

The Economic and Political Influences on Different Dimensions of United States

Immigration Policy

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Abstract

Recent research on political attitudes towards immigration often pits arguments emphasizing economic self-interest against ideological or cultural explanations. Many of these studies conceptualize immigration policy along a single dimension instead of disaggregating it into its distinct policy dimensions. Conditional on the type of immigration policy, different explanations should have more or less explanatory power. We disaggregate immigration policy into six different dimensions and provide theoretical scope conditions for when ideological and economic factors should matter. We test these predictions on votes on immigration policy in the US House of Representatives from 1979-2006. We advance the debate on the determinants of immigration policy by showing that both economic self-interest and ideological explanations can be powerful, depending upon the type of immigration policy under consideration.

Section I: Introduction

With globalization resulting in the increased movement of people around the globe, immigration has become a significant political issue in most developed countries. In the United States and Europe, immigration policy has been at the center of large public demonstrations and sustained political debate. As a result, the politics of immigration policy need to be better understood. By its nature, immigration policy is multidimensional, and hence the supporters and opponents of different types of immigration policy will vary.¹

Asking who supports and who opposes immigration overlooks the fact that some individuals will have incentives to support some types of immigration policies but not others. Unfortunately much of the literature appears to miss this, in part because public opinion research often is based on generic questions about increasing or decreasing levels of immigration. Actual immigration policy is differentiated not only by the type of immigrant affected, but also by the types of instruments (e.g., border control, visas) used to manage immigrants. For example, a recent literature focuses on the public finance dimension of immigration, but not all policy decisions about immigrants involve fiscal issues. Indeed recently, the politics of immigration have increasingly centered on border security. From our study spanning 27 years of votes in the US House of Representatives, we provide clearer tests of economic and ideological theories by studying the varying influence of these factors on different types of immigration policy votes. Immigration policy includes many distinct issues; here, we consider six main types of immigration legislation, which we think captures most legislation on the issue. The six types are:

¹ Eytan Meyers (2000), for instance, breaks policy into categories about immigrant entry and ones about resident immigrants, but focuses his attention only on the entry dimension.

high-skill employment visas, low-skill employment visas, welfare benefits for immigrants, employer constraints, border security, and final passage of over-arching immigration reform.

Recent debates about immigration policy focus on the relative impact of economic self-interest and ideological or cultural factors (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Citrin et al., 1997; Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Facchini et al., 2009; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007, 2010; Luedtke, 2005; Mayda, 2006). In terms of theories of economic self-interest, the state of the art in immigration literature presents an interactive model where concerns about an individual's economic gains or losses from immigration are conditioned by the fiscal impact of immigration policy (Borjas, 1999a, b; Facchini and Mayda, 2009). Earlier research claimed that an individual's relative capital and labor endowments influenced his or her attitudes toward immigration because of the labor market ramifications of immigration—i.e., its effect on wages and employment (Fetzer, 2006; Gonzalez and Kamdar, 2000; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001a). Individuals with high levels of skill stand to gain from low-skill immigration, and thus should be its major supporters. However, the public finance perspective points out that in environments with high levels of redistribution, these same high-skill individuals will have to pay for low-skill immigrants, who use social services more intensively than do high-skill (and hence wealthy) citizens. Hence the labor market effects of immigration on policy preferences may be moderated (Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Hanson et al., 2007). Because of the size of the welfare state in many developed countries with rising immigration, the fiscal consequences of allowing poorer individuals into social systems with well-established safety nets have become a vibrant political issue (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). Others find less support for the role of public finance, or economic variables in general, and instead stress ideological and cultural factors (Citrin et al., 1997; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). In this paper we focus on both economic self-interest—

especially the interactive model of labor markets and public finance—and ideological factors that might affect attitudes about immigration policy.

We expect and show that the influence of the two sets of factors depends a great deal on the type of immigration policy under consideration. The influence of public finance variables depends on whether the vote involves issues that have direct public finance consequences. We argue, and find, that public finance variables will be most salient for votes on visas for low-skill immigrants and social benefits for immigrants. In this way, we extend existing research on public opinion to the legislative arena as well as provide a richer perspective on immigration policy than do analyses that aggregate all types of policies or focus on shorter periods of time (Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Hanson et al., 2007).²

Our overall contributions to the literature are threefold. First, we highlight how widely the substantive content of legislation that is called “immigration policy” varies and thus point out the risk of obscuring important differences across policies if the analysis does not disaggregate the legislation. We show that different factors affect attitudes toward different policy dimensions. Hence we help adjudicate the important debate over economic versus ideological factors as influences on immigration policy. Second, we provide a critical test of public finance theory in the legislative setting. Hence as in the trade literature, which has examined both public opinion and legislative voting, our extension of public finance arguments helps provide a more

² To date, scholars have either included all available votes on a particular legislative bill (Medina, 2007), analyzed a single final passage vote (Fetzer, 2006; Gonzalez and Kamdar, 2000; Lowell et al., 1986), collected a set of votes but structured the analysis on a vote-by-vote basis over time (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999), or taking the average immigration position of a legislator across a range of votes (Hix and Noury, 2007).

complete picture of democratic representation by extending earlier public opinion work to the legislature. Third, this paper contributes to a larger research tradition that seeks to explain preferences of both citizens and their elected representatives toward different types of international economic engagement, such as immigration, trade and foreign aid (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Hiscox, 2006; Huber and Espenshade, 1997; Milner and Tingley, 2011; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001b).

The next section of the paper explores the different types of immigration policies and disaggregates US legislation into six distinct categories. Section 3 reviews existing scholarship on the determinants of support among the public and in the US legislature for immigration, especially the main theory of economic self-interest, i.e., public finance theory, and ideological arguments about attitudes toward immigration. It also develops hypotheses about when each of these two sets of factors should be most influential in shaping policy. In section 4 we conduct an empirical analysis of roll call votes on immigration. By differentiating types of immigration policy, our empirical analysis can more plausibly assess the causal factors. We contrast the role of our explanatory variables across different types of votes, something the previous literature has not pursued. A final section concludes.

Section 2: Dimensions of Immigration Policy

Immigration legislation is complicated. Most research, however, focuses either on one vote or on some generic question about immigration flows. We feel that this approach is inadequate. Immigration legislation involves a number of different issues and thus evokes different preferences, depending on the issues and their framing. Furthermore, as it evolves over time, legislation may change its emphasis, adding new issues or reframing old ones. Using a

single generic question about immigration or combining votes on immigration legislation risks eliding the patterns of political support for and opposition to it, as different issues with distinct effects are all aggregated. To better test the claims we make about the impact of economic and ideological variables on immigration policy, we need to differentiate the votes. This disaggregation allows us to focus more clearly on particular causal mechanisms. Our claims are strengthened when we match a vote on one specific set of issues with the theory relating to that type of issue.

We distinguish six main categories of immigration policy voting. The first two categories deal with visas. Visas control the number of legal aliens in the US. Given our substantive interest, we divide these votes into two categories: those dealing with visas for high-skill and those for low-skill workers. For example, a vote on H1-B visas would be considered a high-skill visa vote because H-1B visas are for employment positions requiring at least a bachelor's degree. These votes regulate the number of immigrants coming into different segments of the labor market and should have obvious and distinct labor market effects. Next we collected votes that concern the provision of economic and/or welfare benefits to immigrants. These votes deal both with access to these benefits as well as their levels. These votes involve the redistribution of income and can have major effects on welfare programs. The fourth category of votes deals with restrictions and penalties placed on employers for hiring illegal immigrants. These bills often penalize employers and are usually opposed by them. The fifth category of votes deals with border security policies. Many of these votes evoke national security concerns, although they are also framed as a way to prevent the entry of poor immigrants. Our sixth and last category is final passage votes. These bills typically cover a broad range of issues and as a set can represent an

aggregation of all five substantive categories. We describe these categories in more detail below and in our Appendix (for online presentation).

Section 3: Theories of Support and Opposition to Immigration

What do we know about who supports and who opposes immigration policy in developed countries? We examine two sets of theories below: economic ones that focus on labor market effects and public finance aspects, and ideological ones that focus on the left-right political spectrum.

Economic Models of Immigration Preferences: Labor Markets & Public Finance Theory

Because immigration adds workers to the labor pool—since 1970 the share of foreign-born workers in the US labor market has tripled, from about 5% to nearly 15%—the pattern of support and opposition to immigration might be expected to depend on its economic effects. An extensive literature has examined the effect of immigration policies on economic outcomes, such as wages and unemployment, in the receiving country. The labor market theory of immigration policy expects that those who gain from it economically will support it and those who lose will oppose it. Using results from the Stolper-Samuelson theory of trade, scholars have noted that in a capital-rich country that is importing unskilled labor, groups well endowed with capital and skills will profit from immigration, while unskilled labor will lose (Mayda, 2006; Milner and Tingley, 2011; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001a). This model deduces individual preferences over policies based on factor endowments—i.e., the amount of capital versus labor owned by an individual and the relative abundance of capital in their society vis-à-vis other countries. Individuals who lack human capital then are likely to oppose increased levels of immigration because immigrants create more wage competition in low-wage, low-skill labor markets, driving down wages and/or increasing unemployment (Abowd and Freeman, 1991; Borjas and Freeman, 1992; Ruffin,

1984). Public opinion research offers some support for this theory, showing a divide between low- and high-skill respondents on immigration as in trade (Facchini and Mayda, 2007, 2008; Hoskin and Mishler, 1983; Mayda, 2006; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001a). We thus expect labor market effects to be important in explaining preferences over visa allocations.

These findings are not undisputed. While several studies have found that unskilled immigrants have contributed to a roughly 3-9% decline in the wages of US workers (Borjas, 2003, 2006), others have found that US workers in general experienced either no loss or even an increase in their wages as a result of immigration (Gaston and Nelson, 2000; Ottaviano and Peri, 2008). Similarly, there have been no consistent results regarding the impact of immigrants on employment levels. These ambiguous results concerning the economic impact of immigration on wages and employment suggest that labor market factors may not determine immigration preferences. This ambiguity has been reflected in other studies of the political economy of immigration policy. Several studies dispute these labor market based findings and show that an array of ideological and cultural beliefs play a more important role, or at least an interactive one (Citrin et al., 1997; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007, 2010).

The labor market perspective is important but given the nature of mature industrial economies with large government sectors and active fiscal policies, our approach is to consider the conditional effects of both labor markets and fiscal policy. The relationship between immigrants and fiscal policy, especially in the form of the welfare state, has also been studied in Western economies (Borjas, 1999a, b). The fiscal policy theory of immigration politics assumes that the redistributive implications of immigration in welfare states are key to understanding political preferences. This theory is predicated on evidence suggesting that immigrants disproportionately participate in host country welfare programs (Borjas and Hilton, 1996). Fiscal

policy can directly influence preferences about immigration, but it may also exert a conditional impact on how the labor market effects of immigration are perceived. Governments can use fiscal policy to redistribute resources and to offset the effects of other policies. An important literature has argued that governments can use fiscal policy to alter the effects of international integration. Cameron (1978) and later Rodrik (1998), for example, show that countries more exposed to trade tend to have larger public sectors—that is, higher taxes and spending by their governments. These studies suggest that governments try to compensate the losers from globalization in order to make it more politically palatable (Garrett and Mitchell, 2001; Swank, 1998).

However, other studies have found that too much compensation via fiscal policy can create opposition to international engagement among groups that are otherwise expected to support it. For instance, Hanson et al. (2007) consider the interaction between public finance and the winners and losers from trade and immigration, finding that high-skill citizens who should support immigration the most will become more opposed if they live in areas with 1) higher degrees of fiscal redistribution and 2) higher levels of benefits available to immigrants. The tax costs of immigration may turn supporters of open markets into opponents (or at least weaken their support) if they are forced to pay for the redistribution benefits, creating a backlash against immigration. This finding is corroborated by Facchini and Mayda (2008; 2009), who in their research on public opinion provide strong support for the tax adjustment model, which implies that individual income has a negative impact on pro-immigration attitudes in high per capita GDP countries. They show that increasing skill levels lead to declines in immigration support in countries with high per capita wealth transfers and low-skilled immigration. Using the British

Social Attitudes Survey, Dustmann and Preston (2007) also find that welfare concerns influence attitudes towards immigration.

We follow Facchini and Mayda (2009) and Hanson et al. (2007) (HSS) and examine the interaction between the fiscal policy environment and labor markets. We anticipate that increasing fiscal redistribution should lower the support for immigration among the winners from immigration in the US—i.e., high-skill groups—as they are asked disproportionately to pay for the taxes for this redistribution. In addition, we expect that the compensation thesis might also apply: the losers from immigration—i.e., unskilled labor groups—will be less opposed when there is more redistribution. We expect these public finance dynamics to be most visible when we examine votes on visas, which affect labor markets, and policies governing immigrant access to public spending, as opposed to other immigration policy areas that relate less directly to public spending.

Non-Economic Sources of Preferences: Ideology

A substantial part of the immigration literature has debated the relative importance of ideology versus economic interests. Some authors have argued that ideology and beliefs are most important in immigration preferences; these studies tend to show that a wide variety of ideological factors can affect an individual's attitudes toward immigration (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Citrin et al., 1997; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007). Conservative ideologies support a minimum role for government, especially in terms of the active redistribution of resources, whereas those holding left-wing ideologies favor a more expansive role of government in society and often favor redistribution to the poor. These ideological explanations have been used to help explain both trade (Milner and Judkins, 2004) and foreign aid policy making (Milner and Tingley, 2010, 2011) as well as many domestic policy areas (e.g., (McCarty et al., 2006)).

However, most existing evidence suggests that conservatives are less likely than liberals to support immigration, despite conservative antipathy for government intervention in markets. Numerous public opinion studies show that individuals with left party orientations tend to be more sympathetic to increasing immigration (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Citrin and Sides, 2008; Facchini and Mayda, 2007, 2008; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007; Milner and Tingley, 2008). Legislative studies confirm this finding. Hix and Noury (2007) analyze legislative voting in the EU and find that left-right political orientation is the key explanatory variable for immigration voting, not material concerns. Gimpel and Edwards (1999) argue that since 1965 the redistributive impact of immigration has made it *increasingly* partisan and ideologically divided, with conservatives increasingly opposed (pg. 299, figure 7.1). Fetzer's (2006) study of the 109th Congress also found strong support from conservatives for anti-immigration policy.

In principle, conservatives should support unrestricted immigration. Interfering with the flow of people means government interference with the market. However, many immigration policies involve the question of who pays for the costs of immigration and its control, and conservatives are also opposed to higher taxes for the same reason. Others have noted that "anti-immigrant sentiment and fiscal conservatism intersect in a new 'fiscal politics of immigration.'" Immigrants are viewed as part of the reason for the high costs of social services and are especially vulnerable to attempts to reduce government welfare expenditures" (Huber and Espenshade, 1997, pg. 1035). Consider the remarks of Congressman Deal of Georgia: "Mr. Chairman, I think that there are two great political issues that face this country. One is welfare reform and the other is immigration reform. Unfortunately, the two of them are inextricably linked together. ... if we do not address one, it is going to be almost impossible to address and solve the other." (Deal, 1996). Hence while immigration policy proposals might not be directly

about redistribution, the implications of the policy might be quite redistributive. As the fiscal costs of immigration rise, one should expect increasing numbers of conservative groups to oppose it. Thus, we expect conservative legislators to support an open immigration policy to the extent that the policy does not pose a significant tax burden, but to oppose legislation involving public spending for immigrants. We also expect them to oppose legislation that places the burden of immigration restriction on employers. Further, if an immigrant group is expected to join liberal political groups, they might also oppose increased visas since this may increase the number of liberal voters in the future.

Liberal legislators should have different preferences. While those on the left may accept a government role in managing immigration flows, their preferences should depend on the perceived effects of immigration on citizens. If immigration has a negative effect, e.g., by displacing poor native workers, then just as in trade policy, left-wing individuals might prefer government policies to limit immigration, like strict visa limits on low-skill immigration. If immigration is seen as economically beneficial, or in some way fulfilling a desirable set of political goals (e.g., expanding the coalition of groups that favor redistributive programs), then left-wing legislators may favor less restrictive immigration policies, such as higher visa limits and less border control. Further, left wing groups and legislators may favor legalization of immigrants so they become part of the legal workforce and are therefore able to join unions which are typically a liberal constituency. Hence we expect them to be more supportive of extending welfare benefits to immigrants, less supportive of border control, and more in favor of making employers bear the burden of immigration control.

If government policy on immigration revolves around redistributing its costs, one can expect partisan political ideology to play a major role. If these costs are more present in some

types of immigration policy than others, then we should expect ideology to have a stronger effect there. Thus we expect ideology to play a large role in explaining votes on welfare benefits for immigrants. In addition, restrictions on the employment of immigrants place burdens on employers, who tend to hold more conservative views (Chau (2003)). Hence we expect that right-wing individuals will oppose votes that put constraints on employers as they redistribute the costs of immigration to higher income individuals. Finally, border control votes are largely symbolic since they involve policies that tend to have little actual effect on immigration flows (Hanson et al., 2002; Rudolph, 2006). Others have argued that ideology maps onto symbolic concerns (Sears et al., 1980), and hence we expect these votes to be highly ideological. Furthermore, to the extent that border controls have increasingly been linked with national security concerns by conservative legislators (e.g., (Tancredo, 2004)) and used as a divisive issue by Republicans (Barnes, 1993), we expect that ideology will play a salient role on immigration votes about border control measures.

This discussion suggests that different aspects of general liberal-conservative ideology will have a differential bearing on different types of immigration legislation. Although we cannot produce a more differentiated measure of ideology (for example, one that differentiate between attitudes towards government intervention in the economy and attitudes towards out-groups) because of data availability, this discussion does point theoretically to ways that our more generic measure of left-right ideology can play out across different types of immigration policy. In our conclusion we suggest research strategies for studying more closely the influence of ideology across different domains of immigration policy.

The preceding theoretical discussion and distinctions between different types of immigration votes leads to our key hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Economic self-interest models will better explain low-skill visa votes and benefits votes than votes on high-skill visas, employer hiring policy, border control, or final passage. In low-skill visa and benefits votes we predict:

Hypothesis 1a: Legislators in low-skill districts with high levels of welfare spending will be more likely to adopt pro-immigration positions compared to legislators from low-skill districts with low levels of welfare spending (compensation).

Hypothesis 1b: Legislators in high-skill districts with high levels of welfare spending will be more likely to adopt anti-immigration positions compared to legislators from high-skill districts with low levels of welfare spending (backlash).

Hypothesis 2: The effect of partisan ideology should be strongest for votes on benefits for immigrants, border control, and employer restrictions. More conservative (liberal) voters will be more likely to oppose (support) benefits for immigrants and employer restrictions, while supporting (opposing) greater border control.

Section 4: Empirical Analysis

Dependent Variable

We collected the universe of *all* legislative votes on immigration policy in the US House of Representatives in the period 1979-2003 by searching through databases of voting, the Congressional Record, publications such as the *Congressional Quarterly*, and previous scholarly works analyzing legislative voting. Next, we identified non-substantive votes (usually procedural votes) and votes that only cursorily related to immigration and removed these votes from our sample. Our dependent variable is a vote by a member of the US House of Representatives. By reading the Congressional debate on a vote, we coded each vote as either pro- or anti-immigration. We analyze this universe of immigration votes first by considering them as a whole

and then by separating the votes by type of immigration policy. We compare voting on the different issues to see if our predictions about the importance of different factors for certain types of votes are supported. In the supplementary materials we plot the frequency of votes on different types of immigration policy.

Independent Variables

Labor Market Effects: Skill Level/Capital Endowments

To test the main economic model, we need measures of capital endowments and public finance spending. Following other scholars (Beaulieu, 2002a, b; Broz, 2005; Broz and Hawes, 2006), we measure capital endowments by the percentage of people working in high-skill jobs (*%HighSkill*, defined as the percentage of working age persons in a district employed in executive, managerial, administrative, and professional occupations) at the Congressional district level. This variable is a proxy for the relative level of human capital in the district, which is our measure of the labor market effects of immigration.

Public Finance

Since district-level welfare spending is not available, we measure state-level public spending using state expenditures on welfare per native and multiply this by 100,000 for a clearer presentation, denoted *WelfPerCap*. This measure includes all forms of state welfare spending included in the US Census's state finance records.³ We interact this variable with our *%HighSkill* variable to see if the fiscal policy environment moderates labor market effects, as

³ We collected federal welfare distribution data and found nearly identical results.

predicted by public finance theory.⁴ We expect the interaction term to be negative for low skill visa and benefits votes.

Ideological Orientation

Our measure of district ideology, taken from the American politics literature, is the district-level percentage of the two-party vote that goes to the Republican presidential candidate in the preceding election (*PrezVoteRepubl%*). This variable scores more conservative districts with higher values.⁵

Control variables

Legislators may also respond to other, non-economic and non-ideological, pressures within their constituencies. There is evidence that immigrants in the United States tend to support more open immigration policies than non-immigrant citizens (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). Prior research also notes the importance of lobbies for foreign-born populations residing in Congressional districts (Fleck and Kilby, 2001; King and Pomper, 2004; Shain, 1994). Gimpel and Edwards find that the district's level of foreign-born population is significantly correlated with many of the votes they analyze. We measure this using census data on the percentage of a district that was born in a foreign country (*%ForBorn*).

We also include as controls a measure of district agricultural production (*MktValAgProd*), the percentage of the working age population that was unemployed (*Unemploy%*), and the percentage of African-Americans in the population (*%Black*). We also

⁴ We also recreated the *Fiscall* variable used by HSS. As we discuss below, this operationalization does not generate significant results that are consistent with HSS's original findings.

⁵ Our results are largely robust to using DW-Nominate scores instead (McCarty et al., 2006).

include regional dummies (Northeast, South, Midwest, and West) in order to assess any regional differences not already identified by our other controls. Finally, we also include several variables that capture contributions from two broad classes of political action committees: labor PACs and corporate PACs. The literature on immigration suggests that interest groups can play an important role in affecting policy outcomes. Previous research points out that while publics often overwhelmingly oppose immigration, policy does not reflect this largely because many special interest groups lobby hard for immigration (Facchini and Mayda, 2008). We measure contributions from these groups as the percentage of the legislator's total PAC contributions in the preceding electoral cycle (*LaborPAC%*, *CorpPAC%*). We also estimated models with other district-level variables, such as the percent of district adherents to particular religious faiths, and other legislator-specific variables, such as the legislator's gender. These variables did not appear to affect the variables we are most interested in nor change the overall results, and thus we put them aside.

Analysis

Our dependent variable is a legislator's vote, coded as 1 if it is a pro-immigration vote and 0 if an anti-immigration vote. A pro-immigration vote is one that increases or does not decrease visa limits, increases or does not decrease benefits for immigrants, does not enhance border control, and/or does not increase or decreases employer penalties for immigration control (which makes employment of immigrants easier). We have multiple observations per legislator, and hence we pool votes and use panel probit models with population averaged effects, robust standard errors, and an exchangeable correlation matrix. Slope coefficients thus indicate the influence on a population of legislators, and not individual legislators (Neuhaus et al., 1991). That is, they represent the average impact on an average legislator. This procedure allows us to

calculate standard errors of our slope coefficients while clustering on individual legislators. Using an exchangeable correlation matrix and robust standard errors allows for additional legislator heterogeneity. We also include vote fixed effects to account for differences in the yea/nay margins across votes. This procedure allows us to analyze many votes simultaneously and incorporate information about voting by legislators across votes. Analyses with linear probability models produce similar results.

A key part of our analysis concerns the interaction between state welfare spending and a district's skill level. While we present regression coefficients for these interacted variables, the statistical significance of interacted variables does not mean that there is a strong interactive effect in the data because the interaction depends on the values of the conditioning variables (Kam and Franzese, 2007, pg. 60) and, in non-linear models (like the probit models here), the values of all other variables. To get a clearer picture of the interaction effects, we calculate changes in the predicted probability of voting yea or nay across different values of *%HighSkill*, holding our welfare measure at its sample 10th and 90th percentiles.⁶ This allows us to investigate the effect of labor market factors at various levels of welfare spending.

All Votes

⁶ For these simulations, we use Model 4 from the table 1. We fix region at Northeast, covariates at their median values, and vote fixed effect to the excluded vote. Simulated predictions and 95% confidence intervals calculated using predict function in STATA. Reported changes in probabilities in text rely on simulated changes in probability with confidence intervals based upon multivariate normal approximation of the coefficient sampling distribution.

Regression results for the pooled sample of all votes are in the first column of Table 1.⁷

The analysis points to an important interactive effect between labor market outcomes and public finance. Using the simulation approach described above, Figure 1 shows that the probability of a pro-immigration vote increases as skill increases when state welfare spending per capita is held at the sample's 10th percentile. This probability increases from approximately 57% to 71%, a 14% change (95% CI: 5%, 25%). However, this large increase is not seen when state welfare spending is held at the 90th percentile, where the change is from approximately 65% to 67%, a 2% change whose confidence intervals overlap with 0 (-6%, 12%). While increasing *%HighSkill* increases the probability of a vote for immigration in both cases, this effect is greatly reduced in districts with high levels of per capita welfare spending. This supports Hypothesis 1b about backlash. There is also some evidence for Hypothesis 1a, in that the probability of a pro-immigration position is 7% higher for legislators in a low skill district with high levels of welfare spending compared to legislators from districts with low levels of both skill and welfare spending.

Next we consider the influence of district ideology. As we move the *PrezVoteRepub%* variable from its 10th to 90th sample percentiles, the probability of a pro-immigration vote declines by -19% (-23%, -15%). Holding constant other variables in the model, support for pro-immigration policies declines as a legislator's district moves from being very liberal to very conservative. However, as discussed earlier, this aggregation of votes likely obscures the effect

⁷ We estimated a number of alternative models, for example including only subsets of these variables. For reasons of compactness we only present a single specification for our various groups of immigration votes.

of ideology. For some types of votes this effect might be more negative and for other types, such as employer restrictions, we expect the effect to be positive.

The effects of our other variables are largely as expected and consistent with previous findings. Legislators from districts with a higher percentage of foreign-born citizens are also more likely to support a pro-immigration position. Both ideology and economic factors seem to matter when considering all votes. But this pooling aggregates distinct causal processes and may conflate the impacts of these factors, as we show below. For example, we have pooled together votes on benefits with votes on employer restrictions, which represent very different policy types and, as we hypothesize, tap different political coalitions.

Immigration Policy Categories: Sorting out the Influences

Because immigration policy in the U.S. involves a diverse set of instruments that affect its level, character, and cost, we now categorize each vote according to its subject. These categories, as described above, are high- or low-skill visas, border controls, penalties on employers, denial or extension of public benefits. We categorize our votes according to these different instruments since they have different economic and political consequences. We describe all of these categories in more detail in our Appendix (for online presentation).⁸ This set of categories is quite similar to the one developed in Gimpel and Edwards (1999, chapter 3) and thus we are confident that we have identified the important dimensions of immigration policy. Unlike Gimpel and Edwards, who analyze many immigration votes separately over time, we use these categories to structure our analysis.

⁸ Immigration policymaking goes through procedural as well as substantive votes. We excluded procedural votes when it was clear from the legislative record that the votes did not deal with substantive issues.

Hypothesis 1 suggests that the moderating influence of public finance variables will be most salient in low-skill visa and benefits votes, while these variables will have less impact on votes on high-skill visas, employer restrictions, border control, and final passage votes.

According to Hypothesis 2, the effect of conservative ideology should be most salient and negative for benefits and border control votes but positive for employer restriction votes. We present our results in table 1, columns 2-7.

The second column is for high-skill visas, the third for low-skill visas, and the fourth for benefits votes. For high-skill visa votes, the welfare spending and interaction term with skill are somewhat significant but in the opposite direction from what public finance theory would predict. The welfare spending coefficient is negative and the interaction with skill is positive. Low-skill visa votes show a pattern more consistent with public finance theory. The interaction term is negative and significant, and the skill and welfare variables are positive. Finally, the benefits votes have coefficients that are most precisely estimated and are in the theorized direction. For the low-skill visa and benefits votes, we see that the public finance variables fit the data in a way consistent with expectations. The next set of categories (columns 5-7), employer restrictions, border control, and final passage votes, all show a weak influence for the public finance variables. This is in line with our expectations.

Next, we calculate the effect of changing the *%HighSkill* variable for the 10th and 90th percentiles of the *WelfPerCap* variable. We present these results in Figure 2, showing only the vote categories which have significant moderating effects (similar exercises for the other categories revealed no effects), that is, the low-skill visa and benefits results. We report below the estimated changes in probability with 95% confidence intervals. High-skill visas, employer restriction, border control, and final passage votes show little interactive relationship. On the

other hand, low-skill visa and benefits votes show a pattern consistent with expectations. The left pane presents results for the votes on low-skill visas. Here, moving through values of *%HighSkill* leads to a -23% (-42%, -1%) decline in probability of a pro-immigration vote when welfare spending is high. There is less change at lower levels of welfare spending (1% (-20%, 20%)). This suggests support for Hypothesis 1b, which predicts immigration backlash.

In the right pane of Figure 2, we also see a conditional relationship between labor market effects and immigrant welfare benefits. Here, the probability of a pro-immigration position is increasing in skill levels when welfare spending is low. Moving the *%HighSkill* variable from 10% to 50% generates nearly a 30% increase in support when welfare spending is held at the 10th percentile. This suggests that the labor market effects of immigration may matter for policy preferences, especially when those market effects are not confounded by activist fiscal policy. Conversely, the effect of *%HighSkill* when *WelfarePerCap* is held at the 90th percentile is increasing, but the effect is substantially smaller (4% (-17%, 20%)). Hence for both visa and welfare benefits votes, we see a conditional relationship between labor market and welfare spending effects.

Interestingly, we observe a backlash effect for low-skill visa votes, where increases in district skill levels lead to greater opposition to immigration when welfare spending is high. But for benefits votes, the most substantial impact occurs at low levels of welfare spending where support increases with district skill level. This effect disappears, but does not turn negative, in high welfare states where support remains relatively constant in district skill level. In other words, the presence of strong welfare institutions correlates with higher levels of support for immigration benefits in low-skill districts. While the exact moderating patterns are different, the general moderating relationship moves in the same direction for low-skill visa and benefits

votes: the positive influence of high skill levels on immigration support predicted by the standard Stolper-Samuelson model reverses or disappears in districts belonging to states with greater welfare spending.

These differences across categories of immigration votes are especially interesting when considered in light of the analysis of immigration votes when the categories are pooled. Here, we see differentiation across policy areas. The pooled results obscure these differential effects and imply that economic factors matter for more types of votes than they actually affect. Overall, we find support for the public finance predictions in policy areas where we expect these factors to be most salient—that is, for votes on low-skill visas and votes on welfare benefits. We observe little to no interactive effect on border control and employer constraint votes. The fact that we do not observe this effect for those types of immigration votes where theoretically we anticipate less relevance of public finance variables gives additional support to the public finance perspective.⁹

Ideological Factors and Immigration Policy

When we pool all votes together, we estimated that the effect of changing our measure of district ideology, *PrezVoteRepub%*, from its 10th to 90th percentiles was to decrease the likelihood of a pro-immigration vote by 19%. As with the public finance measure, we observe

⁹ It is important to note some null findings when we use an alternative operationalization of the public finance argument that incorporates data on immigration exposure, rather than only benefits spending data (as in Facchini and Mayda (2009)). In particular, Hanson et al. (2007) code states that have high welfare spending *and* high levels of immigration as having a high fiscal exposure. This variable, *Fiscall*, is 1 for such states and 0 otherwise. This variable is then interacted with the skill variable (in the original paper different levels of educational attainment were used). If Hanson et al. are right then this interaction, *FiscallXSk1*, should be negative. In fact, as we show in the supplementary materials, we do not find this relationship. This suggests either that the fiscal consequences of immigration are voted on in ways that do not depend on immigration exposure, only general welfare exposure, or the hypothesized public finance mechanisms are not present in Congressional voting data.

differences in this effect when we disaggregate by immigration vote categories. Table 2 provides the changes in predicted probabilities of taking a pro-immigration position when the ideology measure is moved from its 10th to 90th percentiles while holding other variables at their means. As is evident, the pooled votes obscure the differential effect of ideology across the types of immigration votes.

Legislators from more conservative districts (i.e., districts with a higher percentage of votes going to the Republican Presidential candidate) were more likely to oppose benefits for immigrants. This effect was statistically significant in each model and large (-32%). The left-right ideological spectrum appears to be a strong predictor of voting on immigration policies which deal with redistributive politics.

Legislators from conservative districts were also more likely to take a restrictive stance on visa issues. The effect of ideology was larger for low-skill visa votes (-16%) compared to high-skill ones (1%). This might be because high-skill immigrants are less likely to draw on public support systems or because they pose less of a cultural threat. Our data is unable to parse out the different mechanisms. Interestingly though, the influence of ideology on benefits votes was much stronger than for low-skill visa votes, as we expected.

Border control votes were also significantly influenced by ideological differences. Moving from liberal to conservative districts corresponds to a 28% decline in support for more open borders. We expect this is largely driven by heightened conservative concerns with national security issues. The magnitude of this effect is higher than in final passage votes or the pooled votes analysis, once again illustrating the perils of aggregating immigration policies.

Finally, we find that legislators from more conservative districts were not more likely to support additional constraints on employers to prevent them from using (illegal) immigrant

labor. Indeed the *PrezVoteRepub%* coefficient in these models was positive and highly significant; legislators from conservative districts, in other words, opposed efforts to prevent the employment of illegal immigrants. The effect of changing district ideology for employer restriction votes was 27%. Legislators from conservative districts might oppose the entry of illegal immigrants, but once here there appears to be a belief that government should do little to limit the ability of businesses to employ these individuals. The difference between the effect of ideology on visa votes and on employer restrictions implies that any conservative support for immigration based upon free-market ideas is likely to depend on whether the policy involves restrictions on labor or on employers. In summary, our estimates of the effect of district ideology on the pooled votes aggregated different effects of ideology across different categories of immigration voting. Once immigration policy is disaggregated, we obtain a more nuanced story about ideology and immigration.

Control Variables

Our study includes a wide variety of control variables that have interesting relationships to immigration policy. *Ceteris paribus*, legislators in districts with high percentages of foreign-born populations (*%ForBorn*) were more likely to support benefits for immigrants. Other measures, such as the district's Hispanic population, had a similar relationship to voting. Models including the percentage of district population that was African-American tended to show a positive relationship for benefit and employer constraint votes, but a negative relationship for visa and border control votes. It is possible that the result for benefits votes in part reflects the influence of race on establishing broader coalitions of support for redistributive policies. However, this support does not necessarily extend to other types of immigration policy, and indeed this variable is negative and highly significant for border control votes. Our measure of

labor PAC contributions, *LabPAC%*, was positive and significant for all vote categories except for high skill visa and employer restrictions, where the coefficients were negative and significant.

Section 5: Conclusion

We join the important debate on whether economic self-interest or ideological factors affect immigration policy. We seek to advance that debate by disaggregating immigration policy into a number of different dimensions and showing that theory can guide us to understanding when each of these factors will have significant effects. This allows us to develop the scope conditions for these theories more precisely and to explain a larger set of immigration policies and politics. On the economic self-interest side, we examine the most recent theory that combines the labor market and fiscal policy ramifications of immigration, but we extend this argument from public opinion to legislative voting (Dustmann and Preston, 2007; Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Hanson et al., 2007). We also examine the influence of liberal-conservative ideology, which many studies focus on. Given that the policies used to regulate immigration come in many forms, we generate and test expectations about how the strength of economic and ideological arguments varies according to the substantive nature of the legislation. Separating votes by the type of immigration policy allows for a more complete test of the different theories of the influences on legislative voting.

This disaggregation of immigration votes allows us to more closely examine the hypotheses we are testing. Specifically, we found that the public finance and ideological theories both carried more explanatory power in the domains that reflect the primary concern of the theory, which adds confidence to our findings. In addition, our finding that the theories do not work well in areas outside their domain is useful because it gives further weight to the causal

process specified. Our conclusion is that public finance arguments best fit voting patterns when the votes involve social benefits for immigrants. The opposition of conservative legislators to immigration is also relatively strong for these welfare votes compared to votes on visas for legal immigration. There is an opposite relationship for votes on imposing costs on employers for hiring immigrants, where more conservative legislators opposed employer restraints on immigrant hiring. Analyzing votes by their substantive content gives us more confidence that the specific hypotheses are being tested by the data.

Our study is also the first to take the arguments by Hanson et al. (2007) and others about the effects of state-level differences in public finance regimes and test them on roll call voting. We found some support for an interaction between public finance exposure and the skill level in a legislator's district, and hence some support for the "backlash" and "compensation" hypotheses. Again, we observe substantial differentiation across issue areas in the extent to which this interaction matters. The most robust evidence of an interaction was in the issue areas that a priori we expected to be influenced by public finance considerations: votes on benefits to immigrants and visas for low-skill immigrants. Governments may thus be caught between the desire to increase support for openness by providing more welfare spending and the need to pay for this spending by raising taxes, which in turn affects those who support openness and reduces their support. Fiscal policy may thus be a double-edged sword for globalization.

Our analysis might also help explain the mixed findings in the public opinion literature on the role of economic motivations. Many studies use very general questions about immigration flows, but our study stresses the need to explain how economic variables relate to particular types of immigration policies. This might also help explain why Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007, 2010) find little support for Hanson et al.'s arguments, because they look at general attitudes

towards immigration during a period with relatively little legislative action on benefits but more action on the border security dimensions of immigration. Future studies of immigration preferences should take into account the multi-faceted nature of immigration policy.

Disaggregation of other policy areas that respond to the forces of globalization might also be fruitful.

We also observe a strong role for ideology in immigration voting, a finding consistent with the previous literature. However, our results suggest that the extent to which ideology matters can vary across different types of immigration policies, a more substantive interpretation compared to showing variance over time (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999). As expected, ideology played a significant role in votes on benefits. Border control votes also reveal a very strong liberal-conservative divide, whereas this divide is less salient for visa votes. The strong effect for border control votes may be attributable to the fact that some of these votes also raise national security considerations, which may animate conservatives more.

Future research might proceed on several additional fronts. Like others stressing the role of public finance mechanisms, we are unable to discuss the relationship between compensation and backlash mechanisms in detail. A more fine-grained analysis of our voting data and the existing survey data could explore this more closely. The current paper also underplays the potential role of organized interest groups. More research into the role of organized labor and business lobbies, including agricultural interests, and how they play out in different areas of immigration policy is necessary. Legislators vote on relatively complicated social policies over immigration, which often include a redistributive component that affects interest groups. Most public opinion polls, on the other hand, ask simple questions about general orientations towards immigration and do not necessarily invoke redistributive concerns present in congressional

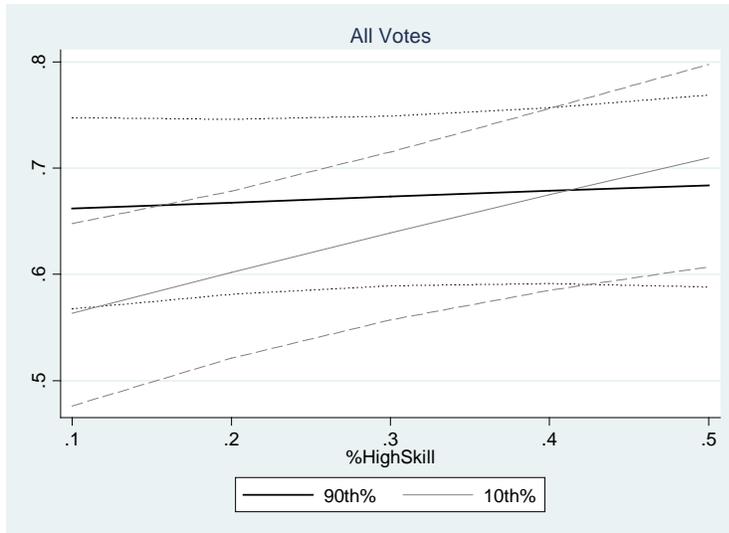
politics. Future survey research about immigration might be designed to tap perceptions about different types of immigration policy. Linking disaggregated measures of immigration preferences to more finely measured ideological constructs (rather than simple left/right constructs) could allow for finer tests of ideological theories than is possible in the present study.

Table 1: Panel Probit with Population Average Effects and Vote Fixed Effects (omitted)

	All	HighSkill	LowSkill	Benefits	Employer	Border	FinalPass
%HighSkill	1.098** [0.385]	-1.957+ [1.129]	0.232 [0.788]	5.430** [1.092]	0.268 [0.869]	0.0361 [1.120]	0.830 [1.044]
WelfPerCap	3.225* [1.309]	-6.252+ [3.787]	6.796 [4.629]	17.14** [4.135]	2.823 [2.593]	-0.581 [3.355]	3.326 [3.313]
WelfPerCapXSkl	-7.841* [3.669]	27.66* [11.50]	-24.87+ [14.15]	-61.90** [14.57]	-9.458 [7.162]	5.679 [10.04]	2.190 [9.057]
PrezVoteRepubl%	-1.669** [0.176]	0.0723 [0.398]	-1.477** [0.302]	-3.638** [0.397]	2.455** [0.363]	-5.067** [0.469]	-2.150** [0.420]
%ForBorn	1.071** [0.223]	0.113 [0.347]	0.166 [0.332]	3.570** [0.666]	-0.496 [0.423]	0.290 [0.466]	2.298** [0.514]
CorpPAC%	-0.172+ [0.103]	0.273 [0.283]	-0.531* [0.230]	-0.273 [0.269]	-0.694** [0.246]	-0.260 [0.264]	0.465+ [0.248]
LabPAC%	0.714** [0.0842]	-0.920** [0.227]	0.509** [0.186]	2.478** [0.250]	-0.814** [0.195]	1.372** [0.212]	0.723** [0.218]
Unemploy%	2.042** [0.728]	-2.098 [1.747]	-0.680 [1.446]	4.529** [1.543]	1.498 [1.872]	5.881** [2.213]	4.747* [1.877]
%Black	0.102 [0.132]	-0.439+ [0.236]	-0.276 [0.213]	0.851* [0.337]	1.035** [0.288]	-0.879** [0.333]	-0.107 [0.370]
MktValAgProd	4.262* [1.958]	3.186 [5.778]	-1.640 [4.068]	14.39** [4.875]	3.839 [4.414]	-8.951 [6.015]	3.679 [4.364]
West	0.106* [0.0434]	0.105 [0.110]	0.00205 [0.0846]	0.0111 [0.106]	0.0709 [0.0901]	0.282** [0.106]	0.178+ [0.0994]
Midwest	0.0478 [0.0399]	0.118 [0.104]	-0.128+ [0.0770]	0.0124 [0.104]	-0.0454 [0.0806]	0.490** [0.114]	0.108 [0.0974]
South	0.0433 [0.0435]	0.198+ [0.114]	-0.107 [0.0881]	-0.0829 [0.104]	-0.0636 [0.0837]	0.490** [0.114]	0.150 [0.113]
Constant	0.692** [0.183]	0.360 [0.518]	1.078** [0.344]	0.497 [0.347]	-1.436** [0.371]	0.584 [0.412]	-0.0817 [0.439]
Observations	20425	1601	3216	5190	3141	4043	3234

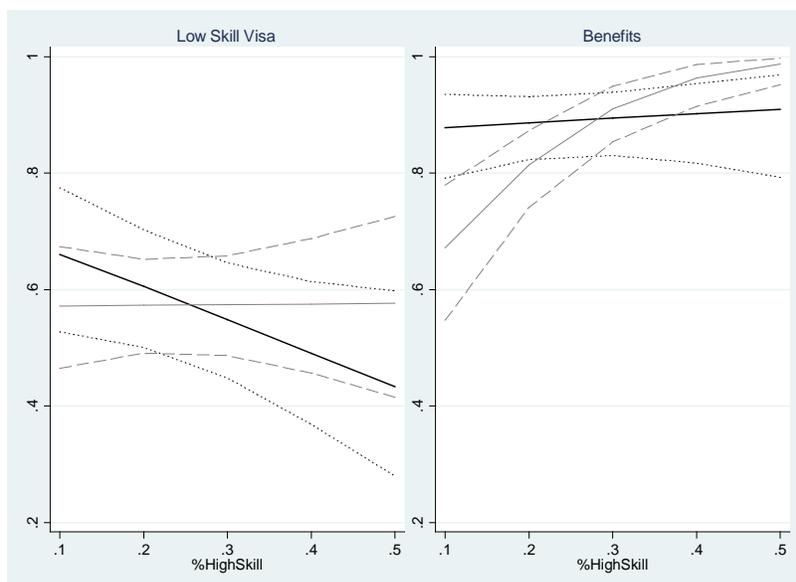
The dependent variable is a vote in favor of increased immigration and/or fewer controls on it. Standard errors in brackets. + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01

Figure 1: Skill-Welfare Interaction Using All Votes



Probability of immigration support as %HighSkill is increased holding welfare spending at either the 10th (light line) or 90th (dark line) percentiles. Model 4 is used, holding other variables at sample medians. Using other models produces substantially similar results.

Figure 2: Skill-Welfare Interaction for Low-Skill Visa and Benefits Votes



Probability of immigration support as %HighSkill is increased holding welfare spending at either the 10th (light line) or 90th (dark line) percentiles. Model 4 is used, holding other variables at sample medians. Using other models produces substantially similar results.

Table 2: Influence of Ideology

Category	Change in Probability
High-Skill Visa	.011 (-.082,.109)
Low-Skill Visa	-.164 (-.226,-.099)
Benefits	-.327 (-.412,-.243)
Employer Constraints	.273 (.202,.347)
Border Control	-.281 (-.397,-.174)
Final Passage	-.258 (-.359,-.154)
All Votes	-.192 (-.231,-.152)

Change in probability of a pro-immigration vote as the *PrezVoteRepub%* variable is moved from 10th to 90th percentile, using Model 4 and holding other variables at sample medians.

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