

Global Versus Specific Opinion and Senator Roll Call Voting:

The Case of Immigration Policy, 2006

By

**Jeffrey E. Cohen
Professor of Political Science
Faber Hall
Fordham University
441 E. Fordham Road
Bronx, NY 10458
718-817-3956
cohen@fordham.edu**

and

**Richard Fleisher
Professor of Political Science
Faber Hall
Fordham University
441 E. Fordham Road
Bronx, NY 10458
718-817-3952
fleisher@fordham.edu**

Paper prepared for delivery at the Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House,
Chicago, Il, April 12-15, 2007

Abstract

An emerging consensus argues that that policy makers pay attention to citizen preferences when building public policies. But do legislators respond more to their constituents' global public orientations, such as ideology, or to their constituents' opinion on the specific issue at hand? Whether legislators respond to global or specific constituency opinion has implications for democracy and the ability of the public to hold its policy makers accountable. Lack of data has kept researchers from assessing which type of responsiveness more strongly figures into legislator decision making. Using newly available surveys across the 50 states, which ask respondents about specific attitudes towards immigration as well as global political orientations, we test for the comparative impact of specific versus global attitudes on Senate roll call voting on immigration. We find that both types of opinion affect senator roll call behavior about equally. Our conclusion discusses the conditions under which specific attitudes about policies might affect legislative policy making decisions and implications for democracy.

Most scholars now agree that policy makers are responsive to constituent preferences when building public policies. Jacobson's (2004) review of the literature on congressional representation is typical: "[C]ongressional roll-call votes are indeed related to estimated district opinion, although the strength of the connection varies across issue dimensions and is never overwhelmingly large" (p. 220). Despite this emerging scholarly consensus, several important questions remain unresolved.¹ For instance, what exactly is it about constituent preferences that policy makers are taking into account? In this paper we ask whether policy makers respond to their constituents' global political orientations, like ideology or partisanship, or to the issue specific opinions of their constituents. Limitations of both theory and data have hampered progress in addressing this question.

Students of mass political attitudes have long distinguished between global attitudes such as partisanship and ideological self-placement and specific policy positions (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960). In contrast, those who have examined the effect of constituent attitudes on congressional voting have been far less sensitive to this distinction. They rarely raise this distinction (but see Stimson, Erikson, and MacKuen 1995) instead using in their studies whichever type of constituency measure has been

¹ The literature on responsiveness to constituency representation is much too large to cite here. Extensive reviews can be found in Manza and Cook, 2002 and Burstein, 2006, 2003, 1998, as well as several books (e. g., Arnold 1990; Bernstein 1989; Clausen 1973; Kingdon 1989, Manza, Cook, and Page, 2002; Matthews and Stimson 1975). Some scholars raise the possibility that rather than responding to constituent opinions government policy makers seek to influence public beliefs, to bring them in line with the policy maker's preferred policy outcome (cf., Ginsberg 1986; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Page and Shapiro 1992).

available, but never both types of opinion (e. g., Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson. 1995; Clinton, 2006). Most commonly, neither type of constituency opinion is available at the constituency level (e. g., congressional districts or states). In the rare instances when studies can include direct measures of constituency opinion, they have only been able to look at the effect of one type of opinion on policy makers' decisions.

Given the dearth of survey data at the district or state level to measure global and/or specific attitudes, researchers have tended to rely on demographic or electoral characteristics as proxies measures of constituency preferences. Using such proxies requires making questionable assumptions about the connection between demographics or electoral results with constituency opinion. For example, voting results are often employed as proxies for the ideological or partisan composition of constituencies (e. g., Leogrande and Jeydal, 1997). But short term influences, like candidate traits, which may be unrelated to ideology or partisanship, may affect electoral outcomes. In some instance, minority party candidates win elections because they are so well liked or for other reasons. Using those vote results as an indicator of a district or state's partisan composition would lead one to suggest that the candidate's party is in the majority when it might not be the case.²

Those who use demographic variables as proxies for constituent opinion usually make two problematic assumptions: self-interest and group homogeneity. Together, these two assumptions imply that members of the demographic category uniformly share the same self-interest on the issue at hand and that the relationship between demographic

² In spite of the problems mentioned electoral results tend to perform better than demographic based surrogates. In addition, researchers have made modifications in measures based on election results to correct some of the problems associated with the variable (Bond, Fleisher, and Talbert 1997; Fleisher 1993).

group and issue position is constant across districts or states. Demographics, however, may be a poor indicator of self interest. Note, for example, the many upper income people who support economic redistribution, which seemingly runs counter to their economic self interest. The group homogeneity assumption may also be questioned. Should we assume, for instance, that northern and southern women will hold similar policy attitudes and political orientations? Owing to these issues in using demographics and electoral outcomes as proxies, direct measures of constituent opinion is preferable and may be necessary to sort out the question that we address here, the relative effect of global versus specific opinion on policy makers' decisions.³

If specific and global attitudes provided policy makers with the same strength and direction of information about constituency preferences, the distinction between the two types of opinion would matter little. Although we might expect some degree of consistency between signals based on global preferences and those focused on specific issues, the two can just as easily diverge. Jacoby (1991) finds that the link between ideological self-placement and issue attitudes varies, sometimes being strong, while at other times the link between ideology and policy is less clear-cut (p. 201).

Several factors contribute to the divergence between global and specific attitudes. First, some citizens adopt global positions based on factors other than specific issue positions (Conover and Feldman 1981; Jacoby 1991; Stimson 2004). Partisanship, for instance, often develops in the family, as a part of political socialization process, not issue based considerations (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960; Green,

³ See Cohen (2006) for a review of the use of demographic and electoral indicators of public opinion as it pertains to the state politics and policy making literature.

Palmquist, and Schickler, 2004; Jennings and Niemi 1968, 1981; Niemi and Jennings 1991). Second, an individual's position on a specific issue may depend on how the issue is primed or framed. In one context, an individual may support a specific policy but if couched in a different context that same individual may oppose the same government effort.

Whether policy makers respond to the global or specific attitudes of their constituents has implications for our understanding of the linkage between constituents and policy makers. If policy makers respond to global attitudes, then constituency preferences may broadly inform policy making even when citizens lack much knowledge or interest in an issue and when the issue is not highly salient to the mass public. All that policymakers need to know in responding to constituent's global attitudes is whether their constituents have distinct partisan and ideological attitudes or orientations. If, in contrast, it is specific issue opinion that affects policy makers' decisions, then the prospects for citizen influence on policy are more proscribed, perhaps being restricted to highly salient issues for which the public has relatively well formed opinions and issues on which constituent preferences are easily transmitted to government policy makers.

In this paper, we take advantage of new state-wide polls across all 50 states that provide us with reliable indicators of mass ideology and mass attitudes on one salient issue, immigration. From these data we can test whether global or specific attitudes affect senator voting, something heretofore impossible, on one policy, immigration. Our paper proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the literature on constituency influence on legislative policy making. Then we build our theoretical model, which is followed by a brief review the immigration policy debate, presentation of our data, and our statistical

analysis. Our conclusion discusses the theoretical implications of our results and directions for future research.

Constituency Influence and Legislative Roll Calls

Strong theoretical linkages exist that expect legislator responsiveness to constituent opinion. Legislators will respond to or anticipate public opinion when casting roll calls because they think their roll call behavior affects their electoral security and likelihood of being re-elected (Mayhew 1974). Roll calls are visible and challengers can use the incumbent's roll call votes to frame their election campaign. When incumbent roll call behavior deviates from public preferences, challengers possess strong incentives to publicize these unpopular votes, which in turn may persuade constituents to vote against the incumbent. This linkage assumes that legislators want to be re-elected and stay in office (Fenno 1973; Mayhew 1974), which we take as reasonable and is quite common in research on legislator behavior. A second mechanism, representative role orientation, may also lead legislators to learn of constituent opinion on issues and cast their roll call votes accordingly (McCrone and Kuklinski, 1979). Representatives may view themselves as instructed delegates whose proper legislative task is to carry out their constituents' policy preferences. For either of these representational mechanisms, policy makers may look to their constituents' global and/or specific opinions.

Global Political Attitudes and Legislative Behavior

Miller and Stokes (1963) were among the first to make the case for studying representation by seeking to link "broad evaluative dimensions" regarding the proper scope of government to roll call votes. They note:

The average citizen may be said to have some general ideas about how the country should be run, which he is able to use in responding to particular questions about what the government ought to do. . . . What makes it possible to compare the policy preferences of constituents and Representatives despite the public's low awareness of legislative affairs is the fact that Congressmen themselves respond to many issues in terms of fairly broad evaluative dimensions (p. 47).

Jacobson's (2004) recent review also suggests representation is strongest when measured in terms of general issue dimensions rather than specific issues. Similarly, Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (1995; also Grossback, Peterson, Stimson 2006) argue the global responsiveness case. They contend that "public sentiment is generally more vague, diffuse, than the more concrete government action," (pp. 543-544) and thus it is proper to focus on global political orientations, which picks up this trait of public opinion toward government, rather than specific opinion on discrete issues. Furthermore, politicians have a difficult time in discerning information about specific opinion because "public preferences only rarely crystallize on specifics," and even if relevant, this type of information "is exceedingly difficult to know." (p. 545). The argument that voter opinions on specific policies may be "non-attitudes" also makes it less likely that policy specific opinions will be of value to a legislator seeking to represent the constituent's responsible for deciding the politician's political fate.

Thus, to Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (1995), global political orientations are easier for politicians to get a fix on, as politicians and others interact and scan the environment for information about where, what they call the public mood, and which is

most clearly realized in global opinions such as ideological and partisan identification. Global opinion thus serves as a guide for policy makers across a range of issues, even when specific opinion on an issue has not formed, but potentially could, for instance by opposition candidates for office raising it in campaigns (Arnold 1990). The assumption here is that if specific opinion formed on an issue, global political orientations would strongly shape the distribution of opinion on the specific issue. Global opinion is thus a good predictor of the future course of public opinion on specific issues.

Specific Attitudes and Legislative Behavior

In contrast, a body of work makes the case for legislator responsiveness to specific opinions. For instance, Bartels (1991) analyses votes on defense because the 1980 NES survey included an item directly tapping constituents' opinions on that issue . . . (p. 463). Bartels does not provide a theoretical rationale for the superiority of specific versus global measures of constituency opinion, but his comment and findings indicate that specific opinion can influence legislator roll calls. Similarly, Jackson and King (1989) attempt to derive estimates of constituency opinion on their issue of interest, taxes, and like Bartels, find that specific policy preferences affect roll call voting. In addition, Page and Shapiro (1983), although not explicitly looking at representatives' roll call voting behavior, report evidence indicating that specific measures of government policy change in congruence to changes in public opinion on specific policy questions.

Despite the fact that on many issues citizens may not hold opinions or preferences or may hold non-opinions (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992), legislators may still respond to specific opinion because such data informs them of the expected behavior of those most

likely to vote in the upcoming election, voters who use their legislators' vote on the roll calls in question as a guide to their electoral choice.

Furthermore, the effect of specific opinions may exert a stronger independent effect when the issue in question does not correlate well with more general measures of constituency preference. To the extent that global political orientations are reflective and predictive of opinions on specific policy issues, the representation of global orientations may be a more reasonable way for legislators seeking to represent their constituents on the floor of Congress to proceed. What happens, however, when policy specific attitudes are not well predicted by global orientations? For the individual legislator, having to cast a vote on an issue for which general political orientations do not capture or summarize constituency opinion on that issue, the use of general attitudes may miss the thrust of constituent preferences.

Legislators, however, are not likely to be equally responsive to all specific opinions. Characteristics of the issue and public opinion on the issue will affect the degree of their roll call responsiveness. Specifically, issues that have strong implications for re-election should elicit the greatest roll call response by legislators. Such issues are likely to be those that are salient with the public as well as issues that can be elevated into campaign issues by the opposition candidate and/or the mass media. Being transformed into a campaign issue should increase an issue's salience to the public.

Legislators, however, may not be able to predict with much certainty whether any vote that they take will become a campaign issue if it is not salient at the time of the roll call. At best, only a small number of issues become important campaign issues. Issues already salient have the highest likelihood of being salient during the re-election

campaign, and this likelihood will grow the nearer the timing of roll call is to the election campaign period. Global attitudes, then, may give legislators the best guess as to public sentiment on specific issues that are not salient at the time of the roll call but may become salient during the campaign period. But for those issues that are salient at the time of the roll call and that are likely to remain so during the campaign, specific opinion may provide legislators with more precise information about public attitudes than global opinion on the issue in question, and thus, may be a superior or preferable guide to roll call voting than global attitudes. This suggests that legislators will pay attention to specific opinion on salient issues and that specific opinion on salient (or potentially salient) opinion may have more impact on legislative roll call behavior than global opinion for this subset of issues.

The existing literature has yet to test whether legislators respond to specific or global opinion. Our study is the first that includes measures of global and specific opinion on a salient issue, in this case immigration, to assess the relative impact of both types of constituent opinion on legislator roll call voting.

The Senate and Immigration Policy, 2006

Immigration has been a policy concern for nearly the entire history of the United States (Gimpel and Edwards, 1999; Tichenor 2003; Zolberg 2005). During the 20th century Congress struggled at numerous times to craft a workable immigration policy, efforts that critics frequently derided as inadequate. For much of the recent period the focus has been on finding effective ways to prevent the immigration of individuals who enter the country illegally. Prior to 2006, Congress last enacted immigration reform legislation in 1996, which itself sought to reform the 1986 Immigration Reform and

Control Act (IRCA). The IRCA granted amnesty to all undocumented aliens residing in the country since 1982, stepped up immigration border enforcement, and created penalties for employers who knowingly hired undocumented, or illegal, aliens.

Recognizing that the 1986 amnesty and other provisions of the IRCA failed to stem the tide of illegal aliens, the 1996 reforms increased enforcement efforts with additional personnel for the Border Patrols and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, set tougher standards for foreigners seeking asylum, and eased standards for expelling foreigners who entered the country illegally or overstayed their visas.

Despite the 1996 reforms, undocumented aliens continued to enter the United States in large numbers. Passel (2005), of the Pew Hispanic Center, calculates approximately 10,000,000 illegal immigrants residing in the United States by 2005, with 1,400 new such immigrants arriving per day, a rate higher than in the 1990s. And although the majority of immigrants enter the United States legally, Passel, using Census figures, estimates that undocumented constitute 29% of the total, with the large bulk of the undocumented coming from Mexico and Central America.

The failure of the 1996 reform raised a host of criticisms of existing immigration policy. Some charged that immigrants, especially illegals, take away jobs from Americans; they undercut the wages other workers by their willingness to work for low wages; they undermine the nation's identity and culture by their inability and refusal to assimilate (Renshon 2005); they burden local governments with increased public service, education, welfare, and policing burdens; they are a source of crime; and especially since 9/11, the porous border between the U. S. and Mexico allows easy entry for terrorists. Advocates of more liberal immigration policy counter most of these charges. But across

the spectrum of attitudes towards immigration policy, a public consensus exists that border enforcement is lax, which undermines national security. For those seeking to revisit the immigration reforms adopted in the 1990s, the events of September 11 allowed them to merge a concern with illegal immigrants and homeland security.

The latest burst of reform activity on immigration policy commenced in the House in 2005. On December 16, 2005, the House passed legislation focusing almost entirely on enforcement issues and on stemming the tide of illegal immigrants from Mexico. Strikingly, the House passed legislation despite the relatively low public salience of the issue. Figure 1 presents two measures of public salience, the average monthly percentage of the public citing immigration as the nation's most important problem and a monthly count of articles in the *New York Times* on immigration from mid-2004 through May 2006. By either measure public salience seemed low, especially when compared to figures for April and May 2006.

Figure 1 about Here

The House bill (HR 4437), passed by a 239-182 margin⁴ It included provisions to build a security fence along the U.S-Mexico border and to force employers to verify employee immigrant status, among other stiffer enforcement provisions. Notably, the bill did not include a guest worker program that President Bush had sought nor did it provide any mechanism for illegal aliens already residing in the U. S. to either gain legal status or apply for citizenship.

⁴ Support of the bill came primarily from Republicans (203Y-16N), with most opposition from Democrats (36Y-164N), with the lone independent opposed.

The House bill sparked intense opposition and exposed a split within the Republican Party. Immigration reform had been a top administration priority since Bush's election in 2000, but the 9/11 terrorists attacks and the ensuing war on terrorism side-tracked the administration and derailed efforts at immigration reform. Bush sought a large guest worker program, in part to aid business demands for cheap labor, but also to attract Hispanic voters into the Republican Party, viewing the fast growing Hispanic population as necessary for Republican political fortunes in the future. In reaction to the House bill and supportive of the president's goals, a group of five Republicans and one Democrat in the Senate spearheaded efforts to find a compromise. In early April, 2006, support for a compromise broke down, making it unlikely that any legislation would emerge from Congress.

A wave of protests scattered around the nation followed, culminating in two mass demonstrations across the nation, one on April 10 and a second on May 1. Spanish-language media, such the television networks, Univision and Telemundo, radio stations, and periodicals, as well as community-based organizations, publicized, organized, and coordinated the demonstrations and rallies, which aimed to pressure Congress, especially the Senate into producing less harsh legislation. President Bush weighed in also, publicly supporting legislation that balanced enforcement with more liberal immigration provisions. As a result of these demonstrations, Bush's public statements, and activity in the Senate, among other factors, immigration issues rose in salience (see Figure 1).

Feeling this public pressure, after returning from the Easter recess, the Senate returned to immigration reform legislation. After 35 roll calls and 30 hours of debate, the Senate passed S. 2611. Unlike the House bill, S 2611 contained provisions for a

temporary guest worker program, as well as a path for some illegal immigrants currently residing in the U. S. to secure citizenship,⁵ and to guarantee social and educational benefits. Given the substantial differences between each chamber's effort to reform immigration law most observers suspected that the prospects of reconciling were not very good. Indeed, as the 109th Congress came to a close, no legislation reconciling the differences between the House and Senate bills emerged leaving immigration as an open issue for the new Democrat controlled 110th Congress to consider.

Data

We use Senate voting on immigration reform in 2006 to test the ideas put forth above. Ideally, we would have preferred several policy areas, but data necessary to test our hypotheses, in particular public opinion data, only exist for immigration reform. Still, immigration policy is a good test case. Immigration became highly salient to the mass public by 2006 and most in the mass public held specific opinions about the policy area. For instance in the April 2006 Gallup poll, 19% viewed immigration as the most important problem facing the nation. Only the war in Iraq had a higher total at 25%, while the price of fuel and the economy in general trailed some distance behind with 11 and 10 percent respectively. Further, unlike many issues, which can be highly complex

⁵ Illegal immigrants who have resided in the country for more than five years could apply for citizenship after paying fines and back taxes, while those residing between 2 to 5 years would be allowed to stay in the country without fear of deportation, but would have to return and could apply for citizenship at border check points after 3 years. Residents in the country for less than 2 years would have to return to their original nations before being allowed to re-enter the U. S. under the guest worker program.

and/or technical, immigration policy is a policy area more easily comprehended by average citizens. If specific public opinion failed to influence senator voting on a salient issue like immigration in 2006, specific public opinion is unlikely to affect legislator voting on less salient issues.

Furthermore, although Republican senators tended to oppose liberalizing reforms, such as allowing many illegal immigrants already residing in the U. S. a road toward citizenship and a relatively large guest worker program, a position that most Democrats supported, the Republican Party was split over the immigration issue. Not only did President Bush support guest worker and citizenship-earning programs, but several key Republicans also took such positions. A comprehensive reform package, which combined border security with guest worker and citizenship earning planks, was co-sponsored by six senators, five of them Republicans (Brownback (KS), Graham (SC), Hagel (NE), Martinez (FL), and McCain (AZ), along with Democrat Kennedy (MA). That voting on this issue is not perfectly party-based is important in helping to sort through the various influences on senators.

Dependent Variable

The Senate held 37 roll calls from May 16 through May 25 (roll calls 121-157). From these roll calls we create two indexes of senator support, an additive index and a W-nominate support score. The additive index, which corrects for absences, counts the number of times that the senator supported the more liberal position, divided by the number of time in which the senator cast a roll call. We use Keith Poole's and Howard

Rosenthal's W-nominate program to calculate senators' W-nominate scores.⁶ One vote (125) was dropped from both indexes because of Senate unanimity. Also Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) was absent from all votes. Cronbach's alpha of .97 for the 36 roll calls suggests their scalability and the W-nominate analysis indicates the unidimensionality of Senate voting on immigration.

Not surprisingly, the two indexes correlate quite highly. Analysis indicates nearly identical results between the two indexes. Because of the more intuitive interpretation of the additive index, we mainly discuss results for the additive index. Results for the W-nominate analysis are presented for comparative purposes (see Table 1).

The additive index can range from 0 to 100 percent. Average support among all Senators is 48%, ranging from 0 to 94%. The parties diverge on the issue, with Democrats providing stronger support for immigration than Republicans (78% to 25%). Still there is some overlap in the support of the two parties: Republican support scores range from 0 to 83%, while Democrats range from 19 to 94%. Eleven Republicans had immigration support scores above 50% and three Democrats had support scores below 50% (Byrd, WV; Dorgan, ND; Nelson, NE).⁷

Independent Variables: Constituency Opinion

Specific Opinion on Immigration: Our basic model includes variables tapping senators' personal preferences and constituency opinions. To measure specific constituency opinions on immigration, as well as global orientations to politics, we rely

⁶ Poole and Rosenthal's W-nominate routine is available on the web site

<http://pooleandrosenthal.com/dwnl.htm>.

⁷ Details on the immigration support scores of each senator can be obtained from the authors.

on 50 state-wide polls conducted by SurveyUSA in December 2005. SurveyUSA is a commercial polling firm, with primarily local news media clients, such as newspapers and television stations. Since May 2005, SurveyUSA has been posting the results of its state-based polls on its internet site, <http://www.surveyusa.com>, where we accessed the state public opinion data.

Compared to other state-based polls, the SurveyUSA polls offer several advantages. SurveyUSA uses the same sampling procedure for all 50 states, collects data on the same number of respondents per state (600), and asks respondents the same questions, using the same survey instrument. This produces a comparable set of opinion readings across the states, with a manageable sampling error of +/- 4.1%.

Like many survey organizations, SurveyUSA samples by using a random digit telephone dialing process, but also employs a "robot interviewing process." The robot poll technique, however, is somewhat controversial. The "robot interview" begins with an actor who reads the questionnaire, which is recorded and used to interview all respondents. Respondent voice activation technology advances the survey from question to question. Although each respondent is in effect interviewed by the same interviewer, which mitigates interviewer variance, the effects of the recorded or "robot" interviewer on the survey response is not well understood. SurveyUSA indirectly addresses this issue on their webpage, where they demonstrate that their state level results closely match the results of other survey firms and that they have a better than average track record in forecasting election outcomes from their data.

SurveyUSA reports tests comparing its own election predictions with other polling agencies, finding as good as if not better results than its competitors. In a recent

paper, Gary Jacobson (2006) extensively tests the SurveyUSA data for reliability and validity and finds them quite comparable to other state level polls. Thus despite this reservation, SurveyUSA provides us with unique data to test the impact of state level presidential approval on state level election contests in 2006.

Another advantage of the SurveyUSA data employed here is their timing. Unlike many polls on public opinion issues, which occur during or after congressional debate or roll call voting, or during election periods,⁸ which also occur after congressional voting these SurveyUSA data date five months before these Senate votes on immigration. This temporal ordering allows us to specify causality more clearly than with polls conducted during or after congressional activity, which raises the possibility that congressional action might influence public opinion.

The SurveyUSA immigration question reads: "Which of these 2 statements do you agree with more: One: Immigrants take jobs away from Americans. Two: Immigrants do jobs that Americans don't want." The first option taps into anti-immigrant sentiment, while the second option pro-immigrant public sentiment.

Obviously, the immigration debate is multidimensional, relating to issues of national security, race, local government budgets, and national identity. This question

⁸ However note that some studies are careful about the temporal order between constituent opinion and roll call voting. For example in his study of defense roll calls in the 1980s, Bartels (1981) used the 1980 NES data based on an average of 19 respondents in 108 districts. Jackson and King's (1989) measure of constituency opinion was based on a May 1978 Roper survey in which they estimated constituency opinion using the demographic correlates of tax attitudes the roll call votes they analyzed were taken in August 1978.

measures attitudes on only one, however salient dimension, economic competition. This aspect has been important politically throughout the history of immigration policy making, often becoming a campaign plank that political leaders opposed to open immigration use to rally support. Furthermore, this economic dimension to immigration has received much media play in 2005 and 2006. It can be considered a relatively easy, as opposed to hard issue (Carmines and Stimson 1989), thereby increasing its political salience.

But the fact that we have only one specific constituent opinion has possible implications in comparing specific opinion with global orientations, like ideology and party, on senator roll call behavior—we might be underestimating the effects of specific opinion, but we will be unable to estimate by how much. On the other hand, the unidimensionality to voting on immigration by Senators suggests that perhaps constituent opinion on the issue is also unidimensional, and thus, that this particular measure will effectively tap the structure of public opinion on the immigration issue more broadly.

Across the 50 states, 44.4% of respondents take the anti-immigrant position, with 50.6% taking the pro-immigrant stance, and 5.0% not expressing an opinion. Considerable state-level variance exists in these data, which range from 30% to 60% for the anti-immigrant position, and 34% to 66% for the pro-immigrant position, both with standard deviations of 7%. Weighted by state population, 42% and 53% hold anti- and pro-immigrant attitudes. To correct for “don’t know” and “no opinion” responses, our immigration opinion variable is the percentage pro-immigration in the state, divided by the summation of the pro- and anti-immigrant state percentages. This corrected immigration opinion variable ranges from 36.2 to 68.8, with a standard deviation of 7.8.

Still, these data come some six months before the Senate roll call votes, raising the possibility that public attitudes on immigration changed over the time period in question. We can compare the December 2005 SurveyUSA question with the same question that CBS News/New York Times polls posed in April and May 2006. The SurveyUSA figures compare favorably with these other national surveys, suggesting little movement in opinion on this question. The text of the CBS News/ New York *Times* poll reads: "Do you think illegal immigrants coming to this country today take jobs away from American citizens, or do they mostly take jobs Americans don't want?", which is identical to the SurveyUSA question.

Responses for April from CBS News/ New York *Times* are: Take jobs 34%, Don't Take jobs 53%, and Don't Know/ No Opinion 11%. May responses read: Take jobs 36%, Don't Take jobs 53%, and Don't Know/ No Opinion 9%. The CBS News/ New York *Times* has a higher Don't Know/ No Opinion percent than the SurveyUSA results, lower "Take jobs" rates, but the same "Don't Take jobs" rates. The May CBS News/ New York *Times* "Take jobs" percent, corrected for "don't knows" is 40.4 (36/(36+53)), compared to the nationally weighted SurveyUSA corrected percent of 44.2 (42/(42+53)). The December-to-May shift of 4% is modest and suggests no major shift in opinion.

Another question suggests national aggregate opinion stability, but a third indicates some movement in national level public opinion. Figure 2 plots these two questions across 2005 and 2006. The ABC News/ Washington Post poll ask respondents: "Do you think the United States is or is not doing enough to keep illegal immigrants from coming into this country?" Figure 2 plots the percent saying "enough is being done". This

series is very stable, and shows that only a minority believe the government is doing enough. For this question, from 75-80 percent think that not enough is being done, which immigration restrictions presumably use to justify their position.

Figure 2 about Here

In contrast, the CBS News/ New York Times Poll question: "Should legal immigration into the United States be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?" shows some movement in public opinion. The figure plots the difference between those who want to decrease legal immigration and those who want to increase it. Across the series, the percent wanting to decrease always outstrips those preferring to increase, but that margin began to slide from April to May 2006. Overall then, we are fairly confident that the SurveyUSA question of December 2005 reasonably taps public opinion in Spring 2006, when the Senate voted on the issue.

Global Political Orientations: To measure global political orientations, we use the SurveyUSA question, which asks respondents to identify whether they think of themselves as liberal, moderate, or conservative, the same type of question that Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993, 2006) use in constructing their estimate of state ideology from aggregated New York Times polls. Similar to the treatment of the immigration attitudes question, we construct a corrected state liberal variable by dividing the percentage of self-identified liberals in the state by the summation of the percent liberal and percent conservative. This variable ranges from 18.2 to 66.0, with a mean and standard deviation of 32.2 and 10.2, respectively. Moreover, although these two opinion measures correlate highly ($r = .53$, $p = .0001$), the correlation is far from perfect or overwhelming. In other words, more than ideology accounts for state level orientations to immigration. The fact

that the two opinion items are not more highly correlated allows us to test to which type of opinion, specific or global (or both) senators respond to in their roll call behavior.

Control Variables

Several factors beside constituency opinion may affect senatorial roll calls on immigration. Thus, we also measure the senators' party and ideology. The party variable is measured 1 for Democrats and -1 for Republicans, with 0 for the independent Jeffords of Vermont. We use 2005 ADA support scores to measure the members' ideology. Properly, the ADA score is not a measure of ideology, but a summary roll call measure, and thus includes all influences on the senators' voting in 2005. Analysis indicates that inclusion of this variable is necessary to specify the estimation fully and the R^2 is some 10 percentage points lower without the ADA measure.

Furthermore, senators may look to objective conditions, such as economic conditions in the state, because they may sometimes feel that the public is misinformed and/or because objective conditions provide senators (and other decision makers) with "hard" evidence about the possible implications of a decision. For instance, in states experiencing high unemployment, senators may reckon that an open immigration policy might exacerbate state unemployment in the future, with the senator feeling the political fallout for supporting such an immigration policy. In contrast, senators representing states with low unemployment may believe that a more liberal immigration policy might help the state's economic growth by attracting relatively cheap immigrant labor. Thus, we expect high unemployment to be associated with more restrictive immigration voting by senators. Because the problem of immigration may be different in states with higher unemployment rates than in states where job shortages are less severe, we include a

measure of the state unemployment in April 2006, the latest unemployment figure prior to the voting. Analysis also experimented with other objective measures, such as the percentage of immigrants in the state, the percentage of Hispanics, and whether the state shared a border with Mexico. None of these variables affected senator voting; hence they were dropped from the analysis.

Similarly, we experimented with a measure of Bush's approval in the state, due to his position and activism on the issue, airing a prime time speech on May 15, 2006, the day before Senate debate and voting commenced. Like the several objective measures, the Bush approval measure also failed to affect senator voting once the public opinion measures were entered into the analysis. Thus, the analysis reported below does not include this variable.

Critical for our purposes, we need to isolate the effects of public opinion on senator voting, but state public opinion may affect a senator's ADA support score. We find, for instance, that the senator's 2005 ADA score correlates with state mass ideology at .39 ($p = .0001$) and state immigration opinion at .26 (.01). Experimentation found that including both the ADA and mass ideology measure into the same equation wiped out the effects of mass ideology on senator voting, yet the effects of mass ideology may be felt through the ADA measure due to the correlation between the two. To guard against this possibility, we purged the ADA variable of its mass opinion components by regressing the ADA variable on state mass ideology and attitudes towards immigration. The residuals of this estimation become the new ADA variable.

Finally, we add a measure of whether the senator is running for re-election.⁹ Besides state opinion, senators may look to objective conditions in the state in deciding how to vote on issues before them. Senators running for re-election in 2006 might be more sensitive to the immigration issue than those with 2008 and 2010 re-election dates. May 2006, the month of the Senate debate and votes on immigration, was less than six months prior to the November election, a short enough time frame for immigration to be a major issue in the campaign. Although no direct evidence exists, it appears that supporters of a restrictive immigration policy hold their positions more intensely than supporters of a more open immigration policy. If this is the case, senators running for re-election in 2006, feeling that anti-immigration supporters might be more likely to vote and to base their vote in the senator's immigration roll call record, will oppose open immigration reforms and support restrictive ones more than senators not running for re-election in 2006. We measure this with a dummy variable. Twenty-nine senators were up for re-election in 2006, while four decided to retire. These included majority leader Frist (R-TN), as well as Sarbanes (D-MD), Dayton (D-MN), and Jeffords (I-VT).

Analysis

Table 1 presents analysis of our six independent variables on Senators's support for immigration. For the analysis, the additive index is rescaled to range from 0 to 100%.

⁹ We also experimented with several other variables, including whether the senator was retiring in 2006, the percentage of the state's population that were immigrants, the state's mass partisan distribution, and whether the state shared a border with Mexico. None of these variables were found to be statistically significant and thus were dropped from the analysis. Detailed results of using these variables can be obtained from the authors.

and for the sake of comparability, we rescaled the W-Nominate scale to range from -100 to 100. In both cases, we use robust regression with Huber-White standard errors, because the opinion data are based on survey estimates, with some error variance or potential measurement error. Results are generally consistent and nearly identical across the estimations. Overall, the model performs well accounting for 78 percent of the variance using the additive index and 76 percent using the W-Nominate scale.

Table 1 about Here

Impact of Global and Specific Opinion on Senate Voting

Our main interest lies in comparing the effects of global and specific attitudes on Senate voting. As both opinion variables have the same metric (percentages) they can be compared directly. The coefficients for these two variables suggest that senators respond to both in deciding how to vote, but with slightly greater responsiveness to global as opposed to specific attitudes. We are able to test formally for whether the two coefficients significantly differ from each other. This test concludes that they do not significantly differ $\{F(1, 91) = .86, p = .36\}$.

Substantively, the results from the additive index estimation tell us that each one percentage point shift in the distribution of ideological identifiers in a state leads to approximately a 1.6% change in support for immigration. A one standard deviation difference in state ideological balance (10.2%) translates into nearly a 16% differential in support for immigration. Specific attitudes on immigration also strongly affect senatorial roll call voting. Each one percentage point shift in specific attitudes on immigration leads to 1.1 percentage point shift in senatorial support. A one standard deviation difference in state immigration attitudes (7.7%) produces a 8.5 percent point shift in senatorial roll call

voting. These results affirm that the separate impact that global and specific signals have on representative's voting behavior. In states where the signals were inconsistent or in conflict the Senator had to balance these competing cues.

Impact of Control Variables

Three of the four control variables, senator's party, 2005 ADA support and 2006 re-election, significantly influence senator roll call behavior. The coefficient for state unemployment has the wrong sign. Results of all other variables remain in tack with their coefficient size only trivially different if we delete unemployment from the analysis.

Senator's ADA 2005 support score is especially potent, rivaling the constituency variables. Results indicate that a one percentage point shift in a senator's ADA support would alter the senator's immigration voting by about .85 points, and a one standard deviation change (39.4%) producing about a 33.5 percentage point impact on senator roll call behavior. Even after controlling for ideology, party exerts a statistically significant effect. The difference between Republicans (-1) and Democrats (1) produces a 20 point change in immigration voting. Note that the effect of party holds even after controlling for the Senator's ideology and the global ideological orientation of the Senator's state. This is all the more noteworthy given the high degree of ideological polarization between the parties in Congress in recent years. Senators up for re-election in 2006 are some 9 points more supportive of restrictive immigration policies than those not up for re-election, as hypothesized. Finally, state unemployment affects senator behavior, but not as hypothesized. Senators from states with high unemployment levels lean in the more open immigration direction.

Analysis of Residuals

Finally, although the estimated models perform quite well in terms of R^2 , they fail to account for about one-quarter of the variance. Inspection of the residuals reveals seven senators with residuals greater than two standard deviations from the average. ($sd = 16.1$). Table 2 lists these senators, their immigration roll call support scores and their residuals, plus the support scores for Democrats and Republicans.

Table 2 about Here

Of these seven outliers, there five Republicans (McCain, AZ, Martinez, FL, Brownback, KS, Hagel, NE, Lugar, IN) and two Democrats (Dorgan, SD and Byrd, WV). In each case, the Republicans are more supportive of liberal immigration than the model predicts while both Democrats display stronger support for the restrictive side of the debate than predicted. Notably, four of the five Republican outliers (McCain, Martinez, Brownback, and Hagel) co-sponsored the comprehensive legislative package, which tried to build a package that contained increased border security and enforcement, as well as more liberal provisions regarding guest workers and the path to citizenship among illegal immigrants already residing in the U. S. For comparative purposes, the table also presents information on the two other co-sponsors, Kennedy (D-MA) and Graham (R-SC), the latter whose outlier is just shy of the two standard deviation cut point.

Including a dummy variable for co-sponsoring the immigration reform legislation barely affects the performance of the other variables in the estimated model, although it boosts the adjusted R^2 to .83 and .78 for the immigration support and nominate roll call indices respectively, an improvement of 5% and 2%. Both of the increments are statistically significant improvements over the estimation without the co-sponsorship

variable. Importantly, adding the co-sponsorship variable does not affect the other variables, which suggests that we look elsewhere to explain the behavior of these outliers.

Idiosyncratic factors may explain the behavior of these outliers. For instance, two, McCain and Hagel, have been mentioned as possible Republican presidential candidates in 2008. On other issues they also have staked out moderate political stances, perhaps in a strategy to appeal to as wide a swath of voters as possible in their potential national bids. Martinez was born in Cuba, before emigrating to the U. S. with his parents. His background may make him especially sympathetic to the plight of other immigrants. Brownback is among the most devoutly religious members of the Senate, and on a series of other issues, such as humanitarian efforts in Africa, Brownback has followed his religious beliefs in support of such efforts. Publicly he also views the immigration issue as one of humanitarianism and social justice, which may have moved him into the camp that is supportive of openness in immigration. Besides such idiosyncratic explanations, no other factors seem to account for the roll call behavior of these seven outlying senators. Despite these seven outliers, the estimated model does a good job of explaining senator roll call behavior on immigration.

Conclusions

In this paper we sought to test whether representatives were more responsive to global or specific policy cues when seeking to represent their constituencies on roll call votes cast on the floor of Congress. A survey conducted by SurveyUSA allowed us to obtain both global preferences and specific attitudes on immigration reform in each of the states. The SurveyUSA polls were conducted prior to the Senate's voting on a series of immigration proposals. In an analysis in which global and specific attitudes were regressed on Senator's

votes on immigration reform controlling for other relevant factors, we found that both global and specific attitudes exerted an independent, statistically significant, and comparable effect on roll call voting.

These results provide us with additional insights into the process in which representative's seek to reflect the preferences of constituents. Our results suggest that representatives seek to take these multiple sources of information into account when casting roll calls on an issue such as immigration under these conditions: when voters possess enough information to form opinions on the issue, when those specific opinions are not highly correlated with global attitudes, and when representatives are likely to receive the separate signals provided by global and specific attitudes. We can speculate, however, that when on issues for which constituents are less likely to have an informed opinion or when the specific opinion is strongly correlated with the global measure, the process of representation is less complex, with representatives relying on the global attitude cue. To assess whether our findings and theoretical speculations generalize beyond the immigration case will require more data, such as that used here, on additional specific attitudes, in varying contexts and combinations with global attitudes.

References

- Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bartels, Larry M. 1991. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Build Up." *The American Political Science Review* 85 (2):457-74.
- Bernstein, Robert A. 1989. *Elections, Representation, and Congressional Voting Behavior: The Myth of Constituency Control*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bond, Jon R., Richard Fleisher and Jeffrey Talbert. 1997. "Partisan Differences in Candidate Quality in Open Seat House Races, 1976-1994." *Political Research Quarterly*, 50 (2): 281-299.
- Burstein, Paul. 1998. "Bringing the Public Back in: Should Sociologists Consider the Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy?" *Social Forces*. 77 (September): 27-62.
- Burstein, Paul. 2003. "The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda." *Political Research Quarterly*. 56 (No. 1): 29-40.
- Burstein, Paul. 2006. "Why Estimates of the Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy are Too High: Empirical and Theoretical Implications." *Social Forces*. 84 (June): 2273-2289.
- Campbell, Angus, Converse, Philip E., Miller, Warren E., and Stokes, Donald E. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

- Clausen, Aage R. 1973. *How Congressmen Decide: A Policy Focus*. New York,: St. Martin's Press.
- Clinton, Joshua D. 2006. "Representation in Congress: Constituents and Roll Calls in the 106th House." *Journal of Politics*. 68 (No. 2): 397-409.
- Cohen, Jeffrey E. 2006. "Introduction: Studying Public Opinion in the American States," in Jeffrey E. Cohen, ed. *Public Opinion in State Politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 3-18.
- Conover, Pamela Johnston and Stanley Feldman 1981. "The Origins and Meaning of Liberal/Conservative Self-Identifications." *American Journal of Political Science*, 25 (4): 617-645.
- Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In David E. Apter (ed), *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: Free Press.
- Edwards, George C. 1978. "Presidential Electoral Performance as a Source of Presidential Power." *American Journal of Political Science* 22 (1):152-68.
- Fenno, Richard F. 1973. *Congressmen in Committees*. Boston,: Little, Brown & Co.
- Fleisher, Richard. 1993. "Explaining the Change in Roll Call Voting Behavior of Southern Democrats." *Journal of Politics*, 55 (2): 327-341.
- Gimpel, J. G., and J. R. Edwards, J. R. 1999. *The Congressional Politics Of Immigration Reform*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ginsberg, Benjamin. 1986. *The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power*. New York: Basic Books.

- Green, Donald; Bradley Palmquist; and Eric Schickler. 2004. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Grossback, Lawrence J.; David A. M. Peterson; and James A. Stimson 2006. *Mandate Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jackson, John E., and David C. King. 1989. "Public Goods, Private Interests, and Representation." *The American Political Science Review* 83 (4):1143-64.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander : Political Manipulation And The Loss Of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2004. *The Politics of Congressional Elections, 6th edition*. NY: Pearson, Longman.
- Jacoby, William G. 1991. "Ideological Identification and Issue Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science*, 35 (1): 178-205.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1968. "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." *American Political Science Review* 62 (1):169-184.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1981. *Generations And Politics : A Panel Study Of Young Adults And Their Parents*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Kingdon, John W. 1989. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*. 3rd ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Leogrande, William M. and Alana S. Jeydal. 1997. "Using Presidential Election Returns to Measure Constituency Ideology: A Research Note." *American Politics Quarterly*. 25 (No. 1): 3-18.
- Manza, Jeff and Fay Lomax Cook. 2002. "A Democratic Polity? Three Views of Policy Responsiveness to Public Opinion in the United States." *American Politics Research*. 30 (No. 6): pp 630-667.
- Manza, Jeff; Fay Lomax Cook; and Benjamin I. Page, eds. 2002. *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Matthews, Donald R., and James A. Stimson. 1975. *Yeas and Nays : Normal Decision-Making in the U.S. House of Representatives*. New York: Wiley.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress : The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McCrone, Donald J. and James H. Kuklinski. 1979. "The Delegate Theory of Representation." *American Journal of Political Science*, 23 (No. 2): 278-300.
- Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *The American Political Science Review* 57 (1):45-56.
- Niemi, Richard G. and M. Kent Jennings 1991. "Issues and Inheritance in Formation of Party Identification." *American Journal of Political Science* 35 (4): 970-988.
- Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1983. "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy." *The American Political Science Review* 77 (1):175-90.
- Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public : Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Passel, Jeffrey S. 2005. "Estimates of the Size and Characteristics of the Undocumented Population," Pew Hispanic Center, www.pewhispanic.org.
- Renshon, Stanley A. 2005. *The 50% American: Immigration and National Identity in an Age of Terror*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Stimson, James A. 2004. *Tides of Consent : How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stimson, James A., Michael B. Mackuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *The American Political Science Review*, 89 (3): 543-565.
- Tichenor, Daniel J. 2002. *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Zolberg, Aristide R. 2005. *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Variable	Additive Roll Call Index, Robust Regression			W-Nominate*** Roll Call Index, Robust Regression		
	b	SE	p*	b	SE	p*
State Ideology	-1.57	.26	.000	-2.26	.37	.000
State Immigration Attitudes	-1.11	.34	.001	-1.79	.50	.000
Senator Party	10.66	6.20	.045	11.07	8.76	.105
2005 ADA Support Score (Purged)	.85	.15	.000	1.18	.21	.000
Re-election in 2006	-8.95	3.92	.01	-13.62	6.47	.02
State Unemployment (April, 2006)	2.94	1.45	.05**	5.17	2.93	.07**
Constant	194.68	19.93	.000	214.34	34.81	.000
n/ R ² / Root MSE	98	.78	16.60	97	.76	27.28
Equation F, p of F	68.06	.000		46.21	.000	
<p>* All p values use a one-tailed test of statistical significance because the hypothesis indicates direction of impact, unless otherwise noted. ** Two-tailed test. Variable points opposite to the direction hypothesized. ***W-Nominate is rescaled to range from -100 to 100. Source: Data compiled by authors, see text for details.</p>						

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Outliers**		
Senator	Immigration Roll Call Support Index	Residual
McCain, R-AZ*	71.9	33.2
Martinez, R-FL*	64.2	42.6
Lugar, R-IN	58.3	53.3
Brownback, R-KS*	63.9	38.5
Hagel, R-NE*	61.1	36.6
Dorgan, D-ND	38.2	-35.1
Byrd, D-WV	19.4	-33.0
Kennedy, D-MA*	94.4	10.6
Graham, R-SC*	62.9	31.7
Democrats	77.3	
Republicans	24.7	
* Co-sponsors of the Immigration Reform Package ** Computed from the results of Model 1, Table 1. Source: Compiled by authors. See Text for details.		

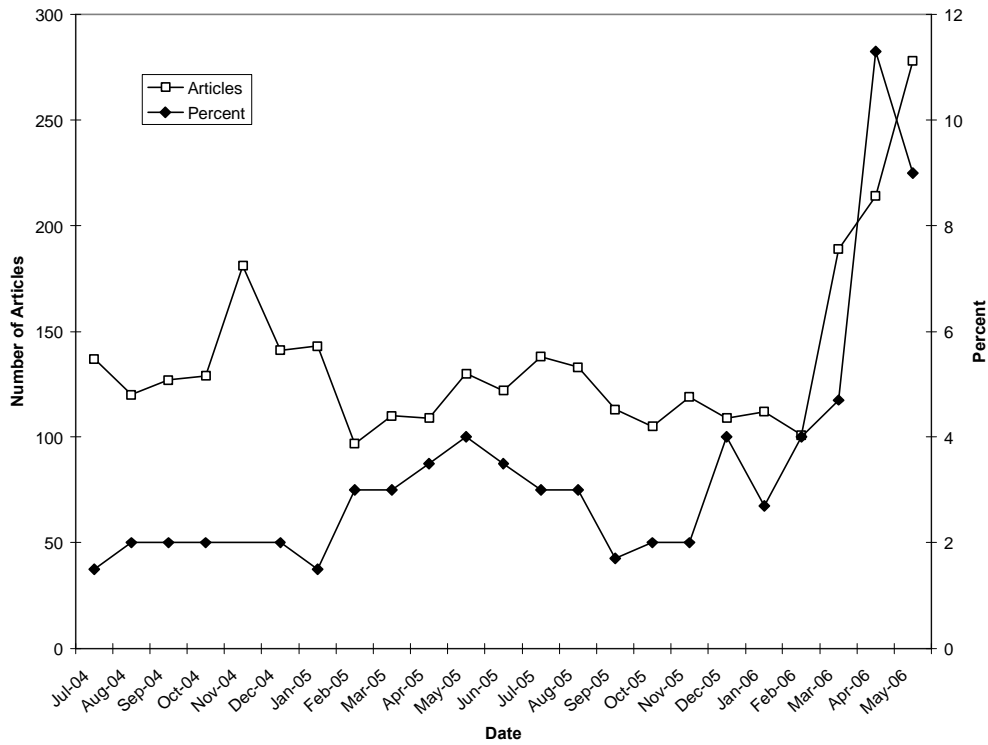


Figure 1. Two Measures of the Salience of the Immigration Issue, July 2004-May 2006

Notes:

Percent--Average Monthly Percentage of Respondents Citing Immigration or Illegal Aliens as the Most Important Problem Facing the Nation Today
 Articles--Monthly Count of the Number of Articles in the New York *Times* Using the Terms "Immigration" or "Immigrant" in the Headline, First Paragraphs, or Terms.

The correlation between the two series is $r = .76$, $p = .09$.

Source: Various polls compiled from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, and a search of the New York *Times*, both from Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

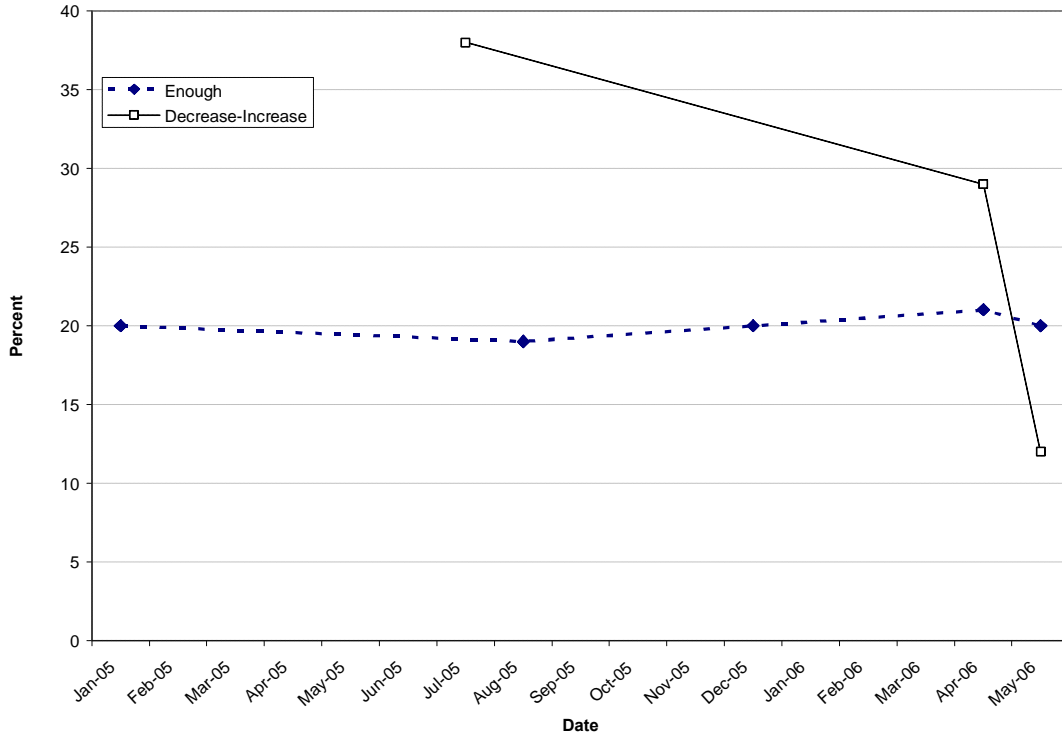


Figure 2: Stability and Change in Public Attitudes toward Immigration

Notes:

“Enough” series is from ABC News/ Washington Post Poll. The question reads: "Do you think the United States is or is not doing enough to keep illegal immigrants from coming into this country?"

“Decrease-Increase” series is from CBS News/ New York Times Poll. The question reads: "Should legal immigration into the United States be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?" The series is calculated at Decrease % - Increase %.

Source: PollingReport.com