This configuration simply means the concept “Latino immigrant” is deposited in LTM with a positive or negative affective tag (Lodge and Taber 2013: 30). Thus, evoking one’s “Latino immigrant” concept should immediately ignite its evaluative charge (i.e., “good” vs. “bad”), per Lodge and
Taber’s (2013) *hot cognition* mechanism. If this reasoning is correct, then this initial phase of a person’s decision-making sequence will arouse and introduce affect into their cognitive stream, as their implicit attitude is “pushed” from LTM into one’s working memory (WM).

At this stage, implicit attitudes are mentally available to people, ready to serve in subsequent political decision making. I contend that this is when “implicit expectations” are formed. The activation of one’s implicit attitude leads citizens to assume that a given political object is relevant to the current judgment. Given the chronic rehearsal between political object and political issue, the individual deems this assumption valid, unproblematic, and – most importantly – familiar. After all, the association between political object and policy domain is a typical occurrence in the information environment – a pattern that citizens’ associative thinking has made a mental note of.

I hypothesize that in the wake of their arousal, people’s implicit attitudes provide immediate diagnostic information of an affective type. Specifically, citizens now have an unspoken sense of whether they positively or negatively judge “Latino immigrants,” and this affective response – via an *affect transfer* mechanism (Lodge and Taber 2013: 56–57) – will directly influence a person’s explicit views about immigration. In other words, how one feels about this group will shape how one interprets information related to immigration, as well as what one thinks about specific policy proposals aimed at reforming the immigration system. More specifically, citizens will evaluate information in the direction of their implicit attitude toward Latino immigrants (Lodge and Taber 2013: 58–59). If an individual is negatively predisposed toward this group at the implicit level, then this person will judge subsequent information in a manner that confirms this spontaneous reaction.

Imagine, for example, a person who is asked to indicate her support for increasing the number of visas available to legal immigrants. For argument’s sake, let us say her implicit attitude toward Latino immigrants is very negative. Let us also say that in assembling her opinion, this person is given information about the substantial numbers of Asian immigrants who might benefit from a larger pool of immigrant visas (e.g., US Office of Immigration Statistics 2013). This information is novel. Our respondent will attend to it and consider it. She will deliberate, as it were. But at an implicit level, she already has Latino immigrants on her mind. And she happens to hold them in low regard. Her deliberations are shaped by what she implicitly expects. She registers strong opposition to increasing visas for legal immigrants. All of this occurs without her knowing that an implicit attitude has affected her thought process.

This example illustrates how the consequences of implicit attitude might unfold in people’s decision making about immigration. And several clues point to its validity, both within social and political psychology (Lodge and Taber 2013: 5–17; cf. Correll et al. 2002; Forgas and Tan 2011). In a lab setting, for instance, Gawronski et al. (2003) asked German subjects to explicitly evaluate the ambiguous behavior of a German or Turkish person they read about. These
judgments, the authors discovered, were potently shaped by people’s implicit attitudes. In particular, negative implicit attitudes toward Turks led individuals to evaluate the ambiguous behavior of the Turkish target more harshly (e.g., as arrogant and insensitive) compared to the German target. In a similar vein, Fazio and Dunton (1997) asked subjects to evaluate target persons who varied by race, gender, and occupation. When asked to make similarity ratings of these targets, subjects with more negative implicit attitudes toward blacks were more likely to make these evaluations on the basis of race, rather than gender or occupation (cf. Roskos-Ewoldsen and Fazio 1992).

Taken together, the preceding evidence suggests that implicit attitudes should shape political judgments. But I say “should” because the clearest clues about affect transfer’s influence on decision making, political or otherwise, come from lab studies with college undergraduates (e.g., Fazio and Dunton 1997; Lodge and Taber 2013). Evidence of this mechanism’s operation among members of the mass public is therefore still pending. One of my contributions, then, is to marshal empirical evidence from the realm of immigration to bolster this mechanism’s external validity for politics.

Besides affect transfer, I anticipate that implicit attitudes can influence people’s immigration policy judgments by way of affect contagion – another mechanism identified by Lodge and Taber (2013: 58–59). Triggering one’s implicit attitude toward Latino immigrants does not happen in isolation. As social and political psychologists have taught us (e.g., Collins and Loftus 1975; Lodge and Taber 2013), people’s attitudes, beliefs, and values are embedded in LTM in a lattice-like structure of interconnected nodes. Hence, stimulating one’s implicit attitude is likely to call forth additional and related considerations via spreading activation. This batch of considerations will flow from long-term to working memory. But this admixture is not a random draw from one’s LTM. Rather, it represents those considerations that are congruent with the affective response initially sparked by the arousal of one’s implicit attitude. Thus, “reasoning processes that may seem to the citizen to provide reasons for one’s evaluative reactions may more often rationalize the initial affect one felt toward the object of evaluation” (Lodge and Taber 2013: 58).

In the case of US immigration politics, I hypothesize that explicit attitudes will – via affect contagion – mediate the influence of implicit attitudes on immigration policy judgments (Baron and Kenny 1986). That is, many of the self-reported considerations that people use to judge immigration policy – e.g., partisanship, authoritarian values, and socioeconomic concerns – are themselves affected by one’s implicit attitudes toward Latino immigrants. This is another way of saying that people will often draw on their explicit attitudes to evaluate immigration policies in a manner that is generally consistent with the affect initially sparked by one’s implicit attitude. And, to the extent that I find empirical support for this hypothesis in the mass public, the external validity of affect contagion will, too, be enhanced (McDermott 2011; Sears 1986), since
evidence of its political influence is also mainly based on lab studies with college undergraduates (Lodge and Taber 2013).

But just how seamless is the influence from implicit to explicit attitudes? Are there any conditions under which this cognitive sequence is interrupted? Lodge and Taber (2013) suggest that it is incredibly hard to decouple explicit attitudes from the affective charge of implicit attitudes. As they state, “[i]t is possible, though difficult, to override implicit responses” (22), which suggests that one’s explicit attitudes will often be consistent with the valence of one’s implicit attitudes. I agree that it is incredibly hard to arrest the cascading influence from implicit to explicit attitudes. But I also think of implicit and explicit attitudes as related, yet distinct, constructs that independently influence one’s political decision making (cf. Greenwald et al. 2009; Mo 2014; Payne et al. 2010). Hence, identifying those circumstances where these types of attitude diverge is – in my view – a useful theoretical exercise, for it helps to illuminate the boundary conditions to a strong correspondence between implicit and explicit attitudes.

Against this backdrop, I theorize about the conditions under which the political influence of implicit and explicit attitudes might diverge. JQP teaches us that people’s political concepts – each with its own affective tag – are stored in LTM, interconnected to each other in associative fashion. Here, implicit considerations will be activated first, with this activation quickly fanning out to other considerations – including explicit attitudes. By the time this activation reaches one’s explicit attitudes, people have surpassed their threshold of awareness. That is, insofar as they are entertaining an explicit attitude, they know they are doing so.

At this juncture, JQP expects that the charge of one’s implicit attitude(s) will carry over directly into one’s explicit attitude(s). People will justify the latter on the basis of the former. Nevertheless, APE and MODE both allow for the possibility that people can manipulate and edit their explicit attitude (because they are motivated to do so) in spite of the original valence of their implicit attitude remaining unchanged. Specifically, the APE model suggests that even if people resolve the cognitive inconsistency that might emerge between a “gut reaction” toward an object (e.g., implicit attitude) and a “proposition” related to that object (e.g., explicit attitude) in favor of the latter, this “does not necessarily deactivate the associations that gave rise to the affective gut response that built the foundation for this proposition” (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2011: 66). This means that people can edit and adjust the influence of their explicit attitudes, even if their implicit attitudes stay activated and pull in a different direction – what MODE theorists refer to as “mixed processes” (Fazio and Towles-Schwen 1999: 102–103).²

² This view is also highly consistent with the theoretical work of Timothy Wilson et al. (2000), who propose the notion of “dual attitudes.” Here, people can have implicit and explicit attitudes
Applying these insights to the case of immigration politics, I derive a dueling effects hypothesis, where some individuals (i.e., highly motivated), under some circumstances (i.e., cued attention to non-Latinos), can suppress the influence of their explicit attitudes toward Latino immigrants even as the influence of their implicit attitudes toward the same group persists. The main implication flowing from this hypothesis is that, if correct, public opposition to immigration is stronger than what verbal self-reports suggest.

The last mechanism that I propose and test concerns social position. To this point, I have couched my theory of “implicit expectations” at a very individualistic level, thus providing a detailed account of how implicit attitudes color a given person’s views about immigration. Yet one of the defining features of social and political life is the importance of groups – that is, individual persons as members of larger collectives (Huddy 2001, 2013; Tajfel and Turner 1979). And within the study of politics, one of the more crucial group memberships revolves around race, where current theorizing suggests that this construct leaves a deep imprint on the psychology of individuals’ political attitudes (e.g., Dawson 2000; Philpot and White 2010).

Seizing on these insights, I hypothesize that the effects of implicit attitudes on immigration policy judgments are modulated by race – or rather, by the position of one’s racial group in America’s racial order (Dawson 2000; Kim 2000; Masuoka and Junn 2013). In particular, I expect that the effects of implicit attitudes will be stronger among white Americans, relative to African Americans, as the former are the dominant group in America’s racial hierarchy (Fang et al. 1998; Kahn et al. 2009; Sidanius and Pratto 2001). The reasoning behind these differential effects is at once simple and illuminating. As members of a dominant group, whites are motivated to preserve their privileged station in the racial order. Hence, the expression of implicit attitudes against a threatening outgroup (i.e., Latino immigrants) serves as one way for whites to bolster their position in this hierarchy. In contrast, black Americans occupy the lowest tier in the racial order (see Fang et al. 1998; Kahn et al. 2009; Masuoka and Junn 2013). The motivation to maintain a high rank in the order is therefore absent, which suggests that the expression of implicit attitudes might have less relevance for blacks than whites. If true, then this hypothesis implies that “implicit expectations” serve a functional role, which makes the influence of implicit attitudes more pronounced among some segments of the mass public than others.

toward the same object stored in memory, with the former being activated prior to the latter in light of relevant cues. According to this view, people can, with enough effort, manipulate and edit their explicit attitude toward an object, which falls under their awareness and control. But despite explicit attitude change, people’s implicit attitude toward the same object can persist.
Implicit Attitude’s Political Effects: The Role of Individual Differences

I claim that implicit attitudes can directly and indirectly affect people’s immigration policy judgments via the mechanisms I hypothesized about in the preceding text. Critical to these hypotheses is the presence of individual differences in implicit attitudes. As “object-evaluations,” implicit attitudes are not a type. It is not the case that one has (or does not have) an implicit attitude. Rather, all of us have implicit attitudes to some degree. For some people, these attitudes are very strong, such that the association between an object and its evaluation (e.g., Latino–Bad) is remarkably robust. For other individuals, these attitudes are anemically weak, with the object evaluation association tenuously held in place, as if by gossamer. For all persons, however, their level of implicit attitude will shape the impact it has on their explicit political judgments and choices.

To some public opinion specialists, this may seem like an uncontroversial and unnecessary point. But it merits emphasis because it contrasts with the constructionist view of (implicit and explicit) attitude formation espoused by Lodge and Taber (2013). Speaking in reference to John Q. Public, these authors point out: “[t]he strong implication of this…model is that all beliefs and attitudes will be constructed in real time from whatever cognitive and affective information is momentarily accessible from LTM” (Lodge and Taber 2013: 33).

But are all attitudes really constructed “in real time”? From one perspective, several public opinion specialists teach us that many citizens will form their political attitudes on the basis of immediately salient considerations (Tourangeau et al. 2000; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992). Yet even within this “constructionist” sea, there are islands of scholarship counseling against taking this view too far. One of the more renowned and enduring of these is Phillip Converse’s (1964) treatise on the nature of mass belief systems. Although widely famous for revealing the instability and ideological incoherence of most citizens’ political thinking, tucked in Converse’s (1964) chapter was another, equally provocative insight: that where structure to public opinion exists, one of its foundations is attitudes toward groups. Taken at face value, this insight suggests that some attitudes toward groups are not developed on the spot because people have already formed and stored them in LTM. And one reason why these attitudes are so well-formed and easily elicited is, I suggest, because of stable and recurring patterns of political discourse about groups.

Of course, to argue that some implicit attitudes might be pre-formed and easily stimulated is not to suggest that all implicit attitudes display this character – nor does it imply that Lodge and Taber’s (2013) constructionist view is incorrect. A more scientifically productive way to interpret my theoretical proposal is that by establishing that some implicit attitudes are, in fact, preformed, stable, and easily evoked, we can begin to pinpoint when implicit attitudes are formed on the spot, when they are merely drawn out on the spot, and when we will observe a confluence of these perspectives, thus further setting boundary conditions for implicit attitudes’ political effects.
Conclusions and Next Steps

This chapter has laid out the theoretical framework that will guide my empirical investigations in the following chapters. In distilled form, this framework traces the development of implicit attitudes to stable and recurring patterns in political discourse surrounding policy issues. These implicit attitudes, my framework suggests, are automatically called forth when a relevant political topic is broached. Once they are made mentally accessible, these implicit attitudes anchor how citizens deliberate about a pending political judgment. This influence of implicit attitudes happens subconsciously, that is, without a person’s knowledge that their impulsive thoughts have affected what they explicitly decided.

Using this framework, I analyze contemporary US immigration politics and how citizens’ unspoken impressions of Latino immigrants prefigure into how they view and judge immigration policies. To the extent that my framework is valid, several key pieces of evidence must emerge during my investigations. First, a systematic examination of discourse on this political issue must reveal clear patterns in content and focus – patterns that people’s associational reasoning can draw on to develop implicit attitudes. In the case of immigration, this means the regularities that emerge in political discourse about this issue should highlight Latino immigrants while encouraging a specific normative view of them. Second, if patterns in immigration discourse lend themselves to associational reasoning, I must find that implicit attitudes toward Latino immigrants exist and that their prevalence matches the regularities in public discussions of immigration. Not only that, but I must also show these implicit attitudes are substantively different than their self-reported counterparts – that they, in fact, offer something new. Third, I must demonstrate that implicit attitudes toward Latino immigrants operate in ways outlined by my theory of implicit expectations. Specifically, I must show that implicit attitudes are easily called forth, and that once mentally accessible, they can shape one’s effortful deliberations without one’s awareness of this influence.

Meeting these goals necessitates multiple lines of empirical attack. Accordingly, the opening salvo in this investigative assault is also, perhaps, its most fundamental: Does political discourse actually yield stable patterns that might encourage a particular implicit view of Latino immigrants? To answer this question, let us turn to Chapter 4.