



Press "ONE" for English: Language Policy, Public Opinion, and American Identity

Deborah J. Schildkraut

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Press "ONE" for English examines how Americans form opinions on language policy issues such as declaring English the official language, printing documents in multiple languages, and bilingual education. Deborah Schildkraut shows that people's conceptions of American national identity play an integral role in shaping their views. Using insights from American political thought and intellectual history, she highlights several components of that identity and shows how they are brought to bear on debates about language. Her analysis expands the range of factors typically thought to explain attitudes in such policy areas, emphasizing in particular the role that civic republicanism's call for active and responsible citizenship plays in shaping opinion on language issues.

Using focus groups and survey data, Schildkraut develops a model of public conceptions of what it means to be American and demonstrates the complex ways in which people draw on these conceptions when forming and explaining their views. In so doing she illustrates how focus group methodology can help yield vital new insights into opinion formation.

With the rise in the use of ballot initiatives to implement language policies, understanding opinion formation in this policy area has become imperative. This book enhances our understanding of this increasingly pressing concern, and points the way toward humane, effective, and broadly popular language policies that address the realities of American demographics in the twenty-first century while staying true to the nation's most revered values.

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