

# Communicating about Undocumented Immigration Issues: Is Your Target Audience Bilingual?

Shuyang Qu

Alexa J. Lamm

Joy N. Rumble

Follow this and additional works at: <http://newprairiepress.org/jac>

## Recommended Citation

Qu, Shuyang; Lamm, Alexa J.; and Rumble, Joy N. (2017) "Communicating about Undocumented Immigration Issues: Is Your Target Audience Bilingual?," *Journal of Applied Communications*: Vol. 101: Iss. 2. <https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.1004>

This Research is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Applied Communications by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact [cads@k-state.edu](mailto:cads@k-state.edu).

---

# Communicating about Undocumented Immigration Issues: Is Your Target Audience Bilingual?

## **Abstract**

Due to the large number of undocumented immigrants working in the agricultural and natural resources industry, and recent discussions regarding immigration reform in the United States, agricultural communicators need to understand public opinion of undocumented immigrants and the factors that influence public opinion surrounding immigration issues in order to provide effective information to target audiences. Immigration has often been associated with linguistic diversity since the majority of immigrants speak a language other than English. To understand how linguistic differences impact public opinion, and how to communicate with audiences expressing diverse linguistic preferences, this study used an online survey design to examine the differences in attitudes toward immigration issues and information channel preferences between individuals who are bilingual and those who are not bilingual. Results from 503 Florida residents, representative of the population, indicated that non-bilingual respondents had a significantly more negative attitude toward immigration issues than bilingual respondents. In addition, bilingual respondents preferred to receive information through a website significantly more than non-bilingual respondents. The results imply agricultural communicators should recognize their target audiences' language ability and create messages about immigration specifically for bilingual and non-bilingual audiences. Bilingual websites should be created to disseminate immigration messages to engage bilingual audiences.

## **Keywords**

Bilingual, Construal Level Theory, Information Channels, Public Opinion Undocumented Immigration

## **Creative Commons License**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

# RESEARCH

## Communicating about Undocumented Immigration Issues: Is Your Target Audience Bilingual?

Shuyang Qu, Alexa J. Lamm, and Joy N. Rumble

### ABSTRACT

*Due to the large number of undocumented immigrants working in the agricultural and natural resources industry, and recent discussions regarding immigration reform in the United States, agricultural communicators need to understand public opinion of undocumented immigrants and the factors that influence public opinion surrounding immigration issues in order to provide effective information to target audiences. Immigration has often been associated with linguistic diversity since the majority of immigrants speak a language other than English. To understand how linguistic differences impact public opinion, and how to communicate with audiences expressing diverse linguistic preferences, this study used an online survey design to examine the differences in attitudes toward immigration issues and information channel preferences between individuals who are bilingual and those who are not bilingual. Results from 503 Florida residents, representative of the population, indicated that non-bilingual respondents had a significantly more negative attitude toward immigration issues than bilingual respondents. In addition, bilingual respondents preferred to receive information through a website significantly more than non-bilingual respondents. The results imply agricultural communicators should recognize their target audiences' language ability and create messages about immigration specifically for bilingual and non-bilingual audiences. Bilingual websites should be created to disseminate immigration messages to engage bilingual audiences.*

### KEY WORDS

Bilingual, Construal Level Theory, Information Channels, Public Opinion Undocumented Immigration

### INTRODUCTION

The United States (U.S.) is one of the largest immigrant-receiving countries in the world (Qu, Lamm, & Odera, 2014; Suro, 2009). In recent years, issues associated with immigration, especially undocumented/unauthorized/illegal immigrants, have been a priority of the federal government (Suro, 2009). The number of immigrants living in the U.S. has grown at an exponential rate. According to Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, 11.1 million undocumented immigrants lived in the U.S. in 2014, compared to 3.5 million in 1990 (Passel & Cohn, 2016). Florida is the third-largest immigrant serving state with approximately 850,000 undocumented immigrants, sharing 5% of the national labor force (Passel & Cohn, 2016).

In spite of ever-increasing levels of mechanization, many important agricultural production facilities in the U.S. are dependent on hired farm labor, over half of which is made up of unauthorized immigrant workers (Knutson & Fisher, 2011). Agriculture is a significant component of the Florida economy requiring a "continuous, economically feasible, and authorized

workforce to sustain the state's economic growth" (Bowden, Lamm, Carter, Irani & Galindo, 2012, p. 1). Because of the intense physical work required in farm labor, the Florida agricultural industry heavily depends upon immigrant workers to perform important roles in crop production and harvest (Florida Farm Bureau, 2014) and does not have a replacement workforce should this group of workers disappear. Because many jobs associated with agricultural production are not preferred by domestic labor, policies have been put in place to allow immigrants to enter the U.S. so they can legally work in seasonal or temporary positions (Knutson & Fisher, 2011). However, public opinion toward undocumented immigrants was "overwhelmingly negative" (Muste, 2013, p. 408). Parker and Lamm (2014) used the Attitudes towards Illegal Aliens Scale (Ommundsen & Larsen, 1997; 1999) to examine public opinion toward undocumented immigrants and found that people generally perceived undocumented immigrants as costing the U.S. millions of dollars each year, infringing on the country's resources, and not deserving the same rights as American citizens.

Agricultural communicators need to understand the public's opinion of undocumented immigrants and immigration issues because public opinion strongly influences public policy (Burstein, 2003). According to Johnson and Hill (2011), the public considers the current immigration policies and regulations enacted by state or local governments as the primary source of failure. Therefore, state and local governments are becoming more active in addressing immigration issues by discouraging undocumented immigrants and establishing sanctuary cities, even though most immigration policies are federal (Johnson & Hill, 2011).

Over time, states that have a more liberal public have passed more liberal policies, while states with a more conservative public have passed more conservative policies (Erikson, Wright, & McIver, 1993; 2006). Public opinion of undocumented immigration issues will become increasingly important as immigration policy formation and implementation is enacted. Additionally, Rivera (2014) argued that public opinion matters because the issue of undocumented immigration is salient to the public. The public is able to compare what is happening around them with state legislation and make conclusions about whether or not the legislation aligns with public opinion.

One of the distinct characteristics the U.S. is known for is its linguistic diversity (Ortman & Shin, 2011). Data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that approximately 20% of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English (Ortman & Shin, 2011). An American Community Survey further supported this finding, reporting that 20.8% of Americans speak another language at home (Ryan, 2013). The number of people who can speak a language other than English has increased in the U.S. over time. The Pew Research Center (2013) found the number of Spanish speakers in the U.S. had increased 233% since 1980, and Vietnamese speakers 599% over the same period. The growing number of people in the U.S. who speak a second language suggests a greater diversity within American society due to a larger number of immigrants and their impact on native English speakers. Florida ranks seventh nationally in the percent of the population speaking another language at home (Ryan, 2013). Nearly five million Florida residents (27.6%) speak another language at home (Ryan 2013).

Due to the importance of immigration to the Florida agricultural and natural resource industry, the significance of public opinion on immigration policy, and the ample number of people who are bilingual in the state, we sought to determine how attitudes toward undocumented immigration issues and preferences for receiving information about undocumented immigration issues differed between those who were bilingual and those who only spoke English.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Ways to become a bilingual vary (Michael & Gollan, 2005). The linguistic classifications of bilingualism are early and late bilinguals. Early bilinguals are those who attained proficiency in a second language during early childhood, and late bilinguals are those who are exposed to a second language later than childhood (Fiszer, 2008; Lai, Rodriguez, & Narasimhan, 2014). People who speak another language often have some type of association with immigrants. According to Birner (n.d.) from the Linguistic Society of America, individuals who can speak another language in the U.S. are often the children of immigrants (documented or undocumented). These children who speak their parents' native language at

home during their childhood while speaking English at school become early bilinguals. Early bilinguals can also be those whose parents speak more than one language to them or those who are exposed to another language by interacting with other significant persons in their lives (such as a grandparent or caretaker) (Birner, n.d.).

On the other hand, many bilinguals are not necessarily closely related to immigrants (Birner, n.d.). Individuals may have acquired a second language sometime after acquiring their first language, perhaps in a classroom, classifying them as a late bilingual (Birner, n.d.). In the U.S. these bilinguals are likely to be Americans who are interested in learning another culture's language, and who are likely to have experience outside of the U.S. in places where they themselves are not considered native.

Bilingualism is a valuable element when examining public attitude toward immigration as language ability is a "cornerstone cross-cultural skill" (Newman, 2012, p. 144). The ability to speak more than one language shortens "cultural distance" (Newman, Hartman, & Taber, 2014, p. 167). Cultural distance is a concept used to describe the degree to which people differ in respect to "values, beliefs, norms, customs, and language between distinct cultural entities" (Newman et al., 2014, p. 3).

Language, as one of the important aspects of cultural distance, creates barriers for individuals to communicate and interact with others from a different culture and can even create feelings of threat (Newman, 2012). Being able to speak another language may increase the understanding and receptivity to the beliefs, values, and norms of a different culture (Newman et al., 2014). Therefore, bilingualism becomes a valuable indicator to measure people's attitude toward undocumented immigrants and immigration issues (Newman, 2012).

The theoretical framework for this study was guided by construal level theory and uses and gratification theory. Construal level theory argues that psychological distance influences an individual's choice, attitude, and actions to the related event (Trope, Liberman, & Wakslak, 2007). Psychological distance is explained from the temporal, space, social, and hypothetical aspects. An event that is perceived to be further into the future, at a more remote location, less socially familiar, or less likely to happen to an individual is processed as a higher-level construal (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Higher-level construals tend to employ general and abstract mental schemata to represent an event. The representation of the event often lacks contextual details. On the other hand, lower-level construals are able to create concrete, vivid, and specific mental schemata when processing an event. This event usually includes rich contextual details (Kardes, Cronley, & Kim, 2006).

Previous research has shown that lower-level construals can impact an individual's attitudes. When compared to experiences that are indirect and abstract, direct concrete experiences are likely to form strong attitudes that enable the creation of distinct memories (Fazio, Powell, & Williams, 1989; Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Smith & Swinyard, 1983). Troup and Liberman (2007) suggested experiences lacking direct contact (e.g., distant places, times) trigger a more abstract high-level construal that is expressed through more general responses. Bilinguals often have direct experience with immigrants (Birner, n.d.). They are more likely to engage in immediate rich contextual details with information about immigration issues and create low-level construals than those who only speak English. For example, Jia and Smith (2013) found that when immigration issues were made temporally near, self-protective motives (concrete low-construal level) played a bigger role in their study participants' attitude toward immigration than high-construal level motives. Analogous to the effect of temporal distance, this study proposed that bilingual and non-bilingual individuals held dissimilar attitudes toward undocumented immigration issues because bilinguals are likely to use lower-construal mental presentation than non-bilinguals who may have further psychological distance from undocumented immigration issues.

According to the uses and gratification theory, when media users are actively involved in a topic, such as agricultural and natural resources issues, they select a communication channel based on their shared motives and interests. This theory argues that participants' information needs drive their selection of a media channel (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Kippax & Murray, 1980; Rosengren, 1974). This media selection behavior is "goal-directed, purposive, and motivated" (Rubin, 2009, p. 167).

Throughout history, researchers have identified needs associated with specific media channels. Berelson (1949) found that people read newspapers to acquire “serious” information, to appear informed and be perceived as prestigious in social gatherings (p. 114). People used television and radio to “escape the boredom of everyday life, to have something to talk about with others, to compare the people and events in the programs with their own experiences, and to keep in touch with the main events in the world” (Kippax & Murray, 1980, p. 336). McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) said television provided gratification of tension or emotional release, social integration, companionship, education, and surveillance. The use of new technology, such as social media and websites, has served users similarly to television (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). In addition, interactive new media emphasizes a strong casual, interpersonal sensation that greatly gratifies its new media users’ needs for social presence such as sharing problems, sociability, and social information (Cowles, 1989; Dicken-Garcia, 1998; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

Meyers, Gracey, Irlbeck, and Akers (2015) examined the uses and gratifications of agricultural blog readers. Findings suggested the motives for reading agricultural blogs were to learn about others’ opinions of agricultural issues and to discover information not available in other news sources. Lamm, Rumble, Carter, and Lamm (2016) utilized uses and gratification theory to examine opinion leaders’ media preferences to communicate about agricultural and natural resources issues. Communication channels examined by Lamm et al. (2016) not only included mass media channels, but also interpersonal channels such as conference calls. Findings of Lamm et al. (2006) suggested a preference for communication channels that foster interpersonal interaction.

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences in attitudes toward undocumented immigration and information channel preferences when learning about undocumented immigration issues between Florida residents who are bilingual and those who are not bilingual. The objectives of this study were to:

1. Describe respondents’ attitudes toward undocumented immigrants.
2. Describe respondents’ preferred information channel when learning about undocumented immigration issues.
3. Compare attitudes toward undocumented immigrants between individuals who are bilingual and those who can speak only English.
4. Compare the preferred information channel when learning about undocumented immigration issues between individuals who are bilingual and those who can speak only English.

## METHODS

An online survey was conducted to fulfill the objectives of this study. Undocumented immigration was defined in the survey as “foreign nationals residing in the U.S. without legal immigration status, resulting from someone entering the country without permission or remaining in the U.S. after a legal visa expires” (Odera & Lamm, 2013, p. 9). To measure attitude toward undocumented immigrants, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 19 statements. The list of statements was slightly altered from the Attitudes towards Illegal Aliens Scale developed by Ommundsen and Larsen (1997; 1999). Examples of the statements included “Undocumented immigrants should not benefit from my tax dollars” and “All undocumented immigrants deserve the same rights as U.S. citizens.” Each of the statements were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Undecided*, 4 = *Agree*, to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. In term of the real limits, 1.00 – 1.49 was considered strongly disagree, 1.50 – 2.49 was disagree, 2.50 – 3.49 was undecided, 3.50 – 4.49 was agree, and 4.50 – 5.00 was strongly disagree. Prior to the data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 50 Florida residents to test the internal reliability of the survey instrument. The results were deemed to be reliable ( $\alpha = .87$ ). Eight out of 19 statements were reverse coded and then all 19 statements were summed and averaged to create an overall index score. Respondents were also asked what their preferred information channels were to receive information about undocumented immigration and whether they could speak a language other than

English. Preferred communication channels for receiving information about undocumented immigration were measured by asking respondents to check all their preferred information channels from a list of items including visiting a website, watching TV coverage, attending a seminar or conference, etc. This study was part of a larger project related to Florida residents' opinions of undocumented immigration.

The population of interest for this study was Florida residents age 18 or older. Qualtrics, a survey software company, was hired to distribute the online survey to the population of interest. Non-probability sampling was used when collecting data. Public opinion research commonly utilizes non-probability sampling techniques to make population estimates (Baker et al., 2013). In this study, 503 out of 527 respondents in Florida gave full responses to the survey, generating a response rate of 95.4%. Post-stratification methods were used to weight the data to compensate for potential selection, exclusion, and non-participation biases (Baker et al., 2013). The respondent demographics were weighted to ensure representation according to the 2010 U.S. Census using geographic location in the state, age, gender, and race/ethnicity (Kalton & Flores-Cervantes, 2003). The use of weighting procedures can yield results comparable, or in some cases better than standard probability-based samples (Abate, 1998; Twyman, 2008; Vavreck & Rivers, 2008). Demographic characteristics of the sample and 2015 Florida census can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Florida Demographics Represented in Survey Respondents and Florida Census*

Demographic Category	Respondent %	Census %
Gender		
Female	51.1	51.1
Male	48.9	48.9
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	22.5	24.5
Non-Hispanic	77.5	75.5
Race		
White	77.1	77.7
African American	17.0	16.8
Asian	3.0	2.8
Native American	0.2	0.1
Age		
19 and younger	1.3	21.4
20-29 years	12.8	13.1
30-39 years	12.2	12.2
40-49 years	14.2	12.6
50-59 years	13.5	13.9
60-69 years	11.1	12.2
70-79 years	7.4	8.3
80 and older	4.9	5.2
Language ability		
Bilingual	19.3	N/A

Non-bilingual

80.7

N/A

Note. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test and Chi-square in statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics version 22.

## RESULTS

### Objective 1: Describe Respondents' Attitudes Toward Undocumented Immigrants.

Respondents were asked to respond to 19 statements associated with their attitude toward undocumented immigrants on a five-point Likert scale. Table 2 displays the respondents' mean and standard deviation for each statement. To calculate an index score, eight of 19 items were reverse coded and the responses were averaged. Reliability was calculated *ex post facto* resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of .87. The mean score was 2.29 ( $SD = .78$ ) indicating average overall disagreement with the statements and a negative attitude toward undocumented immigrants.

**Table 2**

*Attitude Toward Undocumented Immigrants (N = 503)*

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Undocumented immigrants have rights, too.	3.12	1.22
Undocumented immigrants should not be discriminated against.	3.07	1.24
Undocumented immigrants are a nuisance to society.*	3.03	1.17
There is enough room in this country for everyone.	3.01	1.24
Undocumented immigrants provide the U.S. with a valuable human resource.	2.75	1.15
Undocumented immigrants should be forced to go back to their own countries.*	2.63	1.27
Undocumented immigrants who give birth to children in the U.S. should be made citizens.	2.47	1.23
Undocumented immigrants are not infringing on our country's resources.	2.17	1.21
Access to this country is too easy.*	2.14	1.17
Undocumented immigrants should not have the same rights as U.S. citizens.*	2.09	1.22
Taking care of people from other nations is not the responsibility of the U.S.*	2.05	1.09
Undocumented immigrants should be excluded from social welfare.*	1.97	1.13
Our taxes should be used to help those residing without documentation in the U.S.	1.96	1.19
All undocumented immigrants deserve the same rights as U.S. citizens.	1.95	1.10
There should be open international borders.	1.90	1.07



Undocumented immigrants cost the U.S. millions of dollars each year.*	1.87	1.02
The government should pay for care and education of undocumented immigrants.	1.82	1.03
Undocumented immigrants should not benefit from my tax dollars.*	1.80	1.01
Undocumented immigrants should be eligible for welfare.	1.73	1.02
Overall	2.29	.78

\* indicates reverse coded items.

Note. 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, to 5 = Strongly Agree. Real limits: 1.00 – 1.49 was considered strongly disagree, 1.50 – 2.49 was disagree, 2.50 – 3.49 was undecided, 3.50 – 4.49 was agree, and 4.50 – 5.00 was strongly disagree

### Objective 2: Describe Respondents’ Preferred Information Channel When Learning About Undocumented Immigration Issues.

Respondents were then asked to identify which information channel they would prefer to use to receive information about undocumented immigration issues (Table 3). The majority of respondents indicated their preference was visiting a website (62.4%), followed by watching TV coverage (41.0%), and reading printed factsheet, bulletins or brochures (31.4%).

**Table 3**  
*Information Channel Preference (N = 503)*

Information channel	<i>f</i>	%
Visit a website	314	62.4
Watch TV coverage	206	41.0
Printed factsheet, bulletins or brochures	158	31.4
Read a newspaper article or series	143	28.4
Watch a video	89	17.7
Take part in a one-time voluntary activity	46	9.1
Attend a seminar or conference	46	9.1
Attend a fair or festival	45	8.9
Attend a short course or workshop	43	8.5
Get trained for a regular volunteer position	35	7.0
Other	32	6.4
Look at demonstration or display	28	5.6

### Objective 3: Compare attitudes toward undocumented immigrants between individuals who are bilingual and those who can speak only English.

An independent t -test was conducted to determine the effect of being bilingual on attitude toward undocumented immigrants. Bilingual respondents had a mean score of 2.62 (*SD* = .82). According to the real limits described in methods

section, a mean score of 2.62 categorized bilingual respondents' attitude toward undocumented immigrants as undecided. Non-bilingual respondents had a mean score of 2.21 ( $SD = .75$ ), which indicated that they disagreed with the statements. The mean difference between respondents' overall attitudes toward undocumented immigrants and respondents' language ability was significant ( $t = 4.77, p < .01$ ).

**Objective 4: Compare the preferred information channel when learning about undocumented immigration issues between individuals who are bilingual and those who can speak only English.**

Table 4 shows that visiting a website was the most preferred communication channel followed by watching TV coverage for people who were bilingual and those who were not. Some respondents, bilingual and non-bilingual, preferred to receive information about undocumented immigration from printed materials, newspaper articles, or videos. By comparing the information channel preference between bilingual and non-bilingual respondents, few bilingual respondents or non-bilingual respondents preferred to learn about the issues through a demonstration or display, attending a short course or workshop, getting trained for a regular volunteer position, or attending a seminar or conference.

Chi-Square tests were conducted to compare the association between information channel preferences and respondents' language ability. Results revealed there was a statistically significant association with the preference to visit a website for information about undocumented immigration issues and the respondents' language ability ( $p = .05$ ) with bilingual respondents reporting a higher interest in websites than non-bilingual respondents (see Table 4). No significant association was found between respondents' preferences toward other information channels and their language ability.

**Table 4**

*Differences in Preferences to Use Specific Information Channels*

Information Channels	Bilingual		Non-bilingual		$\chi^2$	$p$
	$n$	%	$n$	%		
Visit a website	69	71.1	245	60.3	3.89	.05*
Read a newspaper article or series	35	36.1	108	26.6	3.46	.06
Take part in a one-time voluntary activity	13	13.4	33	8.1	2.62	.11
Printed factsheet, bulletins or brochures	24	24.7	134	33.0	2.48	.12
Other	4	4.1	28	6.9	1.01	.32
Attend a short course or workshop	10	10.3	33	8.1	.48	.49
Get trained for a regular volunteer position	8	8.2	27	6.7	.31	.58
Attend a fair or festival	10	10.3	35	8.6	.27	.60
Look at demonstration or display	6	6.2	22	5.4	.09	.77
Watch TV coverage	39	40.2	167	41.1	.03	.87
Watch a video	17	17.5	72	17.7	.00	.96
Attend a seminar or conference	9	9.3	37	9.1	.00	.96

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

We sought to determine Florida residents' attitude toward undocumented immigrants and preferences for information channels to learn about undocumented immigration issues and to explore how attitude toward undocumented immigration differed among those who were bilingual and not bilingual. Results revealed that Florida residents' attitudes toward undocumented immigrants tended to be negative. For example, Florida residents disagreed that all undocumented immigrants deserve the same rights as U.S. citizens, disagreed that undocumented immigrants should be eligible for welfare, and agreed that Undocumented immigrants should not benefit from my tax dollars. This result was consistent with the findings of Parker and Lamm (2014), who used the same attitude index and found that people generally perceived undocumented immigrants as costing the U.S. millions of dollars each year, infringing on the countries resources, and not deserving the same rights as American citizens.

The second objective's findings disclosed that bilingual individuals in Florida had a significantly different attitude toward undocumented immigrants than non-bilingual individuals. Bilingual respondents were significantly more inclined to feel undecided with the statements about undocumented immigrants. This finding is consistent with finding of Newman et al. (2014) that being able to speak another language increased the understanding of the beliefs, values, and norms of another culture, thus inducing a more positive attitude toward undocumented immigrants than those who do not speak another language. Based on construal level theory, the finding hinted that bilinguals were likely to adopt concrete low-level construals through rich, direct, detailed context when thinking about undocumented immigration issues, while non-bilinguals adopted high-level construals with general decontext mental presentations.

This study also examined Florida residents' preferences for information channels to receive information about undocumented immigration issues. Visiting a website was the most preferred information channel for the majority of both bilinguals (71.1%) and non-bilinguals (60.3%). However, visiting a website was significantly more preferred by bilinguals than by non-bilingual respondents. Besides visiting a website, watching TV coverage, reading a newspaper article or series, printed factsheet, bulletins or brochures, and watching a video were also perceived by many respondents to be the preferred channels of receiving information regarding issues about undocumented immigration.

This study included a few interpersonal communication channels as options for the respondents to learn about undocumented immigration issues. All these interpersonal communication channels are participatory channels that are common for agricultural extension activities, including attending voluntary activities, attending a fair or festival, attending a short course or workshop, attending a seminar or conference, getting trained for a regular volunteer position or looking at a demonstration or display. However, less than 15% of Florida residents chose participatory methods to acquire information about the issue. Based on uses and gratification theory, respondents' selection of a media channel bases on their needs and motivations (Katz et al., 1974; Kippax & Murray, 1980; Rosengren, 1974). Interpersonal communication channels such as attending a seminar and conference do not meet participant's needs and motivations to learn about undocumented immigration issues.

In terms of learning about undocumented immigration issues, mass communication channels such as a website, TV coverage, and videos are the more favorable channels than those that require physical participation in the communication. This finding suggested the potential role of television, websites, and videos to provide education about undocumented immigration issues (McQuail et al., 1972; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the importance of immigrants to agriculture in the U.S., agricultural communicators will inevitably encounter immigration issues and will need to communicate clearly about these issues (Friedman, 2006). Agricultural communicators should approach these topics carefully by framing information differently when communicating about immigration with audiences with different language abilities. For example, focusing on undocumented immigrants' positive contributions, such as taking on hard labor positions, when communicating to non-bilingual audiences and discussing cultural values to build connections with bilingual audiences may be appropriate. By framing messages in this way, agricultural communicators will be able to connect to the schemata formed by cultural differences and create messages that directly resonate with the experiences and background of bilinguals and non-bilinguals alike, therefore enabling the messages to resonate with the intended audience.

Based on respondents' communication channel preference found in this study, agricultural communicators should consider creating user-friendly websites providing unbiased and targeted information about immigration issues or effective television coverage about the issues so as to efficiently reach out the public and inform the public about immigration. Participatory communication methods such as voluntary activities, workshops, or conferences should be carefully planned and publicized in order to ensure desirable results as they were not found to be of interest to the public in general. Because bilingual audiences prefer to use websites significantly more than non-bilingual audiences, agricultural communicators should also consider creating bilingual websites and incorporating messages that connect to their schemata in order to engage this audience with information about undocumented immigration.

For future research, we suggest analyzing the public's knowledge level on issues about undocumented immigration and determining whether or not a knowledge gap exists between people who are bilingual and those who are non-bilingual. Policy makers and communicators could learn about what knowledge the public lacks or misunderstands so as to provide corresponding educational materials. Experimental research should be conducted to control participants' low or high construals to find out whether psychological distance to immigrants has causal relationship with their attitude toward undocumented immigration issues. Further research focusing on how bilinguals obtain their information regarding issues on undocumented immigration will further reveal whether personal background and experience with immigrants significantly contributed to their knowledge level on related issues as this study presumed in conclusion. It is also valuable to explore the information source trustworthiness in term of issues related to undocumented immigration. Uses and gratifications theory emphasizes the relationship between media users' motives and their selection of certain media channel. Therefore, researchers should further investigate the public's motives for searching for and learning about undocumented immigration issues. With sufficient research about target audiences' preferences for information channels, trustworthiness of information sources, and motives behind learning about these issues, agricultural educators and communicators will be able to utilize the most trusted information sources and content to communicate effectively about undocumented immigration issues.

## REFERENCES

- Abate, T. (1998). *Accuracy of online surveys may make phone polls obsolete*. The San Francisco Chronicle, D1.
- Ryan, C. (2013). Language use in the United States: 2011, American Community Survey reports. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-22.pdf>
- Baker, R., Brick, J. M., Bates, N. A., Battaglia, M., Couper, M P., Denver, J. A., Gile, K. J., & Tourangeau, R. (2013). Report of the AAPOR task force on non-probability sampling. *American Association for Public Opinion Research*. Retrieved at [https://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/AAPOR\\_Main/media/MainSiteFiles/NPS\\_TF\\_Report\\_Final\\_7\\_revised\\_FNL\\_6\\_22\\_13.pdf](https://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/AAPOR_Main/media/MainSiteFiles/NPS_TF_Report_Final_7_revised_FNL_6_22_13.pdf)
- Berelson, B. (1949). What 'missing the newspaper' means. In P. F. Lazarsfeld & F. N. Stanton (Eds), *Communications Research, 1948-1949*. (pp. 111-129). New York, Harper and Bros.
- Birner, B. (n.d.). Bilingualism. FAQ of Linguistic Society of America. Retrieved from <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/faq-what-bilingualism>

- Bowden, C., Lamm, A. J., Carter, H., Irani, T., & Galindo, S. (2011). *Reconciling immigration and agricultural labor concerns for a sustainable state economy* (Research Report No. WC132). Retrieved from <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/wc132>
- Burstein, P. (2003). The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 29-40. doi:10.1177/106591290305600103
- Cowles, D. (1989). Consumer perceptions of interactive media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 33(1), 83-89. doi:10.1080/08838158909364063
- Dicken-Garcia, H. (1998). The Internet and continuing historical discourse. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(1), 19-27. doi:10.1177/107769909807500105
- Erikson, R. Wright, G., & McIver, J. (1993). *Statehouse democracy: Public opinion and policy in the American States*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, R., Wright, G., & McIver, J. (2006). Public opinion in the States: A quarter century of change and stability. In J. E. Cohen (Ed.), *Public Opinion in State Politics* (pp. 229-253). Stanford, CA: Stanford Press.
- Fiszer, C. (2008). *The effect of bilingualism on cognition: Evidence from early and late Bilinguals* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from [http://sapience.dec.ens.fr/cogmaster/www/doc/MEMOIRES/2008\\_FISZER.pdf](http://sapience.dec.ens.fr/cogmaster/www/doc/MEMOIRES/2008_FISZER.pdf)
- Fazio, R. H., Powell, M. C., & Williams, C. J. (1989). The role of attitude accessibility in the attitude-to-behavior process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (3), 280-288. Retrieved from [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2489509?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2489509?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)
- Fazio, R. H., & Zanna, M. P. (1981). Direct experience and attitude-behavior consistency. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 14, 161-202. doi:0.1016/S0065-2601(08)60372-X
- Florida Farm Bureau. (2014). *Immigration reform is a critical issue for Florida*. Retrieved from <http://www.Floridafarmbureau.org/node/2806>
- Friedman, T. L. (2006). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Jia, L., & Smith, E. R. (2013). Distance makes the metaphor grow stronger: A psychological distance model of metaphor use. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49(3), 492-497. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2013.01.009
- Johnson, H., & Hill, L. (2011). *Illegal immigration*. PPIC report, Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/atissue/ai\\_711hjai.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/atissue/ai_711hjai.pdf)
- Kalton, G., & Flores-Cervantes, I. (2003). Weighting methods. *Journal of Official Statistics*, 19(2), 81-97. <http://www.jos.nu/articles/article.asp>.
- Kardes, F. R., Cronley, M. L., & Kim, J. (2006). Construal-level effects on preference stability, preference-behavior correspondence, and the suppression of competing brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 16(2), 135-144. doi:10.1207/s15327663jcp1602\_4
- Katz, E., Blumler, J., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communication: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19-34). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Kippax, S., & Murray, J. P. (1980). Using the mass media need gratification and perceived utility. *Communication Research*, 7(3), 335-359. doi:10.1177/009365028000700304
- Knutson, R. D., & Fisher, D. U. (2011). *Impacts of immigration reform proposals on the agriculture sector*. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/ANLA1234/acir-review-impacts-of-immigration-reform-proposals-on-the-agriculture-sector-6-30-11-review-draft>
- Lai, V. T., Rodriguez, G. G., & Narasimhan, B. (2014). Thinking-for-speaking in early and late bilinguals. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 15(1), 139-152. doi:10.1017/S1366728913000151
- Lamm, K. W., Rumble, J. N., Carter, H. S., & Lamm, A. J. (2016). Agricultural opinion leader communication channel preferences: An empirical analysis of participants of agricultural and natural resource leadership development programs. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 57(1), 91-105. doi:10.5032/jae.2016.01091
- McQuail, D., J. Blumler, & R. Brown (1972). The television audience: A revised perspective. In D. McQuail, (Ed.). *Sociology of Mass Communication* (pp. 135-65). Middlesex, England: Penguin.
- Meyers, C., Gracey, K., Irlbeck, E., & Akers, C. (2015). Exploring the uses and gratifications of agricultural blog readers. *Journal of Applied Communication*, 99(4), 91-103. Retrieved from [http://journalofappliedcommunications.org/images/stories/issues/2015/jac\\_v99\\_n4\\_article7.pdf](http://journalofappliedcommunications.org/images/stories/issues/2015/jac_v99_n4_article7.pdf)

- Michael, E. B., & T. Gollan. (2005). Being and becoming bilingual: Individual differences and consequences for language production. In J. F. Kroll, & A. M. B. de Groot (Eds.), *Handbook of bilingualism: Psycholinguistic Approaches* (pp. 389-407). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Muste, C. P. (2013). The dynamics of immigration opinion in the United States, 1992-2012. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77(1), 398-416. doi:10.1093/poq/nft001
- Newman, B. J. (2012). *Realistic cultural threat and opposition to immigration in the U. S.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://dspace.sunyconnect.suny.edu/handle/1951/59804?show=full>
- Newman, B. J., Hartman, T. K., & Taber, C. S. (2014). Social dominance and the cultural politics of immigration. *Political Psychology*, 35(2), 165-186. doi:10.1111/pops.12047
- Odera, E., & Lamm, A. J. (2013). *Public opinions of immigration in Florida*. PIE2012/13-10-B1. [City], Florida: University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education.
- Ommundsen, R., & Larsen, K. (1997). Attitudes towards illegal aliens: The reliability and validity of a Likert-type Scale. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 137(5), 665-667. doi:10.1080/00224549709595488
- Ommundsen, R., & Larsen, K. (1999). Attitudes towards illegal immigration in Scandinavia and United States. *Psychological Reports*, 84(3), 1331-1338. doi:10.2466/pr0.1999.84.3c.1331
- Ortman, J. M., & Shin, H. B. (2011). *Language Projections: 2010 to 2020*. Paper presented at the annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, Las Vegas, NV. Retrieved from [http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/acs/Ortman\\_Shin\\_ASA2011\\_paper.pdf](http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/data/acs/Ortman_Shin_ASA2011_paper.pdf)
- Qu, S., Lamm, A. J., & Odera, E. (2014, May). *Communicating about immigration issues: Understanding public perceptions of e-Verify*. Poster presented at the conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, Miami, FL.
- Quan-Haase, A., & Young, A. L. (2010). Uses and gratifications of social media: A comparison of Facebook and instant messaging. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30(5), 350-361. doi: 10.1177/0270467610380009
- Papacharissi, Z., & Rubin, A. M. (2000). Predictors of Internet use. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 44(2), 175-196. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4402\_2
- Parker, S. J., & Lamm, A., J. (2014). Exposure and perceptions: Undocumented immigrants in agriculture. *Proceedings of the 30th Annual Meeting of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education*. Miami, FL. Retrieved from [https://www.aiaee.org/images/stories/AIAEE/2014Conference/conf\\_abs.pdf](https://www.aiaee.org/images/stories/AIAEE/2014Conference/conf_abs.pdf)
- Passel, J. S., & Cohn, D. (2016, September 20). *Overall number of U.S. unauthorized immigrants holds steady since 2009*. [Pew Research Center website]. Retrieved from [http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2016/09/31170303/PH\\_2016.09.20\\_Unauthorized\\_FINAL.pdf](http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2016/09/31170303/PH_2016.09.20_Unauthorized_FINAL.pdf)
- Pew Research Center. (2013, August 13). *Spanish is the most spoken non-English language in U.S. homes, even among non-Hispanics*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/13/spanish-is-the-most-spoken-non-english-language-in-u-s-homes-even-among-non-hispanics/>
- Qu, S., Lamm, A. J., & Odera, E. (2014, May). *Communicating about immigration issues: Understanding public perceptions of e-Verify*. Poster presented at the conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education, Miami, FL.
- Quan-Haase, A., & Young, A. L. (2010). Uses and gratifications of social media: A comparison of Facebook and Instant Messaging. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 30(5), 350-361. doi:10.1177/0270467610380009
- Rivera, M. U. (2014, May). *Immigration, public opinion, and state policy (un)responsiveness: A case for analyzing policies that expand the rights of immigrants*. Paper presented at the Annual State Politics and Policy Conference, Venice, Italy. Retrieved from <http://spcc2014.indiana.edu/Papers/Rivera.pdf>
- Rosengren, K. E. (1974). Uses and gratifications: A paradigm outlined. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives of gratifications research* (pp. 269-286). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
- Rubin, A. M. (2009). The uses-and-gratifications perspective on media effects. In J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research 3rd ed.* (pp. 165-184). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Smith, R. E., & Swinyard, W. R. (1983). Attitude-behavior consistency: The impact of product trial versus advertising. *Journal of Marketing Research* 20(3), 257-267. doi:10.2307/3151829
- Suro, R. (2009). *America's views of immigration: The evidence from public opinion survey*. Washington, DC: Migration

- Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/americas-views-immigration-evidence-public-opinion-surveys>
- Trope, Y., & Liberman, N. (2010). Construal-level theory of psychological distance. *Psychological Review*, 117(2), 440-463. Retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/rev/117/2/440.pdf>
- Trope, Y., Liberman, N., & Wakslak, C. (2007). Construal levels and psychological distance: Effects on representation, prediction, evaluation, and behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 17(2), 83-95. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S105774080770013X>
- Twyman, J. (2008). Getting it right: Yougov and online survey research in Britain. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinions and Parties*, 18(4), 343-354. doi:10.1080/17457280802305169
- Vavreck, L., & Rivers, D. (2008). The 2006 cooperative congressional election study. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 18(4), 355-366. doi:10.1080/17457280802305177

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Shuyang Qu is a PhD student majoring in Agricultural Communication in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication.

Dr. Alexa J. Lamm is an assistant professor of Extension Education within the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication and the Associate Director of the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources. She concentrates on conducting research examining the human dimensions of agricultural and natural resource issues.

Dr. Joy N. Rumble is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Communication within the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication. She specializes in conducting research on communicating about agricultural and natural resource issues.