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# “Descended from Immigrants and Revolutionists:” How Family History Shapes Immigration Policymaking\*

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## Abstract

Does personal and family history influence legislative behavior in democracies? Linking members of Congress to the census, we observe countries of birth for members, their parents, and their grandparents, allowing us to measure ancestry for the politicians in office when American immigration policy changed dramatically, from closing the border in the 1920s to reshaping admittance criteria in the 1960s. We find that legislators more proximate to the immigrant experience support more permissive immigration legislation. A regression discontinuity design analyzing close elections, which addresses selection bias and holds district composition constant, confirms our results. We then explore mechanisms, finding support for in-group identity in connecting family history with policymaking. Holding fixed family history, legislators with more visible indicators of immigration based on surnames are even more supportive of permissive immigration legislation. However, a common immigrant identity can break down along narrower ethnic lines when restrictive legislation targets specific countries. Our findings illustrate the important role of personal background in legislative behavior in democratic societies even on major and controversial topics like immigration and suggest lawmakers’ views are informed by experiences transmitted from previous generations.

**Keywords:** Immigration; Congress; Identity

**JEL Codes:** D7, H7, J15, N32, N42

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\*Title quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Speech to the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 21, 1938. We thank Ran Abramitzky, Matthew Baum, Sam Bazzi, Richard Bense, Leah Boustan, Daniel Carpenter, Dara Cohen, Katherine Einstein, Ray Fisman, Bernard Fraga, Claudia Goldin, Tarek Hassan, Robert Margo, Daniel Moskowitz, Noah Nathan, Bruce Oppenheimer, Daniele Paserman, Spencer Piston, Luisa Godinez Puig, Tobias Resch, Deborah Schildkraut, Hanna Schwank, Maya Sen, Marco Tabellini, Randy Walsh, and Ariel White, as well as participants at SPSA, the Congress and History Conference, MPSA, APSA, the University of Pittsburgh, and the Harvard Kennedy School for helpful comments and suggestions. We thank Danielle Williamson for outstanding research assistance.

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The whole debate we are now undertaking over immigration and the Dreamers has become somewhat personal for me because it has reminded me, in a very strong way, that I and my brother are first-generation Americans. We are the sons of an immigrant who came to this country at the age of 17 without a nickel in his pocket...

– Senator Bernie Sanders, Speech on Floor of Senate, February 14, 2018

## 1 Introduction

Since the Naturalization Act of 1790 passed during the First Congress, immigration and citizenship questions have been among the most fraught domains of political contestation in the United States. Public support for restrictive immigration legislation has been commonplace (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014), with the arrival of immigrants often triggering intense political backlash and demands for immigration restrictions (Alesina and Tabellini 2020; Alsan et al. 2020; Tabellini 2020).<sup>1</sup> Though U.S. immigration policy has oscillated between expansive and restrictive regimes (Tichenor 2002), at least rhetorically, the U.S is a “nation of immigrants.” One reason the long and short run reactions to immigration could diverge (Giuliano and Tabellini 2020) is that many Americans, including members of Congress (MCs), have their own personal or family stories of immigration; even several generations back, an immigrant family history might anchor permissive attitudes towards immigration. Though only a small share of MCs are or were immigrants themselves (historically or today, as we document in Figure 1), a significant number have foreign-born parents or grandparents. For example, in the recent 115th Congress (serving 2017-2019), while only 11 representatives (2.5%) and a single senator were immigrants, 11.8% of representatives and 14.6% of senators had at least one foreign-born parent.<sup>2</sup> In the first half of the 20th century, the share of representatives with at least one foreign-born parent reached as high as 30 percent of the chamber and even more had at least one foreign-born grandparent.

[Figure 1 about here.]

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<sup>1</sup>The political effects of immigration are not always homogenous; for example, Mayda et al. (2018) show that low-skilled immigration decreased Republican vote share, while high-skilled immigration had the opposite effect. Anti-immigrant backlash is also not unique to the U.S. Scholars have documented effects of immigration on right-wing and far-right vote share in Austria (Halla et al. 2017), Denmark (Dustmann et al. 2019), France (Edo et al. 2019), Italy (Barone et al. 2016), and Germany (Otto and Steinhardt 2014). Alesina et al. (2019) estimate reductions in support for redistribution associated with increases in immigration across 16 European countries.

<sup>2</sup>See Lawson (1957) for a statistical summary of foreign-born MCs through 1949. Our numbers differ slightly, due to our efforts to exclude MCs who were born abroad to American parents from the foreign-born counts. We identified country of origin for the parents of 98% of the MCs in the 115th Congress. We cross-referenced our numbers for the 115th Congress with Geiger (2019) and found agreement on the vast majority of cases with a few minor discrepancies.

In this paper, we ask if legislator family history matters when setting national policy. Though MCs often cite their personal or family history when discussing immigration (Swarns 2006; Burden 2007, p.18), does background actually shape policymaking in areas of fierce political conflict? MCs might support permissive immigration policy for many reasons, but two central explanations are: (1) because it aligns with their electoral incentives, or (2) because of their own preferences. Senator Ted Kennedy’s role in formulating and passing the U.S. Diversity Visa lottery serves as a distillation of these concepts and the challenges in distinguishing between them empirically. Kennedy pushed for the policy change both because of his own family connection to immigration *and* because his constituents included a large share of people with family histories of immigration (Law 2002). Our empirical approach allows us to tease apart the role of personal preferences and constituency demands, which are often correlated, and distinguish between these two explanations in a variety of ways. Ultimately our findings highlight the unique importance of legislator ideological preferences and, more specifically, preferences that are molded by (immigrant) family history. Further unpacking the link from legislators’ ideological preferences to immigration policy, we investigate the mechanisms through which background matters. We find that the immigration experiences of previous generations help shape the views of future generations by defining their sense of group boundaries, and these histories matter significantly when legislators consider immigration policy in Congress.

To understand the role of legislator immigrant family background, we turn to the most consequential half-century of immigration law-making in American history and study lawmakers in the U.S. House and Senate from the 64th to 91st Congresses (1915–1971). Our sample period includes the closing of the border in the 1920s and the reshaping of immigration in 1965 by the Immigration and Nationality Act (Abramitzky and Boustan 2017), policy choices that affected millions of lives over multiple generations. Our period also allows us to work with direct measures of legislator family backgrounds. Though immigrant identity is complex and can be hard to infer, we link lawmakers to the historical complete count census data from 1900–1940 to observe their family backgrounds (Ruggles et al. 2020). This census match allows us to examine the countries of origin of the lawmakers themselves, their parents, and, in most cases, their grandparents. We then analyze the effects of family immigration history on two canonical forms of legislative behavior for MCs: legislative voting and speeches on the floor of Congress.

We find that having a recent family history of immigration makes legislators support more permissive immigration policy. MCs with family histories of immigration cast pro-immigration votes—against restrictive bills or in favor of expanding immigration—at higher rates during this period. Our results hold for both landmark immigration bills and for all immigration bills with final passage votes. Moreover, these effects persist (but decrease in magnitude) as MC’s generational distance from the immigrant experience increases.

Our main result could reflect the ideological effects of family background or the effects of electoral incentives. Naturally, districts that prefer more expansive immigration policy might be more likely to elect MCs with a family history of immigration. We distinguish between these effects in three ways. First, we show that when controlling for the composition of an MC’s district (and crucially, foreign-born population share), the effect of immigration history on roll-call voting persists. Second, MCs appear to weigh their own personal background more heavily than the composition of their district, providing evidence that electoral incentives may not be the overriding concern when MCs take immigration votes. Third, we use a regression discontinuity in congressional elections to compare districts just barely or barely not represented by immigrant-background MCs. This allows us to hold constant constituency and eliminate concerns over why some districts elect representatives with (or without) immigrant family histories. These results confirm our main finding: districts quasi-randomly assigned MCs with family histories of immigration voted in favor of expansive immigration policies at higher rates.

Do MCs with immigrant family backgrounds also give more voice to the issue of immigration? Here our results concur with theories of strategic communication by politicians to their constituents (Cormack 2016). Past research has found that MCs publicly emphasize positions aligned with the views of their political base but tend to rely on personal views when casting roll-call votes. Our results show that MCs with an immigrant family history do give more floor speeches about immigration, but district composition—particularly the level of a district’s foreign-born population—explains a much greater share of the variation in speech relative to votes. A parallel regression discontinuity shows null effects of legislator family background on floor speech. These findings are consistent with a model where a meaningful share of roll-call voting behavior is explained by MC preferences, but the public communication of a position depends more on electoral incentives and how well that position aligns with an MC’s base.

Lawmakers place weight on their immigrant background in policymaking, but why? We explore four possible mechanisms: in-group identity, information about immigration, correlated preferences, and broader family traits shared by all migrants. We find the most support for an in-group theory about identity, though the exact borders of this in-group are complicated and possibly vary. MCs with surnames denoting an immigrant background (based on contemporaneous census records) support more permissive immigration policy, even holding actual immigrant background constant. Surnames are a public signal of family immigration history and could be an omnipresent reminder of group boundaries. We also observe how levels of support for permissive immigration policy can break down along narrower lines of ethnic identity. Meaningful group boundaries may form at the level of a specific nation of origin (e.g, Italian immigrants, Irish immigrants), pan-ethnic group, or for an American national identity in which immigration is valued (Masuoka 2006; Schildkraut 2014). When faced with legislation restricting immigration based on national origin, MCs with an immigrant background but from nations unaffected by restrictions supported restrictive policies at a higher rate than their colleagues with family origins in targeted countries. Thus, while MCs with family histories of immigration share a common tendency towards permissive immigration policy, under some conditions it can be subsumed by a narrower group identity.

A second possible mechanism could be information about immigration. Information that an MC with a family history of immigration might have could include an understanding of the plight of new immigrants, the efficiency gains from immigration, or the potential upward mobility of immigrant populations (Abramitzky et al. 2021a). This knowledge could lead an MC to support more immigration. Though difficult to reject, we think the findings that support the in-group mechanism push against the information mechanism. Conditional on being an immigrant, there is no reason why having a surname that signals immigrant history should make an MC know more or less about the potential success of immigrants in the U.S.

Third, MCs could support more immigration for ideologically strategic reasons. Potential immigrants—who could shape a future electorate—could have political leanings aligned with MCs with immigrant family histories. Support for an expanded welfare state among immigrants, as in Giuliano and Tabellini (2020), could be one possibility. However, for this correlated preferences mechanism to be at work, it would need to be the case that MC immigration family history matters to many policy domains beyond immigration. We demonstrate that this does not appear to be the

case. Placebo tests show roll-call voting in other areas does not change systematically with MC immigration history. This finding makes it unlikely that MCs support immigration solely to shape the demographics of future constituents because their ideological preferences are correlated.<sup>3</sup>

Fourth, a family history of immigration could be just one manifestation of a broader set of traits or values passed intergenerationally that affect MC ideology. Immigrant ancestors were self-selected and might vary on some dimensions, including entrepreneurship, grit or determination, risk-taking, or openness to new settings. MCs might support further immigration because they believe new immigrants will share these traits. Similarly, domestic migrants and their descendants might also be self-selected on similar characteristics. Our census data allows us to shed light on this comparison. We find that MC support for more open immigration policies is driven by MCs with family histories of international immigration not those with family histories of domestic migration. Our story, we argue, is particularly about immigration, rather than some trait(s) common to all migrants (e.g., domestic and foreign).

Our paper highlights the importance of immigrant family history, rather than electoral incentives (Biavaschi and Facchini 2020), for MCs making key policy decisions related to immigration. Further, in-group identity appears to be the key mechanism underpinning this process. Given these findings, this article makes three distinct contributions. Our first contribution is to the political economy of immigration literature. Past work on the determinants of immigration policy has emphasized the initial backlash effects of immigration on the views of the US-born (Alesina and Tabellini 2020), misperceptions about immigrants (Alesina et al. 2018), institutional conditions in Congress (Tichenor 2002), political, economic, and social conditions in the US (Goldin 1994; Timmer and Williamson 1996), or international events (Zolberg 2009). Looking at migration policy internationally, Facchini and Mayda (2009) note that, given such high levels of opposition to immigrants, “it is a puzzle that migration is allowed to take place at all” and turn to an interest group model to explain the gap between public opinion and policy. We posit that family histories of immigration play a role in shaping immigration policy. While background is not the only relevant force, far less attention has been paid to how individual characteristics of key decision-makers in Congress and other legislatures affect immigration policy.

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<sup>3</sup>This finding also cuts against the possibility that our results merely reflect the effects of immigrant family history on political views more generally, where support for permissive immigration policy is just one of many dimensions.

Our findings on the importance of legislator family histories for immigration policy speak to some long-standing themes in the political economy literature. There is considerable evidence of direct competition between new immigrants and prior immigrants (Abramitzky et al. 2019a). However, we show that districts with greater foreign-born population shares and, independently, a lawmaker’s personal connection to immigration *both* raised support for permissive immigration policies. These results imply that, on average, people in immigrant-heavy districts placed more weight on new immigrants seeking opportunity than on any potential labor-market harms from these populations. Our findings suggest that the salience of immigrants’ group identity in particular was powerful enough to outweigh labor-market harms of immigration during this time period.

Second, we contribute to the understanding of what factors influence how legislators vote, along the lines of Mian et al. (2010), including views shaped by individual experience and background. When considering legislative decisions, MCs weigh some combination of their personal views along with the preferences of the national party (Lee et al. 2004) and their “economic interest” in getting reelected (Stigler 1971; Kalt and Zupan 1984; Peltzman 1985).<sup>4</sup> Our main finding—immigrant family background contributes to MCs supporting more open immigration policy—holds when controlling for party and constituency, and when applying a regression discontinuity that generates quasi-random assignment of MCs to districts. When we standardize our measures of background and constituency to allow us to compare magnitudes, background is more important than both district and party. Thus, we find that legislators’ own views matter *and* that those views are shaped by their backgrounds and experiences. Past work has shown that lawmaker race (Canon 1999), gender (Fridkin and Kenney 2014), economic class (Carnes 2012), prior political experience (Keena and Knight-Finley 2017) and children’s gender (Washington 2009) also all play a significant role in legislative behavior.<sup>5</sup> Background can matter specifically for controversial and hotly-debated policies: McGuirk et al. (2017) show that having draft-age sons pushes lawmaker-parents to vote

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<sup>4</sup>A legislator’s own views sometimes appear to outweigh these other considerations, with some estimates suggesting that a Senator’s personal ideology holds more weight than any other factor in a legislator’s decision function (Levitt 1996). Other research has similarly argued that differences in legislative behavior (and particularly roll-call voting) tend to correspond to differences in underlying views on policy (Carnes 2012; Barrett 1995).

<sup>5</sup>The role of personal background in decision making extends beyond just legislators. For example, Glynn and Sen (2015) find that a judge having a daughter affects voting on cases involving gender issues. Immigrant history matters for non-politicians as well. In a recent survey experiment, Williamson et al. (2021) prime survey respondents about family history and find “small but consistent” increases in empathy for immigrant outgroups. Dinas et al. (2021), meanwhile, prime on family histories of forced displacement to increase donations and sympathy for refugees in Germany and Greece.



against conscription. However, we are the first to study immigrant background, a central feature of American identity in popular discourse.

Third, we also contribute to the study of immigration during the 20th century. A growing literature exploits changes in policy to estimate the effects of immigration on labor markets (Tabellini 2020; Abramitzky et al. 2019b; Jaeger et al. 2018; Clemens et al. 2018), growth (Ager and Brueckner 2013), innovation (Moser and San 2020), investment (Burchardi et al. 2016), and health (Ager et al. 2020). In addition to deepening our understanding of the political economy forces that shaped legislation during this era, our study also points to a potential longer term effect of immigration that plays out over multiple generations. Where Giuliano and Tabellini (2020) highlight contact theory and cultural transmission from immigrants to the US-born in shaping long run preferences for the welfare state (horizontal transmission), our results suggest that public opinion and political preferences are also influenced by individuals’ family histories (vertical transmission, over generations); the personal history of the descendants of immigrants affects legislators wielding political power, and could similarly affect everyone in daily economic and social interactions. Through this channel, immigration policy is multigenerational and potentially persistent.

## 2 Data

We focus on immigration legislation from 1915 to 1971, corresponding to the congresses where we can match the most members to the 1900 through 1940 censuses to collect family immigration histories. In this section, we describe the history of immigration legislation during this period, the specific bills we will analyze, and our congressional speech data. We conclude by documenting our process for matching lawmakers to the complete count historical censuses.

The size and scope of immigration to the U.S. has been determined by three main factors historically: the costs of migration, the benefits to the migrants, and American policy (Abramitzky and Boustan 2017). As these three factors have changed over time, total flows and the selection of immigrants has changed. The Age of Mass Migration—dating from the late nineteenth century to the immigration restriction acts of 1917, 1921, and 1924—was made possible by falling costs of trans-Atlantic transportation, relatively open border policies, and the industrializing and urbanizing American economy (Abramitzky and Boustan 2017). This historical moment did not just coincide with an increase in the number of immigrants, but also a significant shift in their source countries.

In 1850, more than 90% of the foreign-born in the U.S. came from Northern and Western Europe, mostly Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany. Seventy years later, the foreign-born population in the U.S. was split between old and new Europe. 45% came from “old” sending countries and 41% from “new” sending countries in eastern and southern Europe.

## 2.1 Legislative Outcome: Roll Call Votes on Landmark Immigration Bills

To assess legislative behavior related to immigration policy, we identified key immigration bills in the 1915–1971 period (the 64th through 91st Congresses) using Stathis’ (2014) compilation of landmark legislation and key bills identified by Tichenor (2002). We selected this time period for two reasons: (1) this period spans many major immigration bills of the 20th century; and, (2) members serving in this period were likely to be identifiable in the 1900–1940 censuses.<sup>6</sup> We begin by focusing on landmark immigration legislation because these bills had high stakes, high visibility and directly determined the key parameters of immigration policy during our time period; importantly, any member casting a vote understood it directly affected the fate of immigrants. Table 1 lists the eight bills that we included in our analysis, and Appendix Section A.1.1 describes the legislation in detail. These bills represented major changes to U.S. immigration policy during the mid-20th century. Five of the bills restricted immigration, and three increased immigration or reduced restrictions. We identified the final roll-call vote in each chamber for each landmark bill—either the vote on final passage or on the conference vote—using the VoteView database (Lewis et al. 2017). Several bills were dropped because final votes on the bill were not recorded; also, in three cases, the final vote occurred to override a presidential veto.<sup>7</sup>

[Table 1 about here.]

We included bills in this time period that Stathis and Tichenor both identified as major legislation and for which there was a recorded roll-call vote on final passage. The time period omits

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<sup>6</sup>Goldin (1994) studies the political economy of immigration restriction in a slightly earlier period, focusing in particular on the anti immigrant literacy test bills passed out of the House 5 times from 1897 to 1917 and out of the Senate 4 times. These bills were vetoed by presidents of both parties. Goldin also explores the votes in the House and Senate to override the presidential vetoes. She finds important district level economic and demographic variables at play: districts with slower wage growth or fewer immigrants were more likely to vote against immigration. Goldin’s analysis, however, does not extend to the characteristics of the MCs.

<sup>7</sup>Veto override votes occurred for the Immigration Act of 1917, the McCarran Internal Security Act and the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act.

the first and last years of the 20th century because we only have access to individual-level census data with names up to 1940. For example, we would have liked to include the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act of 1996 but we would not have been able to match MCs younger than 56 years old. Ultimately, our sample years reflect a balance between covering as much time as possible while still having the ability to match MCs to their census records successfully.

## 2.2 Legislative Outcome: Roll Call Votes on All Immigration Bills

While landmark bills represent the most salient and historically notable immigration votes from the 64th–91st congresses, we also collected data tracking the full set of final passage votes on immigration legislation considered during this time period. This wider set of immigration votes supplements the landmark immigration legislation in several important ways. First, these votes are included in the sample regardless of their outcome; this contrasts with landmark legislation, which gained historical importance precisely because they had important legislative impacts *ex post*. Second, a wider set of votes helps illustrate whether any effects that we observe still hold for votes that are less visible than landmark legislation. Third, this full set of bills allows us to make use of methods, such as regression discontinuity, that require a large amount of data to make precise estimates about the relationship between family immigration history and vote choice.

To construct this sample of immigration votes, we relied upon categorizations from Lewis et al. (2017). Specifically, we started with all bills categorized as “Immigration/Naturalization,” and we again identified whether a vote was for the final passage of an immigration bill.<sup>8</sup> We filtered out any roll-call votes that, based on reading contemporaneous descriptions, were not related to immigration or were simply amendments to landmark immigration bills in the same session as the bill’s passage.

## 2.3 Legislative Outcome: Congressional Speech

Our other primary outcome is congressional speech for the 64th–91st Congresses. To measure speeches on immigration, we drew upon speeches recorded in the *Congressional Record* and assem-

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<sup>8</sup>To ascertain whether a roll call vote was for final passage, we determine whether a vote fell into any of the following categories: (1) labelled as a Final Passage vote in the Political Institutions and Public Choice Roll-Call Database (Crespin and Rohde 2018; Roberts et al. 2018), (2) labelled as a Final Passage vote in the description field in the VoteView data. If no votes were recorded for a bill that met the criteria for (1) or (2), then we checked whether there was a vote for a Final Amendment to the legislation, and if not, a final recorded roll-call vote.

bled in Gentzkow et al. (2019). These authors also construct keywords, which we use in this paper, to identify speeches on 22 substantive topics including immigration.

## 2.4 Identifying Immigration Background

To estimate the effects of family immigration background on MC vote choice, we use individual-level data from the 1900 through 1940 U.S. Censuses. We begin by constructing a new linked sample, locating MCs in the 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940 Federal censuses, based on the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) complete count censuses (Ruggles et al. 2020). In this subsection, we detail the complete count census data and the congressional data, we document the machine learning approach to census linking, and we summarize what the census data says about MCs.

To start, we identify all MCs serving between 1915 and 1971 (the 64th through 91st Congresses). To link these MCs back to the census, we extract their full names, dates of birth, and states of birth from the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. For members who were born abroad (and are consequently very difficult to match to census records), we search for their family backgrounds manually and record the citizenship status of their parents (and grandparents when possible) directly. Members born abroad to at least one U.S. citizen parent are not considered immigrants, as they are citizens from birth.

Census questions vary slightly year to year, but they nonetheless provide a wealth of information for each person we can link. For studying family immigration history, we focus on questions asked about birthplace. All people enumerated in 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 were asked their place of birth and their mother’s and father’s places of birth.<sup>9</sup> Because members of the same households are linked in the enumeration, when we observe MCs as children, we can also observe the place of birth of all their grandparents, using their mothers’ and fathers’ answers to their own parents’ places of birth question.

We link all members to their census records in 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, or 1940 with the linking method described in Feigenbaum (2018).<sup>10</sup> Linking historical records is complicated by the lack of a unique identifier. Instead, we rely on variables like name, place of birth, and date of birth, which

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<sup>9</sup>In 1940, the mother’s and father’s places of birth question was only a sample line question, asked only of 2 people on each 40 person census page.

<sup>10</sup>See Appendix Section A.2.1 for discussion of the merits of this and other census-linking approaches.

should not change over time.<sup>11</sup> Still, noise in our data makes exact matching—requiring an MC to report his or her first and last name, year of birth, and state of birth exactly the same in the census as in our congressional data—impractical and potentially biased.<sup>12</sup> Hand linking records is likely the method most able to distinguish between subtle errors in two records identifying the same person or distinguishing two different people. But it is not practical to apply hand linking to large samples and—even with clear instructions on how to make links—not replicable. Instead, we apply a machine learning approach, training an algorithm to learn to make matches based on a smaller sample of carefully linked data. The algorithm learns from the human how to trade off errors in first names or last names or how large a penalty to apply to potential matches with one or two years off in the year of birth.<sup>13</sup> A priori, the costs of such errors are unknown, so the approach makes the implicit rules used by a human linker explicit. The algorithm uses a wide range of record linkage features to build predictions for matches including Jaro-Winkler string distance and Soundex agreement on first and last name, absolute difference in year of birth, agreement on first and last characters of names, as well as name commonness and state of birth.

Overall, we link 94.1% of the MCs in our study sample to at least one of the five decennial censuses. Our match rates into each of the five censuses—limited to MCs alive in a given census year—are all above 57%, peaking at 68.7% matching into the 1910 census. The true positive rate is 92% in cross-validation: this suggests that the linking algorithm is very efficient, able to identify nearly all of the matches that a human trainer would have made, but doing so at scale and with clearly defined linking rules. In addition, our cross-validation implies that the linking algorithm makes the same choice as a careful and well-trained hand linker 86.3% of the time based on our precision or positive predictive value.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Our use of last names in the linking complicates matching women who might be expected—particularly in the early 20th century—to change names upon marriage. However, during this time period, very few women served in Congress. Only 2% of the MCs in our sample were women.

<sup>12</sup>The set of people who report all their information exactly the same census to census is *not* a random sample of the enumerated people or congress members (Abramitzky et al. 2021b)

<sup>13</sup>Errors in years of birth may be surprising, but are very common. For one, censuses record age, not date or even year of birth. Because censuses are taken on different days in each wave (June 1 in 1900, April 15 in 1910, January 1 in 1920, and April 1 in 1930 and 1940), these ages are noisy. With our data on MCs, we observe birthdate exactly, so we can calculate expected age as of the census. However, censuses were taken by enumerators asking questions of one respondent per household, and ages were often estimated or heaped on the nearest round number or simply misstated. In addition, the transcription process for age may be especially noisy because there are no context clues to help a transcriber determine between a poorly written 2 or 3, for example.

<sup>14</sup>Consistent with the machine learning procedure, our match rates also replicate the match rates of our human trainer in each census. Our match rates are generally higher than common census to census linking attempts for three reasons. First, we start with Congressional biographical data with accurate names, including middle names, and exact

We present three examples of MCs from the linked data in Table 2. Former Speaker of the House Carl Albert was born in Oklahoma in 1908, to a mother from Texas and a father from Missouri. All four of his grandparents were born in the United States as well. Clinton Anderson, a former MC, Senator, and Secretary of Agriculture, was born in 1895 in South Dakota, to a mother from South Dakota and a father who immigrated from Sweden. His maternal grandmother was born in Illinois, his maternal grandfather in Wisconsin. His father’s census records report that Anderson’s paternal grandparents were both born in Sweden as well. Finally, former Boston Mayor, Massachusetts Governor, FCI Danbury inmate, and MC, James Michael Curley was born in Massachusetts in 1874 to Irish immigrant parents. In 1900, his mother reports that her parents were both born in Ireland; though his Irish immigrant father died in 1884, we assume Curley’s paternal grandparents were born in Ireland as well. These examples highlight the diversity of MC family histories. While all three are white men who served in Congress in the 1940s, their immigration backgrounds vary substantially.

[Table 2 about here.]

We take several approaches to measuring immigration history, our concept of interest. In addition to measuring an MC’s own place of birth, we also count the number of foreign-born parents an MC has (0, 1, or 2). As Table 3 reports, the average MC in our sample had 0.41 parents born abroad. We also measure the number of foreign-born grandparents (0 to 4). On average, an MC in our sample had 1.8 foreign-born grandparents. By necessity, any empirical analysis that includes grandparent nativity will have a smaller sample because we could only successfully measure nativity of grandparents when we observed MCs residing in their parents’ home.<sup>15</sup> This missingness occurs most frequently in the early years of our sample, particularly among older MCs who were not living with their parents during the 1900 or 1910 censuses. Across the sample of MCs, 16 percent had both parents foreign born and 36 percent had all grandparents foreign born.

Perhaps surprisingly, we observe little difference in immigration histories across party in our

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dates of birth. Abramitzky et al. (2021b) documents the gains from middle initials and names in linking. Second, MCs are a selected population—majority male, white, and high-status—in ways that have historically increased match rates. Finally, we search for fixed characteristics (place of birth and parents’ place of birth) in multiple censuses, allowing us to include MCs even if we cannot match them in every census.

<sup>15</sup>Grandparent nativity is recovered from questions about mother and father’s place of birth asked of the MC’s mother and father. Also, if the nativity of one grandparent was missing, we made the assumption that the missing grandparent had the same odds as the non-missing grandparents of being foreign born.

sample of votes. Table 3 shows that in the House slightly more Republicans than Democrats had foreign-born grandparents. The differences across party are equally small in the Senate. On the other hand, we do observe notable differences across region that track with the history of American immigration (Abramitzky and Boustan 2017; Lee 2019): Southern MCs from both parties had by far the lowest rates of foreign-born parents and grandparents, and Democrats from the Northeast exhibited greater numbers of foreign-born parents and grandparents than Republicans from the Northeast. Summary variation masks some differences in immigration histories between the parties: in the House, more Republican MCs have family histories of immigration in the early sample years with the trend later reversing.

[Table 3 about here.]

Overall, we observe the number of foreign-born grandparents for slightly under 60% of the sample of voting members and we observe the number of foreign-born parents for 93% of voting members.<sup>16</sup> For those MCs without missing data, we also construct an “Immigration Index” summarizing immigration history with a weighted average over places of own birth, parents’ birth and grandparents’ birth:

$$\text{Immigration Index} = 1 \cdot (\text{Foreign-Born MC}) + \frac{\# \text{ Foreign-Born Parents}}{2} + \frac{\# \text{ Foreign-Born Grandparents}}{4} \quad (1)$$

ranging from 0 (all grandparents, parents, and MC born in the United States) to 3 (MC and all ancestors foreign born).

We also make use of surnames as a proxy for family immigration history. We take the 90 to 140 million people enumerated in each decennial census and calculate—for each surname—the share foreign born, mean number of foreign-born parents, mean number of foreign-born grandparents and average Immigration Index. We refer to these surname-based measures of immigration history as *Surname Scores*. We performed each surname calculation by census region since the same surname can denote meaningfully different immigration histories depending on region of the country. We then matched an individual’s surname to the Surname Scores calculated for the census preceding their election to Congress and the relevant region (See Appendix Section A.2.2).

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<sup>16</sup>Appendix Tables A.18 and A.19 display summary statistics for MCs who cast landmark immigration votes and all MCs, respectively. We exclude MCs who were foreign born as citizens (such as those born to Ambassadors or military personnel abroad). We code foreign-born non-citizen MCs as having foreign-born parents and grandparents.

### 3 Roll-Call Vote Analysis

Family immigration background could influence legislative behavior and the effects could be decreasing in generational distance. To test this, we evaluate the relationship between an MC’s immigration history and vote choice on (1) key 20th Century immigration votes and (2) all immigration bills from the 64th–91st congresses. We employ a model of the form

$$y_{ib} = \alpha + \delta \cdot \text{Immigration History}_i + X \cdot \beta + \gamma_b + \epsilon_{ib} \quad (2)$$

where  $i$  indexes individual MCs and  $b$  indexes bills.  $X$  is a matrix of covariates including a measure of foreign-born population in a state/district,<sup>17</sup> indicators for chamber, party, and census region, as well as controls for age and tenure. Our main specification pools across bills and therefore also includes  $\gamma_b$ , a bill fixed effect. We also analyze subsamples of the data by bill, chamber, and expected vote choice to evaluate heterogeneity in the effects of immigration experience on vote choice.

For each of the bills listed in Table 1 and for the broader set of immigration bills, we determined whether a “yea” or “nay” vote best aligned with a political position generally favoring a less restrictive immigration policy.<sup>18</sup> We coded MCs who cast pro immigrant votes in this direction with a 1 and those who did not with a 0. We excluded MCs who abstained from voting from the sample.<sup>19</sup>

We find a strong relationship between immigration history—measured either by foreign-born MCs, number of foreign-born parents, number of foreign-born grandparents, or our summary immigration index—and pro-immigration votes, as we report in Table 4. We see this relationship both for landmark bills (Panel A) and all immigration bills (Panel B).<sup>20</sup> We focus first on landmark

<sup>17</sup>We use census data to calculate foreign-born population in a state or district. County-level data is mapped to congressional districts using the shapefiles from Lewis et al. (2013) and the equal area approach commonly used to apportion geographical data in historical work (Hornbeck 2010).

<sup>18</sup>Yeas and Nays in the regression analyses include announced votes and paired votes. To determine whether members cast votes in favor of or against permissive immigration policies, two researchers manually coded each vote as either pro immigration or anti immigration based on the text of the bill along with the contemporaneous newspaper coverage of the legislation and discussion of the legislation on the floor of congress. In the few cases where coders disagreed, we conducted additional research until we had enough information to resolve how to code the vote.

<sup>19</sup>Especially in this era missed votes occurred frequently and were due more to travel and scheduling limitations than strategic absences.

<sup>20</sup>In the appendix, we report the coefficients on census region, age, and tenure. See Tables A.4 and A.5.



bills. In the odd columns, when the only controls we include are bill and chamber fixed effects, we find that a foreign-born MC has a more than 25 percentage point higher rate of casting a pro vote; having one foreign-born parent is associated with a more than 16 percentage point increase; and having one foreign-born grandparent is associated with a more than 8 percentage point increase. In each case, the effects are substantively and statistically significant. The advantage of such a sparse specification is that we do not have to worry about bias induced by controlling for post-treatment variables.

[Table 4 about here.]

As we show in the even columns of Table 4, we continue to find a strong relationship between immigration history and pro-immigration votes when we include a host of control variables known to be associated with roll-call vote choice including foreign-born population, party, age, tenure and region. Including controls for party and foreign-born population deserves particular attention. Given that party serves as a very strong predictor of vote on most roll-call votes, it will be particularly interesting if immigration history explains variation in vote choice when conditioning on party. However, one concern that arises is that an individual MC’s immigration history influences choice of party, and conditioning on this choice induces bias. While we cannot discount that possibility entirely, we think the effect of a marginal immigrant/non-immigrant grandparent does not strongly influence party choice since the parties have roughly even rates of parent and grandparent foreign birth. One might also worry that districts with a large share of foreign born residents both select representatives with immigrant backgrounds and select representatives that vote for expansive immigration policies. As a result, state or district composition could drive the positive correlations observed in Table 4. To check for this possibility, we determined the number of foreign born residents of each MC’s constituency (congressional districts for the House and states for the Senate).<sup>21</sup> Controlling for other factors, we find that MCs with one foreign-born parent cast pro-immigration votes at a rate 8 percentage points higher than those with none. Similarly, an additional foreign-born grandparent increased pro-immigration voting rates by 3.1 percentage points. Importantly, these effect sizes obtain even when controlling for political party and foreign-born

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<sup>21</sup>Foreign-born residents in a district correlates very highly with US-born residents who have foreign-born parents. Thus, we consider the foreign-born population covariate to be a more general proxy for constituencies with histories of immigration.

population. Thus, we observe these findings over and above whatever extent party identification determined one’s position on immigration.<sup>22</sup>

When we turn to all immigration bills in Panel B of Table 4, we find similar results. Though the magnitudes of the associations between family immigration history and roll-call voting shrink, we continue to find that MCs with more recent immigrant background are more supportive of pro-immigration legislation. Again, the inclusion of controls for district foreign-born population, party, and other covariates shrink but do not eliminate the associations.

Though there is a sizable drop in the coefficients of interest when we move from odd to even columns, we are not overly concerned about omitted variable bias and selection on unobservables. The movement in our coefficients comes with substantial movement in our R-squareds, suggesting that the controls added in even columns have a lot of explanatory power. Controls for party and district foreign-born composition are key here. Following Oster (2019), we test how much additional explanatory power unobservables would have to have to push our coefficients of interest on family immigration history to zero. We report the  $\delta^*$  terms in Table 4. For landmark bills (Panel A), they range from 5.98 to 1.31—compared to 1, Oster’s rule of thumb for  $\delta^*$ —implying that unobservables would have to have significantly more explanatory power than the controls we do include.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, for all immigration votes (Panel B), the Oster  $\delta^*$  terms range from 2.70 to 1.91, again suggesting that the inclusion of omitted variables are unlikely to eliminate our findings.

Our main coefficients on MC immigrant ancestry are also robust to a rich set of controls, as we document in Figure 2. Moving beyond the controls in the even columns of Table 4, our story remains intact when we (1) include three controls for the log of the population of foreign-born from New Europe, Old Europe, and Non-Europe in each district to more precisely control for immigrant composition; (2) include controls for the log of the black population and the log of the urban population in each district; (3) include a control for the vote share for the Democratic candidate in the most recent Presidential election to control for district political preferences; (4) include controls in the first and second dimensions of DW-Nominate scores for MCs; (5) include state fixed effects

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<sup>22</sup>Though our results are stronger for Democrats than Republicans, the patterns generally hold when we analyze within party, as we show in Tables A.9 and A.10.

<sup>23</sup>In Appendix Table A.7, we show that when we deplete the reserve of theoretically plausible unobservable variables by including the first two dimensions of DW-Nominate, several other district-level controls (total population, urban population, number of farms), and more, the Oster  $\delta^*$ s remain above or close to 1. Further, our estimated coefficients of interest fall only slightly and remain statistically significant.

(see also Table A.11); and (6) include local time trends by interacting state fixed effects with year.<sup>24</sup>

[Figure 2 about here.]

Across all models in Table 4, we find a positive and statistically significant effect of immigration experience on voting in favor of immigration in Congress.<sup>25</sup> The coefficients decline by roughly half with each preceding generation’s immigration history, but recall that our measures of MC immigrant ancestry are counts: MCs are either foreign-born or not, but they could have 0, 1, or 2 foreign-born parents and 0 to 4 foreign-born grandparents. Thus, the effect of immigration background on voting is similar for a foreign born MC, a US-born MC with two immigrant parents, and a US-born MC with four immigrant grandparents, but the effect is smaller for an MC with one immigrant grandparent as compared to one immigrant parent. This suggests that the proximity to immigration influences legislator preferences and behaviors but that the effects of family history fade slowly.<sup>26</sup>

In the appendix, we outline a number of additional roll-call results. First, we estimate specifications for each major immigration vote bill by bill (Appendix A.3.4). When estimated individually, the sign on the coefficients for immigrant parents and grandparents is in the right direction for each vote with one exception in the Senate. The bill by bill results appear stronger for House legislation than Senate. Second, family history of immigration also helps explain ideologically-surprising or “miscast” votes on immigration issues (Appendix Section A.3.1). Foreign-born parents or grandparents predict a reduced rate of diverging from pre-existing ideology when an MC is predicted to vote in favor of immigration and an increased rate of diverging when an MCs pre-existing ideology predicts a vote against permissive immigration policy. Third, we note the secondary implications of our results for descriptive representation. In Appendix A.3.3 we outline how demand for descriptive representatives in districts with high foreign-born populations has translated into selection of MCs with immigrant backgrounds; in turn, these MCs have supported permissive legislation on

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<sup>24</sup>In Appendix Table A.8, we also show that our main results are generally robust to the double or debiased machine learning procedure proposed by Chernozhukov et al. (2018). In short, we “learn” very flexible mappings from our set of control variable to our variable of interest (MC immigrant ancestry) and to our roll call outcomes with a random forest model. Though the coefficients on an MC’s own foreign-born status are not robust (possibly because such a small share of the sample is foreign-born), the other coefficients are.

<sup>25</sup>When we exclude foreign born MCs from the sample, and re-estimate the effect of having a foreign-born parent or a foreign-born grandparent, we find nearly identical results to those in Table 4. See Appendix Table A.6.

<sup>26</sup>When we saturate the model in Table A.12, we see much larger estimated coefficients on parent and grandparent foreign-born status than on own foreign-born status.

immigration at higher rates.

The results in Table 4 suggest that the ideological effects of family background do not just reflect the effects of electoral incentives on roll call voting on immigration policy. That is, despite the fact that electorates with large shares of immigrants (and their descendants) might prefer more lenient immigration policy and might be more likely to elect representatives with a family history of immigration, the relationship between MC ancestry and policy survives a wide set of district-level controls. In the next two subsections, we continue to probe this relationship in analyses that allow us to distinguish further between family background effects and electoral incentive effects.

### 3.1 Standardizing Effect Sizes

What are the relative weights MCs put on their own personal background versus their district’s composition? By standardizing our independent and dependent variables in Table 5, we can provide a quantitative answer. In Panel A, the outcome is roll-call voting on landmark bills. We see that own immigration status is roughly as important as district composition (columns 1 and 2). Moreover, family history—parents, grandparents, or immigration index—is three to four times as important as district composition (columns 3, 5 and 7) and also also three to four times as important as party identification (columns 4, 6 and 8). These results generally hold for all bills (Panel B).

[Table 5 about here.]

The results in Table 5 imply that not only does immigrant family background matter to legislator’s, but the relative weight they place on it is substantially larger than the weight on district composition.

### 3.2 Regression Discontinuity Analysis

In the previous analyses, we demonstrated the strong correlation between an MC’s immigration background and vote choices on immigration policy. But immigration history might correlate strongly with unobserved variables, such as district characteristics, that also correlate with vote choice. Perhaps districts with a preference for inclusive immigration policies elect candidates with immigrant backgrounds and thus district-level preferences, not legislator’s personal background and preferences, are driving our results?

Figure 3 plots the relationship between a constituencies’ foreign-born population share and the number of foreign-born grandparents of the lawmakers that they elect. The relationship is close to linear, and it suggests that a district’s composition is correlated with both the immigrant background of lawmakers and with the votes cast by lawmakers representing those districts. This correlation is a challenge to estimating the causal effect of lawmaker background (or of district composition).

[Figure 3 about here.]

To address this issue, we implement a regression discontinuity design (RDD) in which we compare the voting records for officials from districts who *narrowly* elected a candidate with an immigrant background to districts who narrowly did not elect a candidate with an immigrant background.<sup>27</sup>

We want to be clear about what our RDD can (and cannot) estimate. Family immigration history is an immutable characteristic and could influence a person’s entire life. The experiment generated by narrow elections between candidates with and without immigrant background allows us to unpack several key determinants affecting how MCs vote on legislation, but it does not necessarily allow us to compare the legislative behavior of two otherwise identical MCs. An immigrant background is correlated with other characteristics too, and randomization of who wins through close elections may not entirely separate the effect of immigrant background from other personal characteristics. However, because the same district could be represented by an MC with or without an immigrant background, the RDD does allow us to better hold fixed district composition and thus the electoral incentives facing an MC. Thus, this empirical exercise is particularly useful for distinguishing between the effects of electoral incentives and personal legislator ideology.

To implement our RDD, we identify the electoral contests immediately preceding the term in which immigration-related legislation was voted on. For this research design, we focus on the full set of immigration final passage votes from the 64th–91st congresses. Our design requires that we restrict our sample to a subset of elections in which a candidate with an immigrant background faces a candidate with no immigrant background and the outcome is close.<sup>28</sup> We draw upon election

<sup>27</sup>See Appendix A.4 for more detail on the RDD, including threshold and bandwidth robustness checks.

<sup>28</sup>Thus, we do not have enough statistical power to apply this research design to landmark votes only, which occurred in only a handful of years during our time period. Combining these restrictions and using a  $\pm 5$  threshold for estimating the discontinuity leads to just a few hundred effective observations.

data that includes the names and vote shares for winning and losing candidates.<sup>29</sup>

We are unable to match losing candidates to the census—to determine their family immigration history—because we lack even the most basic information on their ages and places of birth. Instead, for the RDD analysis, we impute all candidates’ immigration histories based on Surname Scores.<sup>30</sup> That is, based on surname and region for each candidate we impute immigration history based on the average number of foreign-born individuals, parents and grandparents for everyone recorded in the Census with that surname. For the sake of consistency, we use this surname-based approach for election winners as well.

How do we identify close elections where one candidate has a Surname Score that denotes an immigrant background and where one candidate does not? We coarsen the key measure of immigration history into a binary variable that denotes whether or not a candidate is considered to have a family history of immigration based on their surname. We chose a simple rule of thumb and set the binary indicator for a family immigration history equal to one for MCs with a Surname Score in the top half of the distribution for their region. We set the indicator to zero for MCs with a Surname Score in the bottom half of the distribution for their region. Finally, so that someone with a surname in the 50.1 percentile would not be considered treated and compared to someone in the 49.9th percentile as a control, we applied a donut and excluded surnames that fell in the interval  $(0.45, 0.55]$ .<sup>31</sup> This approach restricts the sample to elections with one candidate with an immigrant background and one without such a background based on these thresholds for the Surname Score. We also show that this particular threshold is not consequential to the results, which are robust at the other possible thresholds too (see Appendix Section A.4.1).

To make our procedure concrete, in the 1910 Census someone with the surname “FEIGENBAUM” residing in the northeast averaged 3.98 foreign-born grandparents. This ranked in the 85th percentile in terms of foreign-born grandparents. Conversely, someone with the surname “PALMER,” which averaged 1.21 foreign-born grandparents in 1910, ranked in the 27th percentile of surnames in terms of foreign-born grandparents. Thus, a close election between candidates

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<sup>29</sup>We focus on the top two vote getters. We exclude at-large House districts; often these districts attracted many candidates from the same party or had multiple winners.

<sup>30</sup>Appendix A.2.2 provides details and illustrates the close relationship between Surname Score and actual immigration history.

<sup>31</sup> $1(\text{Immigration History}_i)$  equals one when  $F_{SS}(\text{Surname Score}_i) > 0.5 + x$ , where  $x = 0.05$ ; and,  $1(\text{Immigration History}_i)$  equals zero when  $F_{SS}(\text{Surname Score}_i) \leq 0.5 - x$ , where again  $x = 0.05$ . All observations in  $(0.5 - x, 0.5 + x]$  are excluded from the sample.

named Feigenbaum and Palmer would generate as good as random variation in immigrant background as the winner would represent the same district in Congress, but possess different (imputed) immigration histories.

We estimate an equation of the form

$$y_{ib} = \alpha + \theta \cdot 1(\text{Immigration History Winner}_{ib}) + f(V_{ib}) + \gamma_b + \epsilon_{ib} \quad (3)$$

where  $1(\text{Immigration History Winner}_i)$  denotes that the *winner* of the election has a Surname Score in the top of the distribution for the relevant measure of immigration history.  $\theta$ , the parameter of primary interest, provides an estimate of the effect on vote choice of the as-if random assignment of an MC classified as having an Immigration History as compared to the vote choice by an MC classified as not having an Immigration History. The outcome variable  $y_{ib}$  denotes whether or not an MC cast a “pro” immigration vote, just as in the previous section. To estimate the RDD, we calculate optimal bandwidths and also use rule-of-thumb bandwidths of  $\pm 5$  and  $\pm 10$  for each regression. The term  $f(V_{ib})$  is a function of the winning candidate’s vote margin, which determines who wins the election and therefore treatment status, and we use a local linear specification estimated separately on each side of the threshold.

[Table 6 about here.]

Estimating the effects separately using our four different measures of immigration history—self, parents, grandparents and Immigration Index—we find a positive effect of having an immigration history on the probability of casting pro-immigration votes across all four measures. The size of the point estimates varies only slightly depending on bandwidth. Table 6 reports full results for the calculated optimal bandwidths along with rule-of-thumb bandwidths of  $\pm 5$  and  $\pm 10$ . When estimating the effect of an MC’s own foreign-born status on pro-immigration votes, our results suggest a statistically and substantively significant increase of 10 to 13 percentage points in the rate of casting a pro-immigration vote (columns 1-3). Use of optimal bandwidth,  $\pm 5$  or  $\pm 10$  appears to make no appreciable difference for the magnitude or significance of this result. For parents, grandparents, and our immigration index, shown in columns 4 to 12, the estimates retain similar levels of statistical significance. When using an optimal bandwidth, the effect sizes are

slightly smaller than for the MC’s own, registering a roughly 8 to 9 percentage point effect. Across the board, these results appear in line with MC family immigration history causing MCs to cast pro-immigration votes.

Figure 4 illustrates the main findings graphically using a linear functional form. The figures model the discontinuity between a narrow loss and a narrow win for a candidate with an immigration history (based on Surname Scores for each of our four measures) as compared to a candidate without such a history. As is evident, there is a visible discontinuity in the voting record at the threshold between a narrow loss and a narrow win for a candidate with an immigrant background.

[Figure 4 about here.]

These results help confirm the patterns we observed in Tables 4 and 5, and they suggest that immigration history leads an MC to cast votes in favor of more permissive immigration policy independent of district composition. We observe the strongest effects when the surname indicates the MC himself or herself likely had an immigrant background, but the effects are also positive, of a notable magnitude, and statistically significant for all other measures as well. When we vary the threshold for classifying a legislator as having an immigrant family history—e.g., what percentile Surname Score indicates immigration history—the same results obtain (Section A.4.1 and Figure A.4). We also confirm our findings with a battery of additional robustness checks in Appendix A.4.2. Appendix Table A.15 shows that the results are not sensitive to choosing a threshold other than at the 50-50 cutoff between winning and losing. Appendix Table A.16 shows that the effects remain robust when dropping elections right at the threshold, an assurance that the findings are not sensitive to strategic sorting or a phenomenon where an immigrant candidate who narrowly wins is more likely to moderate or (alternatively) emphasize their pro-immigrant views precisely when winning a narrow election.

Finally, Appendix Table A.14 shows that all district-level covariates are uncorrelated with an immigrant winning a narrow election.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, when we look at the characteristics of MCs in the districts with narrow elections in the Congress *before* the close election, we see balance across all MC-level covariates.<sup>33</sup> Consistent with the fact that a close election between immigrant and

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<sup>32</sup>District-level characteristics include region, the foreign-born population, black population, sex ratio, number of farms, urban population and total population.

<sup>33</sup>MC-level characteristics include age, party, tenure in Congress, sex, and race.



non-immigrant candidates may not hold all other personal characteristics constant (since other personal characteristics correlate with immigrant status), we do observe that immigrant candidates who narrowly win elections are slightly more likely to be Democrats and to have greater seniority than when a non-immigrant candidate wins. Nonetheless, looking across the range of different placebo outcomes that we test, we do not find meaningfully more statistically significant results than would occur by chance with  $p < 0.10$  when looking across the twenty possible placebo outcome variables (e.g., 2 in 20 placebo outcomes).

### 3.3 Summary of Roll-Call Vote Analysis

Overall, we interpret these findings to suggest that immigration history, even two generations back, is highly predictive of pro-immigration vote choices; this pattern holds even when accounting for one’s party and underlying political ideology. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that these findings do not hinge on the composition of the district electing MCs.<sup>34</sup> When we inspect standardized results, we see that the relative effect of family history is larger than those of district composition.

## 4 Congressional Speech and Immigrant Background

We next evaluate how an immigrant family history relates to an MC’s presentation of self through floor speech. Floor speeches “increase members’ visibility and voice in the legislative process” and provide chances for MCs to emphasize a policy area to their colleagues, constituents and the press (Pearson and Dancey 2011). At the same time, speech serves as a less costly signal than a vote on a key policy issue. Speech is not binding; listeners interpret a speech’s meaning, which can be revised and reinterpreted in ways that a roll-call vote cannot. However, congressional speech is not entirely cheap talk; by taking a position on the record, MCs signal their views and priorities, and they may face consequences later for taking votes contrary to their speeches.

For each Congress (64th–91st), we count the number of distinct floor speeches that include phrases related to the topic of immigration,  $FloorSpeech_{it}$  for each MC  $i$  in congress  $t$ . We estimate the same model as described in Equation 2, but now replace the outcome measuring roll-call votes with a measure of floor speech  $\log(1 + FloorSpeech_{it})$ .<sup>35</sup> We also include Congress and chamber

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<sup>34</sup>Differential patterns of missing data from census linking also do not appear to explain the results. Section A.3.2 replicates Table 4 using Surname Scores, which exist for all MCs.

<sup>35</sup>Appendix Table A.13 reports results for this regression using the Inverse Hyperbolic Sine of the Immigration

fixed effects.

Table 7 Panel A presents the results. When we do not include covariates, we observe a statistically significant and positive relationship between familial immigration history and floor speeches on immigration, with the one exception of whether an MC herself or himself was foreign born. We estimate that having a foreign-born parent increases the number of speeches including mentions of immigration by roughly 7.4 percent; a foreign-born grandparent registers a 4.6 percent increase. When we include covariates, the coefficients on our measures of family immigration history remain positive and distinguishable from zero.

[Table 7 about here.]

Floor speech and roll-call votes are two canonical forms of legislative behavior. However, MCs can and have historically used their voting and strategic communication tools differently, and we find that is the case in our context as well. Specifically, the strength of the effect of family immigration history on speech appears weaker than for roll-call voting. The differences are apparent when we standardize our independent and dependent variables in Panel B of Table 7. When the outcome is speech, the relative importance of these covariates flips from what was saw in Table 5 with roll-call voting. In no cases is family history as important as district composition and composition has a relative importance much larger than that of immigration history: for example, a one standard deviation change in district foreign-born population yields a 0.132 change in speech on immigration, while for foreign-born parents the effect is just 0.047 (column 2). Party also does not retain significant explanatory power for immigration-related speech.

Consistent with the comparison using standardized variables, we also see null effects in the RDD with immigration speech as the outcome (see Appendix Table A.17). In contrast to the RDD for roll-call voting on immigration bills, the results for speech are not robustly distinguishable from zero and fluctuate depending on specification and bandwidth.

This pattern of results suggests that MCs who represented districts with substantial foreign-born populations weight district composition more heavily than their own family histories when choosing whether to speak on immigration. Such floor speeches allow MCs to engage in position

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Speech count. Using this approach, or the natural log plus one of the speech count, makes no meaningful difference for the results.

taking, essentially responding to the incentives in place for their district. Local press often reported directly on speeches given by a district’s representatives.<sup>36</sup> As a result, composition of the district appears to have been a key factor driving this form of behavior. On the other hand, MCs weighted family immigration history more strongly than district composition for roll-call votes.

This subtlety in how family immigration history affects legislative behavior appears broadly consistent with existing theories on the interplay of strategic communication and voting for MCs. Cormack (2016) distinguishes between MCs’ behavioral and communicated ideal points (the former is based on roll-call vote choices, the latter on public statements). Because “a voter’s ability and willingness to expend resources to accurately learn legislator ideology is small” (Cormack 2016; Carpini and Keeter 1996), MCs often have more flexibility with their votes than their communication, and their specific choices regarding communication will depend on the composition of their district (such as the ratio of base to swing voters). Districts with a greater share of base voters (whose ideal points are more extreme than either the district median or the swing-voter median) than swing voters will push MCs to highlight votes that are more extreme.

In the immigration policy context, we observe district composition playing a similar roll. Districts with larger immigrant population shares—where it was plausible that immigrants comprised a significant portion of an MC’s base—also saw more immigration-related floor speeches. Given that personal immigration history registered a large effect on roll-call votes but a smaller effect on speech, the general pattern of results appears consistent with a model where personal ideology and experience explains a meaningful share of roll-call voting behavior, but the degree to which legislators emphasize these positions depends on the degree of alignment with a member’s base constituency.

## 5 Mechanisms Linking MC Immigrant Background to Policymaking

Having established that more recent familial immigration history leads MCs to cast roll-call votes in support of more permissive immigration policies (with more mixed results for speech related to im-

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<sup>36</sup>See *Schlagend, Argumente gegen Einwanderungsbill, In der Haus-Debatte vorgebracht* (1914) as an example of an American-based German-language newspaper reporting at length on speeches by representatives in the congressional debates on literacy test legislation. An English-language translation of article’s sub-header reads: “The battle of speeches raged for several hours. [...] Friends of immigrants fought their hardest against the literacy test clause.”

migration), we now turn to the possible mechanisms that may help explain the relationship between immigration background and legislative behavior. We focus on four possible mechanisms: in-group identity, information, correlated preferences, and broader family traits shared by all migrants. Our results point to in-group identity as the key mechanism.

## 5.1 In-Group Identity

Aspects of identity can be an important component in economic decision making (Akerlof and Kranton 2000; Kranton 2016) and identity’s effects likely extend to political choices—even of professional political actors—as well. As immigrants or the children or grandchildren of immigrants, MCs are members of an identity group. That identity—and the in-group it forms—could emerge at different levels including nation of origin or a more general descendants of immigrants in-group. In this subsection, we show two ways in which an in-group identity mechanism plays a role in our findings. First, we show that when an MC’s immigrant family background is more visible, they are more likely to support policy that increases immigration. Second, when we examine particular landmark bills that restricted immigration differentially by origin and parse family history by origin-region, we see identity boundaries within the immigrant group become more salient.

### 5.1.1 Visible Indicators of Immigrant Background

The visibility of one’s background, and the impressions held by others, may influence legislative behavior. We examine how visible indicators of an immigrant background influence an MC’s decision-making on immigration roll-call votes, holding *actual* immigration history constant.

Table 8 reports the results of regressions where we include the measures of family immigration history as well as Surname Scores for each MC. This approach decomposes family immigration history into an MC’s actual family history and the public perception of family immigration history based on population-level statistics. Consider an MC who has one foreign-born parent but a surname that does not indicate a recent family history of immigration (for example, “Smith” averaged 0.03 foreign-born parents among people in the South in 1930). Now compare this to someone who also has one foreign-born parent but who possesses a surname suggesting a high probability of an immigrant background (for example, “Sundstrom” indicated on average 1.56 foreign-born parents for someone born at the turn of the century in the Northeast). This estimation procedure identifies

whether this type of variation in surname leads to meaningfully different behavior on immigration roll-call votes. Visible indicators of an immigrant background could lead to adopting more permissive attitudes on immigration.

[Table 8 about here.]

Our estimates appear to bear out this hypothesis. Across all four specifications and in both the landmark sample (Panel A) and the full sample (Panel B), the coefficient on the surname score variable registers as equal to or bigger than the magnitude of the coefficient on actual immigration history. The difference appears most extreme for an MC’s own foreign-born status; this result likely occurs because while few MCs were themselves born abroad, a surname indicating a significant probability of foreign birth also suggests a likelihood of foreign-born parents and grandparents, which we know also influences vote choice. For our other measures, the size of the coefficients are roughly equal and we cannot reject the null hypothesis of equality between the coefficients.

There are several possible mechanisms that could cause an MC with an immigrant surname to vote differently than an MC whose surname does not indicate recent immigration history. For example, when MCs have surnames visibly identifying their family histories of immigration, their constituents might view them as “descriptive representatives” and expect them to take pro-immigrant positions on legislation. An immigrant surname might boost the election chances of an MC in a district with immigrant constituents, in turn reinforcing a role as a descriptive representative. A second possibility is that a surname denoting a family history of immigration influences an MC’s sense of group boundaries, leading to subtly different legislative behavior. Third, having an immigrant surname could mean an MC is treated “like an immigrant” by others for his or her whole life and this experience could affect voting. While we cannot distinguish between these processes, the effect remains the same: being easily identifiable as having an immigrant background (holding actual background constant) correlates with increased support for permissive immigration policies.

### 5.1.2 Nation of Origin

While “immigrant” or “descendant of immigrants” is one salient dimension of MC background, it elides variation in immigrant experience by country or continent of origin. Immigration restriction bills can be coded as pro or anti immigration, but the legislation is often more complex: as an

example, while the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924 severely curtailed immigration from Italy, the quotas were non-binding on Irish immigrants. These targeted restrictions allow us to assess the importance of group boundaries.

In this section, we show that region of origin mattered for immigration votes. Before World War II, MCs with family trees rooted in southern and eastern Europe (the “New European” source countries during the Age of Mass Migration), were more likely to vote against immigration restriction bills than MCs of “Old European” stock, and subtleties about the exact restrictions mattered as well.<sup>37</sup> After WWII, particularly for broadly permissive bills that reshaped American immigration policy—in particular, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—the effects of MC immigrant backgrounds were similar, whether the MCs’ parents or grandparents came from New or Old Europe or the rest of the world.

We start by examining the three immigration restriction bills of the interwar era (Table 9 Panel A). We regress a dummy for pro-immigration votes on MC immigrant family history, dividing origins by region: New Europe, Old Europe, and Non Europe. Specifically, we count the number of parents (0, 1, or 2) and number of grandparents (0 to 4) who are born in each region, with US-born parents and grandparents as the reference group. Though MCs with any (recent) European family immigration history are more likely to vote against the three immigration restriction bills, the effects are much larger for MCs with more parents or grandparents from New Europe.<sup>38</sup> Each of these bills symbolically and practically targeted immigrant populations other than those from Old Europe. The Immigration Act (1917) primarily implemented a literacy test (and also included exemptions for close family members of current immigrants). The Immigration Quota Act (1921) was projected to alter the distribution of immigrants such that Old Europe source countries would comprise 55% of immigrants and New Europe countries would comprise 45%; the Reed-Johnson Act aimed to further tip the balance to 84% Old Europe and 16% New Europe (Tichenor 2002, p. 145). In sum, in the moments leading up to final passage, each of these bills appeared to target immigrants from places other than Old Europe most harshly, though to varying degrees.

The results in Table 9 Panel A identify conditions under which the general tendency towards

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<sup>37</sup>We base these codings on Goldin (1994). Section A.2.4 in the Appendix lists the countries and regions that comprise Old Europe and New Europe, drawing on IPUMS birthplace codes.

<sup>38</sup>The effects of Non-European immigration history is a bit noisier and harder to interpret, but in these Congresses, this group is much smaller.

permissive immigration legislation held by those with immigrant backgrounds may break down somewhat. When restrictive immigration policies targeted specific immigrant sub-groups (i.e., New Europe immigrants), country of origin operates as a key predictor of MC roll-call voting. We implement hypothesis tests with the null that the coefficient on New Europe Parents (Grandparents) equals the coefficient on Old Europe Parents (Grandparents). For the Immigration Act (1917), which implemented a literacy test but did not drastically alter the balance of New Europe immigrants, the difference in coefficients is relatively fuzzy. We cannot reject the null of no difference at  $p = 0.10$  for Old Europe versus New Europe parents or grandparents. On the other hand, for the Immigration Quota Act and Johnson-Reed Act, both of which placed stricter quotas on New Europe immigrants, we can reject the null of no difference for parents and grandparents at  $p < 0.01$  (columns 3, 4 and 6) and  $p < 0.05$  (column 5).

Did the patterns change after WWII? Here we focus on four bills from the House of Representatives: the McCarran Internal Security Act, the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act, the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Table 9 Panel B). The McCarran Internal Security Act, enacted over Truman’s veto, targeted Communists early in the Cold War. One provision relevant for our study: immigrants could have citizenship revoked if found in violation of the law within five years of naturalization. Old European heritage led to voting pro immigrant (against the act); New European heritage (columns 1 and 2) did as well, though with an effect of a smaller magnitude. Enacted two years later, the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act resembled in some ways the pre-WWII immigration restriction bills, retaining a quota system. MCs with New Europe immigration history were much more likely to oppose it than those from Old Europe (columns 3 and 4).

[Table 9 about here.]

But while the McCarran-Walter bill activated identity based on national origins just as pre-WWII restriction bills had, the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 appear different. MC immigrant background had similar (positive) effects on casting a permissive vote, regardless of where those MCs’ families came from originally. None of the effects estimated in columns 5, 6, 7, or 8 of Table 9 Panel B allow us to reject the null of no difference between Old Europe and New Europe coefficients.

These results suggest that when MCs faced a vote on legislation restricting immigration of people with family backgrounds similar to themselves, they were more likely to oppose the bill. While immigrants of all backgrounds had higher probabilities of opposing immigration restrictions, legislation targeting people of different backgrounds produced different levels of opposition. Group boundaries at the level of *nation of origin*—not just a general preference for permissive immigration policy—best explains the observed pattern of legislative behavior.

## 5.2 Information

The second possible mechanism we explore is information. In contrast to MCs with no (recent) foreign-born ancestry, MCs with a family history of immigration might possess more accurate information about immigration (and thus about the effects of restricting or liberalizing immigration policy). These MCs have first-hand experience with immigrants and immigration that could make them more empathetic to the plight of new immigrants. They might better understand the efficiency gains from immigration. Or, as a particularly successful descendant of immigrants, they might recognize, through introspection, the (high) potential upward mobility of immigrant to the US (Abramitzky et al. 2021a). Wherever this information comes from precisely, the effect would be the same and consistent with what we have found: MCs with an immigrant background would be more likely to vote in favor of more immigration.

Though the information mechanism is a challenging one to assess, our results highlighting the role of visibility (e.g., immigrant surnames) in the previous subsection are useful in appraising support for it. We see no reason that having a surname signalling an immigrant family history should influence one’s level of information about immigration. Thus, our finding on the strong role of immigrant visibility, which highlights the importance of in-group identity, appears inconsistent with the information mechanism explaining the bulk of the relationship between family immigration background and legislative behavior.

## 5.3 Correlated Preferences

Our third possible mechanism asks whether MCs might support immigration for ideologically strategic reasons. Efforts to shape the electorate—usually through gerrymandering but also through selective enfranchisement or disenfranchisement—date to at least the founding era. But immigration



also changes the electorate. Potential immigrants, or their children, could eventually naturalize and become citizens and subsequently vote. If these future voters have political leanings aligned with MCs with immigrant family histories, then ideologically-motivated MCs might view increased immigration as a tool for bending policy in their preferred direction. One possibility comes from Giuliano and Tabellini (2020): in American history, there is stronger support for an expanded welfare state among immigrants than the US-born. In this case, lawmakers might support permissive immigration policies because inflows of immigrants to their districts would help build a constituency more likely to support their preferred policies. Support for immigration in this case would be just one of several interrelated policy positions all driven by statistical discrimination to fulfill a political objective rather than by a lawmaker’s group affinity.

However, as we show in this subsection, there is a sharp distinction between support for permissive immigration and other liberal policies. Controlling for other factors, lawmakers with an immigrant background do not favor liberal policies in topics associated with support for the welfare state (or in other policy areas) at a level that would suggest their strong support for increased immigration is a strategic attempt to change their future constituents. Instead, we find that immigrant family history is uniquely important for immigration policy.<sup>39</sup>

We also view this mechanism as unlikely based on timing. Immigrants could only naturalize after five years and naturalization was far from universal (Shertzer 2016). While non-citizen immigrants were able to vote in 24 states and territories in the mid 19th century, by the start of our period only a handful of states still allowed non-citizens to vote (Henderson 2017).<sup>40</sup> Combined with high levels of geographic mobility among immigrants (Biavaschi and Facchini 2020), it appears unlikely that MCs could expect to alter the ideological make-up of their constituents through immigration.

To explore the other policy areas that immigrant ancestry might correlate with as well as the magnitudes of those relationships, we compute the share of bills in different topic areas where immigration family history—specifically the Immigration Index measure—was a statistically significant predictor of liberal roll-call voting.

[Figure 5 about here.]

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<sup>39</sup>The results in this subsection also underscore that the link from family immigration history matters to immigration legislation is not just one small part of a larger effect of immigration family on roll call votes more generally.

<sup>40</sup>Four states repealed non-citizen voting in 1921 with Arkansas the final to do so in 1928.

First, we consider all bills in the 64th–91st Congresses. To implement this analysis, we classified these bills with topic codings constructed by Peltzman (1984). These relatively broad topics include issues such as the Budget, Defense, Domestic Social Policy, and others. Following the approach of Washington (2009), we identified votes where the majority of one party favored legislation and the majority of the opposing party did not (that is, there was conflict over the vote) and coded these votes based on whether an MC supported the ideologically left position when voting (again, based on which party supported the legislation). We then supplemented these topics with our additional category capturing all immigration votes during this period. For each topic, we then ran regressions, bill-by-bill, of liberal votes on the count of an MC’s Immigration Index. In Figure 5 (other than the bottom 4 rows), we report the share of votes for each topic where we found a statistically significant result of Immigration Index on MC vote choice, controlling for other factors. By chance, we should expect 5 percent of individual votes to have a statistically significant relationship at  $p=0.05$  (demarcated by the dotted vertical line in the figure). As the figure makes apparent, the Immigration category registers by far the greatest share of roll-call votes where an MC’s immigration history mattered, and it is also statistically different from the effect observed by chance. For votes spanning the 64th–91st congresses, an immigrant family history mattered most for bills related to immigration policy.

Immigrant background could of course matter for some other policy topics as well. We do observe that family immigration history is a predictor of a liberal vote for topics related to International Organizations, Regulation (Special Interest), and the District of Columbia. But the results are not remotely as strong as what we observe for the immigration policy topic. Immigration policy positions stand out as uniquely related to the immigrant backgrounds of lawmakers.

Second, we also directly compare landmark legislation on Immigration to other topic areas with major legislation (see the bottom four rows of Figure 5). We focus on landmark legislation passed in the areas of social welfare, transportation and the environment. We selected landmark votes in these areas using the same procedure as for the landmark immigration votes (consulting Stathis (2014) to identify landmark legislation in an area and then identifying the vote for final passage). This approach comprises a fitting comparison since Stathis selected both the landmark immigration legislation studied in our paper and these bills on social welfare, transportation and environment without regard to whether partisan conflict over the vote existed (thus, these are

apples-to-apples comparisons). Comparing major legislation, immigration legislation again registers by far the greatest share of roll-call votes where an MC’s immigration history mattered. In fact, neither the transportation nor the environment topics included a single bill where immigrant family background was correlated with vote choice at a statistically significant level. For social welfare, immigrant background helps explain a relatively small share of votes, and the results are not distinguishable from what would occur purely by chance. This finding again emphasizes the unique explanatory power of immigrant background for immigration legislation, and it suggests that MCs with immigrant backgrounds were unlikely to have supported immigration legislation as part of a broader effort to strategically increase support for social welfare policies. More broadly, the lack of a relationship between family immigration history and other left-leaning policies (such as social welfare) stands out as an additional reason why it seems unlikely that MCs would have supported permissive immigration policy to shape the electorate in order to advance their preferred social welfare policies.

## 5.4 Family Traits

Our final possible mechanism recognizes that a family history of immigration could be just one manifestation of a broader set of traits or values passed intergenerationally that affect MC ideology. Immigration, especially in the era we study, was a difficult journey that required severing ties with those left behind. It was also an expensive and risky undertaking, with a potential immigrant moving to a new country they had likely never seen before. For these reasons, and more, we might expect that immigrant ancestors were self-selected and might vary on some dimensions, ranging from entrepreneurship, grit or determination, risk-taking, to openness to new settings. MCs might support looser immigration restrictions because they believe new immigrants will share these traits.

But immigrants are not the only MC ancestors who might be self-selected. Migration *within* the US in the nineteenth and early twentieth century shared many of the same challenges as international immigration, including long journeys, uncertain prospects, and breaking social bonds with familiar people and places. Is there a difference between a family history of *immigration* and a family history of *migration* on immigration policy-making?

To answer this question, we examine the birthplaces, by state, of MCs, their parents, and their grandparents. We define migration history to be comparable to our definition of immigration family

history but where immigration identifies people who move across countries and migration identifies people who move across states (but within the U.S.). An MC is a migrant if he or she represents a state in Congress that is not his or her birthstate. An MC's parent is defined as a migrant if the MC was born in a different state from the MC and an MC's grandparent is defined as a migrant if the MC's parent was born in a different state from the MC's grandparent. As with immigration, we count up the number of migrant parents and grandparents that an MC has.

[Table 10 about here.]

Table 10 replicates the paper's main results but includes controls for family migration history. We find that MC support for more open immigration policies is driven by MCs with family histories of international immigration not those with family histories of domestic migration. Across all specifications, the effect of immigrant family history is roughly five to ten times larger in magnitude than the effect of a domestic migrant family history. Furthermore, the coefficient on MC Migrant Ancestry is statistically distinguishable from a zero effect in only a handful of cases, whereas the results for MC Immigrant Ancestry are statistically significant across all specifications. Our story, we argue based on these results, is therefore particularly about immigration, rather than some trait(s) common to all migrants.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the relationship between lawmakers' immigrant backgrounds and their legislative behavior. We studied both landmark immigration legislation and general roll-call votes, as well as congressional speeches, related to immigration policy. Our results demonstrate a strong relationship between personal immigration history and MC vote choice on immigration policy in the early and mid-20th century. MCs born abroad or with parents or grandparents born abroad voted in favor of pro-immigration policies more than those whose families immigrated to the United States in earlier generations. Furthermore, this voting behavior is not just the result of pro-immigrant electorates selecting MCs with recent family immigration background, but occurs when accounting for district-level characteristics and selection. Recent immigration experiences serve as strong predictors of votes for permissive policies even when MC ideology would predict otherwise. However, position-taking through congressional speech appears best explained as a function of

district composition rather than immigrant family history—consistent with the theory that MCs may have more discretion when casting votes on immigration policy compared to speaking about immigration policy.

Though family histories of immigration contribute to support for permissive immigration policies in Congress, this finding is conditioned by a variety of factors. We explore these factors as part of an effort to pin down the mechanisms underlying the relationship between immigrant family background and vote choices favoring permissive immigration policies. Ultimately, an MCs in-group identity—a feeling of belonging to a group based on family background, and making choices that favor that group—appears to be the most crucial factor in explaining our findings. MCs with immigrant last names—surnames that we theorize make in-group identity more salient, while holding actual immigrant background constant—are more likely to support permissive policies. Furthermore, the importance of in-group identity extends to one’s specific nation or region of origin; we find that immigrants from Old Europe source countries reacted differently than immigrants originating from New Europe source countries when legislation differentially targeted New Europe immigrants with restrictions.

Other accounts that would explain the link between immigrant family history and permissive attitudes on immigration do not register strong evidence in their favor. Unique information about the experience of immigrants possessed by MCs with family histories of immigration does not lead to support for more permissive policies. Nor can we explain our findings with a correlated preferences account, in which MCs with immigrant backgrounds seek (through immigration) to reshape the electorate and further a broad set of policy goals; in fact, an immigrant family history appears to possess unique explanatory power for decisions related to future immigration policy, but not for roll-call votes on social welfare (and many other) policies. Finally, we also rule out the possibility that other characteristics common to migrants (domestic or international) explain our findings. A family history of domestic migration does not, for example, have the same explanatory power as a history of international immigration.

Our findings highlight the critical role of identity in politics—for politicians themselves and for citizens in general. Much of the literature on political identities focuses on descriptive characteristics such as race and gender. Our paper shows that other characteristics, somewhat less easily observable, also play a critical role in MCs’ legislative behavior. While immigration is closely tied

to race and ethnicity, being an immigrant is also a distinct identity that varies within racial and ethnic groups. Immigration background, we show, has a crucial temporal component—people with the same ethnic backgrounds may be immigrants themselves or descendants of prior generations of immigrants.

This temporal element of our findings yields some of the most interesting predictions related to past, current, and future immigration policy. Our results suggest an almost linear decay over the generations in the effects on support for permissive immigration policy. Intuitively, a single immigrant grandparent has roughly half the effect as a single immigrant parent. These findings suggest that, to the extent immigration in-flows continue apace, there should be continued pressures for permissive immigration policies in Congress, even if Congress itself is not composed of many first-generation immigrants. On the other hand, if generational distance to immigration for most members of Congress increases substantially over time, our results suggest that, by the third or fourth generation (if a linear decay can be extrapolated for subsequent generations), we should expect reduced support for permissive immigration in Congress on the margin.

Our paper also helps unpack what group boundaries are most relevant in a policy-making context. In theory, meaningful group boundaries may form at the level of a specific nation of origin (e.g, Italian immigrants, Irish immigrants), pan-ethnic group, or even at the level of a general American national identity in which immigration is valued. Our paper has treated the extent to which these levels of group boundaries have mattered as ultimately an empirical question to test. We have let group boundaries vary in our assessment of immigrant history—considering not only temporal aspects (proximity/generational distance), but also visibility (surname), and subregional identities (and when these are/are not salient). By unbundling immigrant background into component parts, we have sought to add breadth and depth to accounts of the role of immigrant group identity.

Most of all, our paper highlights how personal characteristics and identity cannot be overlooked when seeking to understand legislative behavior. We suggest that politicians and their (immigrant) backgrounds are central actors in the political economy of immigration (Alesina and Tabellini 2020). Fenno (1978) famously asked what elected representatives see when they look at their constituency, sparking a voluminous literature investigating legislator behavior in the district. Our paper has sought to turn a lens inward. What do legislators see when they look at themselves? Identity

matters in many domains (Kranton 2016; Akerlof and Kranton 2000) and this includes even high stakes and politically charged legislating. This paper provides evidence for the role that personal and family history matter when setting immigration policy; but more broadly, we suggest that other forms of personal background or family history ought to be taken into account when studying the behavior of elected representatives in other policy making domains.

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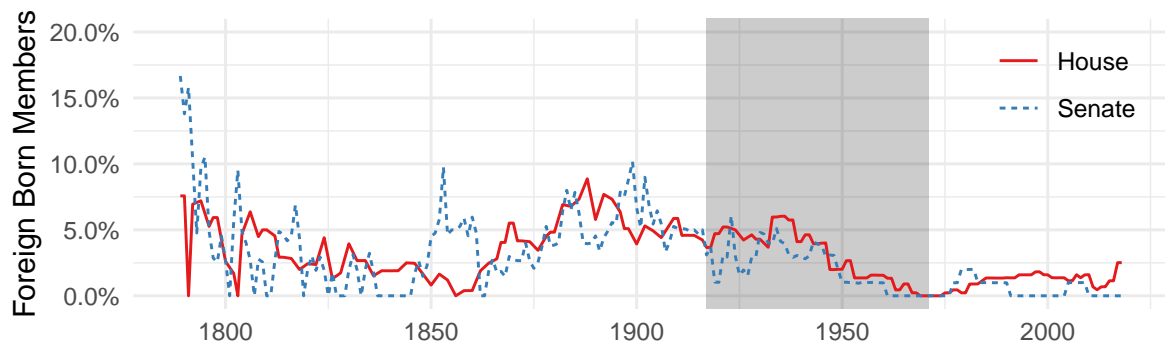
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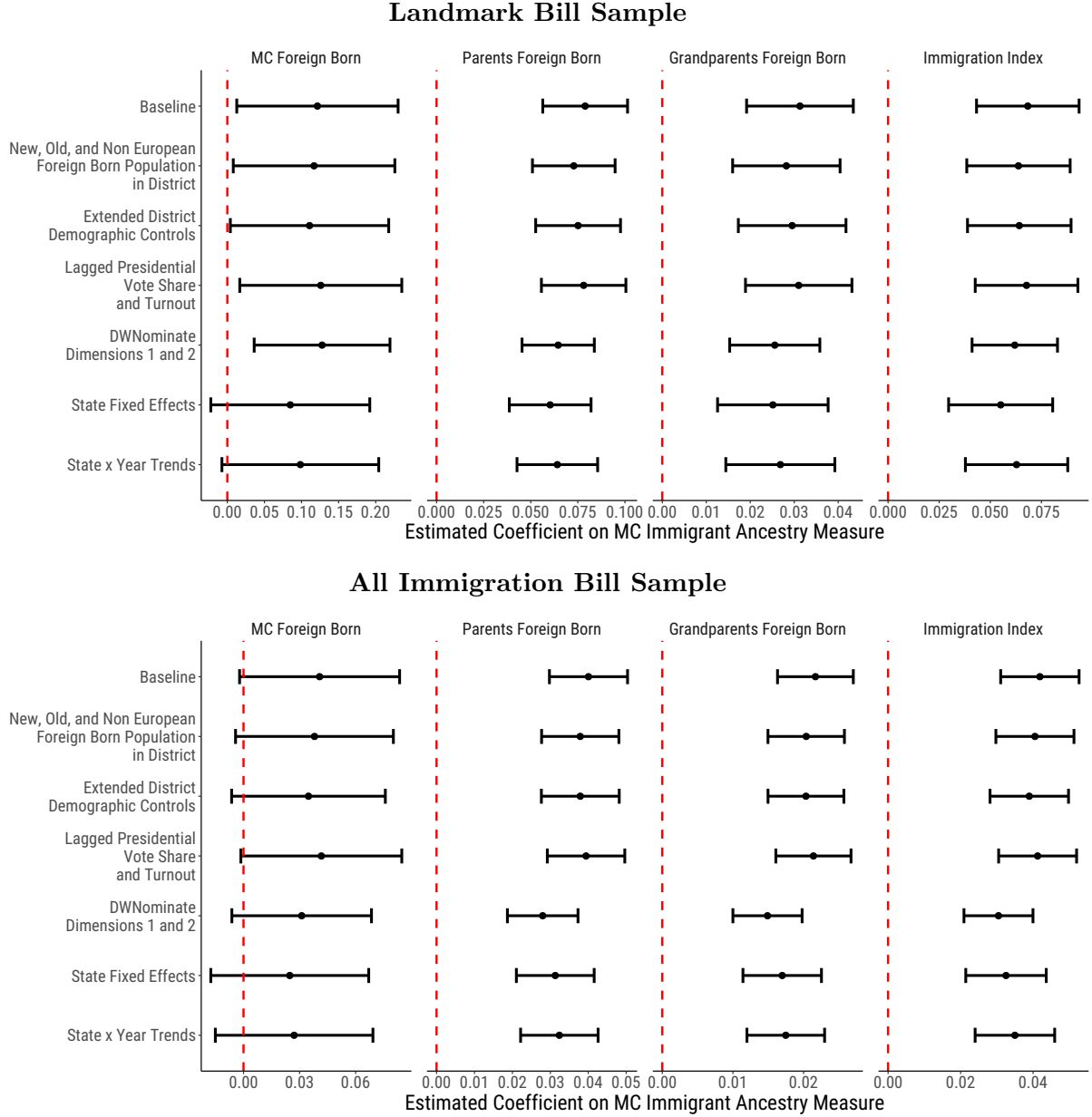
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**Figure 1:** Foreign-Born Members of Congress Over Time



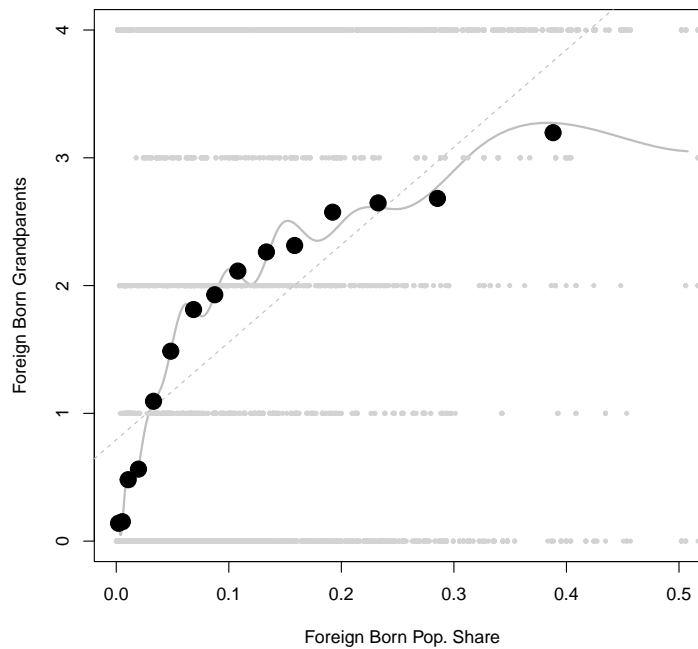
*Note:* This figure illustrates the percentage of foreign-born members in the US House of Representatives (solid red line) and in the US Senate (dashed blue line). MC birthplace is drawn from the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress. The period studied in this paper is denoted with a gray box. While MC birthplace is relatively simple to collect for this period, tracing foreign-born family history requires additional sources like linking to the complete count censuses. With some notable exceptions (in the 1850s for example) the House has tended to have a larger share of foreign-born members than the Senate. From the 1870s to the 1930s, both chambers of Congress reached or surpassed five percent of all members as foreign born. Since then, both chambers have seen sustained declines.

**Figure 2:** Robustness of Immigration History and MC Vote Choice



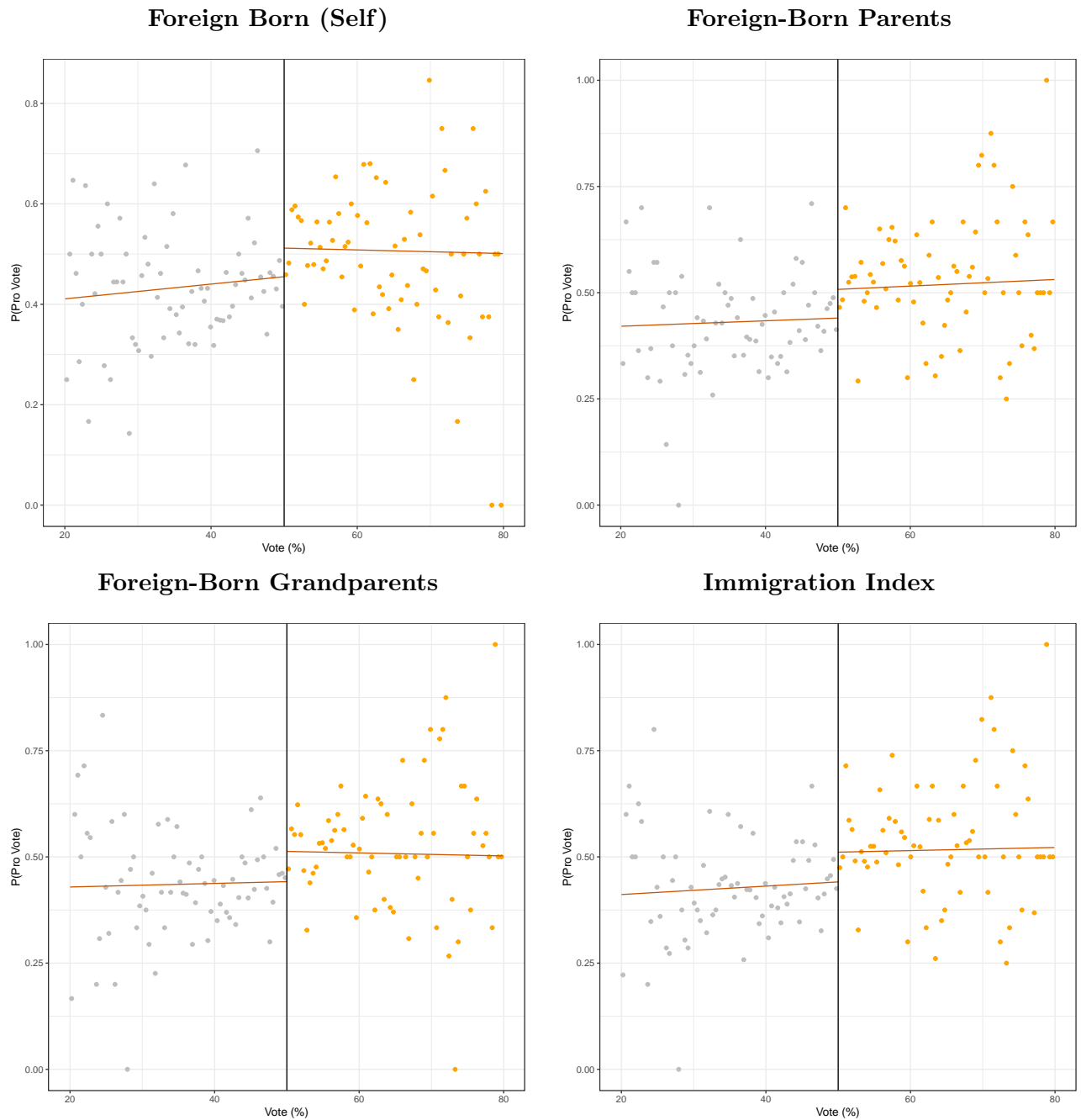
*Note:* This figure reports results from regressing an indicator for pro immigration roll-call votes on family immigration history. We report the coefficient on the MC immigration history variable with 95% confidence intervals. In the top panel, the sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1. In the bottom panel, the sample includes votes on all immigration legislation. In the first row (baseline), the estimates include bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate, as well as congressional district foreign-born population, MC party, census region, and quadratics in age and tenure. The baseline controls are included in all results. In the second row, we include three controls for the log of the population of foreign-born from New Europe, Old Europe, and Non-Europe in each district. In the third row, we include controls for the log of the black population and the log of the urban population in each district. In the fourth row, we include a control for the vote share for the Democratic candidate in the most recent Presidential election to control for district political preferences. In the fifth row, we include controls in the first and second dimensions of DW-Nominate scores for the MC. In the sixth row, we include state fixed effects. In the seventh row, we include local time trends, interacting state with year. Standard errors are always clustered at the MC level. See the Table 4 notes for more on MC immigrant ancestry definitions.

**Figure 3:** Relationship between Foreign-Born Population Share and MCs' Average Number of Foreign-Born Grandparents



*Note:* This figure illustrates the relationship between a place's foreign born population share and the family immigration histories of the MCs that they elect. Small gray dots represent each observation in the sample. The large black dots represent bins collapsing across observations. As is evident from the plot, the relationship between foreign-born population share and foreign-born grandparents is positive and close to linear.

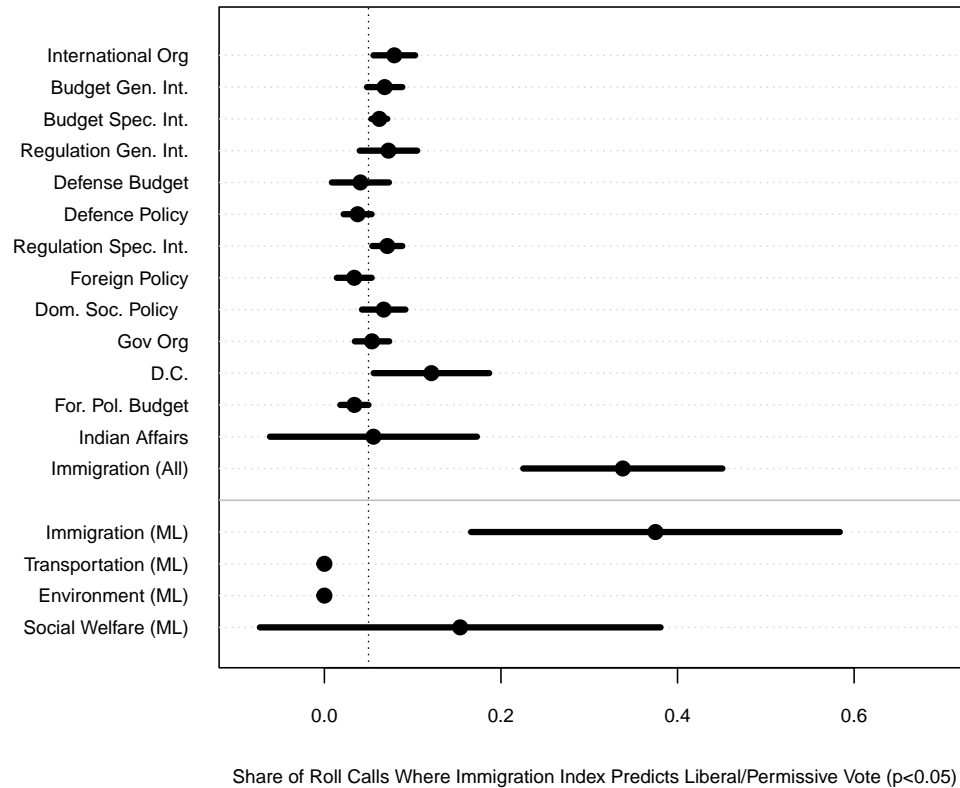
**Figure 4:** RDD: Effect of MC Immigration History (Surname Score) on probability of casting Pro Immigration Vote, 64th–91st Congresses



*Note:* For each measure of family immigration history, we estimate the effect of immigration family history on supporting permissive immigration policies in final passage votes for immigration bills between the 64th and 91st congresses. The sample is constructed by focusing on elections in which one candidate possessed an immigrant family history and one candidate did not. In this case, candidates with an immigrant family history are determined based on surname. Each dot represents the share of candidates who voted pro immigration in a given vote share bin. We identify the effect by using close elections in which a candidate with an immigrant family history narrowly won or narrowly lost the election. Across all four measures of family history, we observe a significant and positive effect on support for permissive immigration legislation.



**Figure 5:** Effect of Immigration History on Permissive/Liberal Vote for Placebo Topics, 64th–91st Congresses



*Note:* This figure reports the effects of an immigrant family history across a range of placebo topics on roll-call votes during the 64th–91st congresses. For each topic (as defined by Peltzman (1984)), we identified all votes in our time period where conflict existed—based on whether majorities of each party opposed one another—and then for each bill we regressed vote choice on Immigration Index, district composition and all other covariates included in our main specifications. We then plot the share of regressions for each topic in which the coefficient for Immigration Index has a statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) effect on vote choice. While family history is a frequent and strong predictor of roll-call voting on all Immigration final passage votes, as well as major legislation affecting immigration policy (as defined by Stathis (2014)), family history is not a frequent significant predictor of voting in almost every other area. For the bottom four rows in the figure, we performed a similar exercise for major legislation in the policy areas of immigration, transportation, the environment and social welfare.

**Table 1:** Landmark Immigration Bills

Congress	Bill	Roll Call #	Pro Immigrant	Yea	Nay
64	HR10384	Immigration Act of 1917			
		House	121	Nay	309
		Senate	324	Nay	65
67	HR4075	Immigration Quota Act (1921)			
		House	21	Nay	285
		Senate	21	Nay	90
68	HR7995	Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson-Reed Act)			
		House	90	Nay	319
		Senate	126	Nay	72
80	S2242	Displaced Persons Act of 1948			
		House	N/A (no final roll-call vote)		
		Senate	198	Yea	75
81	HR9490	McCarran Internal Security Act (1950)			
	S4037	House	264	Nay	302
		Senate	444	Nay	77
82	HR5678	McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act (1952)			
		House	165	Nay	284
		Senate	298	Nay	60
83	HR6481	Refugee Relief Act of 1953			
		House	64	Yea	225
		Senate	82	Yea	63
89	HR2580	Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965			
		House	177	Yea	330
		Senate	232	Yea	80

*Note:* This table reports landmark immigration legislation. We coded each piece of legislation based on whether a Yea or Nay vote aligned with a more permissive (more pro immigrant) stance. The totals for Yeas and Nays include announced votes and paired votes.

**Table 2:** Examples of Family Background from Census Data

	Carl Albert	Clinton Anderson	James Michael Curley
Birthplace	Oklahoma	South Dakota	Massachusetts
Mother	Texas	South Dakota	Ireland
Father	Missouri	Sweden	Ireland
Maternal Grandparents	Missouri Kansas	Illinois Wisconsin	Ireland Ireland
Paternal Grandparents	Missouri Texas	Sweden Sweden	Ireland Ireland

*Note:* This table illustrates varying family backgrounds for three members who served in Congress during our sample period: Carl Albert, Clinton Anderson, and James Michael Curley. All three are white males and are US-born, but have very different family histories that we can recover by linking to the complete count census.

**Table 3:** Family Immigration History for MCs by Party and Chamber

	Overall			House			Senate		
	Total	Dem	Rep	Total	Dem	Rep	Total	Dem	Rep
Share Foreign-Born	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.05
Average Number of Foreign-Born Parents	0.41	0.40	0.41	0.44	0.43	0.43	0.31	0.26	0.34
Average Number of Foreign-Born Grandparents	1.80	1.72	1.85	1.84	1.78	1.87	1.54	1.39	1.66
Share with 1+ Foreign-Born Parent	0.25	0.24	0.25	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.20	0.17	0.22
Share with 1+ Foreign-Born Grandparent	0.55	0.50	0.59	0.56	0.52	0.60	0.47	0.43	0.52
Share with Both Parents Foreign-Born	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.11	0.09	0.12
Share with All Grandparents Foreign-Born	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.31	0.27	0.34
N	3235	1729	1462	2716	1448	1230	519	281	232

*Note:* This table reports summary statistics for family immigration history for MCs in the 64th to 91st Congresses by chamber and by party. Members who held office in multiple Congresses in the sample are counted once (per chamber). Members from third parties are included in totals.

**Table 4:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice

	Panel A. Pro Immigration Vote in Landmark Bill Sample							
	MC Foreign Born				MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:		Immigration Index	
	MC Foreign Born		Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.256*** (0.062)	0.121** (0.055)	0.165*** (0.013)	0.079*** (0.011)	0.085*** (0.006)	0.031*** (0.006)	0.169*** (0.013)	0.068*** (0.013)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.039*** (0.006)		0.035*** (0.006)		0.038*** (0.008)		0.037*** (0.008)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oster $\delta^*$		5.98		2.01		1.31		1.71
Observations	3,448	3,367	3,203	3,124	2,037	1,980	2,037	1,980
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.27	0.44	0.32	0.44	0.32	0.45	0.31	0.45
	Panel B. Pro Immigration Vote in All Immigration Bill Sample							
	MC Foreign Born				MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:		Immigration Index	
	MC Foreign Born		Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.110*** (0.028)	0.041* (0.022)	0.086*** (0.006)	0.040*** (0.005)	0.049*** (0.003)	0.022*** (0.003)	0.088*** (0.006)	0.042*** (0.006)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.023*** (0.003)		0.020*** (0.003)		0.017*** (0.004)		0.017*** (0.004)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oster $\delta^*$		1.93		1.91		1.98		2.70
Observations	18,014	17,233	16,876	16,119	10,440	9,956	10,440	9,956
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.38	0.33	0.37	0.34	0.38	0.34	0.38

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table reports results from regressing an indicator for pro immigration roll-call votes on family immigration history, congressional district foreign-born population, and other covariates. We measure MC Immigrant Ancestry in four ways with the measure indicated in the column header. In columns 1 and 2, MC Foreign Born is an indicator variable denoting if a member was born abroad as a non-citizen. In columns 3 and 4, Parents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 2 and counts the number of foreign-born parents. In columns 5 and 6, Grandparents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 4 and counts the number of foreign-born grandparents. In columns 7 and 8, Immigration Index ranges between 0 and 3 with each generation (self, parents, and grandparents) contributing one third of the weight to the index. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. In the top panel, the sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1. In the bottom panel, the sample includes votes on all immigration legislation. Other MC controls include party, census region, and quadratics in age and tenure. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table 5:** Relative Explanatory Power of Immigration History and Foreign-Born Population and Political Party: Standardized Regressions

	Panel A. Pro Immigration Vote (Standardized) in Landmark Bill Sample							
	MC Foreign Born		MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:				Immigration Index	
			Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry (Standardized)	0.075*** (0.020)	0.076*** (0.020)	0.239*** (0.020)	0.239*** (0.019)	0.311*** (0.024)	0.313*** (0.023)	0.313*** (0.025)	0.314*** (0.024)
Foreign Born Population in Congressional District (Standardized)	0.089*** (0.019)	0.092*** (0.019)	0.076*** (0.019)	0.079*** (0.019)	0.071*** (0.021)	0.076*** (0.021)	0.071*** (0.022)	0.076*** (0.022)
Democrat (Standardized)		0.031* (0.018)		0.025 (0.018)		0.078*** (0.023)		0.073*** (0.023)
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,367	3,367	3,124	3,124	1,980	1,980	1,980	1,980
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.29	0.29	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.33
	Panel B. Pro Immigration Vote (Standardized) in All Immigration Bill Sample							
	MC Foreign Born		MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:				Immigration Index	
			Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry (Standardized)	0.035*** (0.010)	0.037*** (0.009)	0.127*** (0.010)	0.130*** (0.010)	0.175*** (0.012)	0.181*** (0.011)	0.168*** (0.013)	0.175*** (0.012)
Foreign Born Population in Congressional District (Standardized)	0.056*** (0.009)	0.059*** (0.009)	0.043*** (0.009)	0.047*** (0.010)	0.038*** (0.010)	0.042*** (0.011)	0.038*** (0.010)	0.042*** (0.011)
Democrat (Standardized)		0.043*** (0.009)		0.043*** (0.009)		0.077*** (0.011)		0.076*** (0.011)
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,233	17,233	16,119	16,119	9,956	9,956	9,956	9,956
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.33	0.33	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table reports results for the standardized regression of casting a pro immigration vote on a measure of family immigration history and the district-level foreign-born population and the MC's party. All variables in the model are standardized by subtracting each observation by the variable's mean and dividing by the standard deviation. Panel A covers landmark immigration bills while Panel B covers all immigration bill. We measure MC Immigrant Ancestry in four ways with the measure indicated in the column header. In columns 1 and 2, MC Foreign Born is an indicator variable denoting if a member was born abroad as a non-citizen. In columns 3 and 4, Parents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 2 and counts the number of foreign-born parents. In columns 5 and 6, Grandparents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 4 and counts the number of foreign-born grandparents. In columns 7 and 8, Immigration Index ranges between 0 and 3 with each generation (self, parents, and grandparents) contributing one third of the weight to the index.

**Table 6:** Regression Discontinuity: Imputed Immigration History (Surname Score) and Vote Choice, All Bills Pooled

	MC			MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:						Immigration Index		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Estimate	0.113*** (0.035)	0.099* (0.052)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.086*** (0.027)	0.117** (0.055)	0.161*** (0.039)	0.089*** (0.031)	0.123** (0.052)	0.143*** (0.039)	0.092*** (0.031)	0.1** (0.051)	0.152*** (0.039)
N	4235	4235	4235	4368	4368	4368	4354	4354	4354	4295	4295	4295
N (Effective)	1727	1230	2148	2436	1290	2259	2064	1306	2243	2138	1269	2197
BW	$\pm 7.23$	$\pm 5$	$\pm 10$	$\pm 11.154$	$\pm 5$	$\pm 10$	$\pm 8.826$	$\pm 5$	$\pm 10$	$\pm 9.651$	$\pm 5$	$\pm 10$

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This figure reports the estimates from a Regression Discontinuity where the sample is constructed by focusing on elections in which one candidate possessed an immigrant family history and one candidate did not. The estimate reported is the effect attributable to the candidate with the family history of immigration winning the election. Vote share is the running variable. We present estimates for each measure of family immigration history (Foreign-Born MC, Parents, or Grandparents as well as the Immigration Index) using an optimal bandwidth, a  $\pm 5$ , and a  $\pm 10$  for vote share. We cluster SEs at the MC level.

**Table 7:** Immigration History and Immigration Speeches: Baseline and Standardized Regressions

	Panel A. Immigration Speech							
	MC Foreign Born		MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as: Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born		Immigration Index	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.168 (0.110)	0.060 (0.106)	0.074*** (0.020)	0.041** (0.021)	0.046*** (0.009)	0.026** (0.010)	0.095*** (0.021)	0.058** (0.023)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.055*** (0.010)		0.050*** (0.010)		0.045*** (0.013)		0.045*** (0.013)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,760	14,282	13,646	13,188	8,959	8,651	8,959	8,651
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.19	0.23	0.19	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.23	0.26
	Panel B. Immigration Speech (Standardized)							
	MC Foreign Born		MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as: Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born		Immigration Index	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry (Standardized)	0.011 (0.031)	0.012 (0.031)	0.044** (0.020)	0.045** (0.020)	0.084*** (0.029)	0.086*** (0.030)	0.074*** (0.029)	0.076** (0.029)
Foreign Born Population in Congressional District (Standardized)	0.160*** (0.049)	0.162*** (0.049)	0.167*** (0.051)	0.170*** (0.051)	0.163** (0.065)	0.164** (0.065)	0.163** (0.065)	0.165** (0.065)
Democrat (Standardized)		0.023 (0.015)		0.030** (0.015)		0.026 (0.022)		0.024 (0.021)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,190	14,190	13,104	13,104	8,583	8,583	8,583	8,583
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table reports the relationship between the key measures of family immigration history and  $\log(1 + \text{ImmigrationSpeeches})$ . For robustness with inverse hyperbolic sine transformations, see Table A.13. Panel A is the baseline while in Panel B all variables in the model are standardized by subtracting each observation by the variable's mean and dividing by the standard deviation. We measure MC Immigrant Ancestry in four ways with the measure indicated in the column header. In columns 1 and 2, MC Foreign Born is an indicator variable denoting if a member was born abroad as a non-citizen. In columns 3 and 4, Parents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 2 and counts the number of foreign-born parents. In columns 5 and 6, Grandparents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 4 and counts the number of foreign-born grandparents. In columns 7 and 8, Immigration Index ranges between 0 and 3 with each generation (self, parents, and grandparents) contributing one third of the weight to the index.



**Table 8:** Immigration History versus Visible Foreign Surnames and MC Vote Choice

	Panel A. Pro Immigration Vote in Landmark Bill Sample			
	MC Foreign Born	MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as: Parents Foreign Born	Grandparents Foreign Born	Immigration Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Actual MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.086 (0.056)	0.059*** (0.013)	0.021*** (0.007)	0.046*** (0.015)
Surname Predicted MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.388*** (0.081)	0.076*** (0.024)	0.037*** (0.013)	0.065*** (0.023)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District	0.036*** (0.006)	0.033*** (0.006)	0.035*** (0.008)	0.037*** (0.008)
Other MC Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,365	3,124	1,976	1,967
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.46
	Panel B. Pro Immigration Vote in All Immigration Bill Sample			
	MC Foreign Born	MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as: Parents Foreign Born	Grandparents Foreign Born	Immigration Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Actual MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.018 (0.022)	0.025*** (0.006)	0.014*** (0.003)	0.025*** (0.007)
Surname Predicted MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.230*** (0.042)	0.057*** (0.011)	0.029*** (0.006)	0.050*** (0.011)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District	0.022*** (0.003)	0.019*** (0.003)	0.015*** (0.004)	0.016*** (0.004)
Other MC Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,228	16,119	9,943	9,906
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.38	0.37	0.38	0.38

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table reports results measuring how visible indicators of a family history of immigration (surname) and actual family history influence roll-call voting on landmark immigration legislation. For example, the Parents Foreign Born variable refers to the number of foreign-born parents an MC has, while the Surname Parents Foreign Born variable refers to the average number of foreign-born parents for a person with the same surname and located in the same region as the MC. We also control for foreign-born population in the district. Each column includes bill and chamber fixed effects as well as MC controls (party, region, age and tenure). Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table 9:** Family Immigration Origins and MC Vote Choice

	Panel A. Pre-WWII Immigration Votes					
	Immigration Act (1917)		Immigration Quota Act (1921)		Johnson-Reed Act (1924)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Old Europe Parents	0.164*** (0.025)		0.099*** (0.021)		0.159*** (0.024)	
New Europe Parents	0.404* (0.211)		0.353*** (0.080)		0.450*** (0.078)	
Non Europe Foreign Born Parents	0.078 (0.085)		0.040 (0.061)		0.319*** (0.073)	
Old Europe Grandparents		0.099*** (0.023)		0.058*** (0.018)		0.090*** (0.018)
New Europe Grandparents		0.214* (0.118)		0.183*** (0.052)		0.233*** (0.046)
Non Europe Foreign Born Grandparents		0.037 (0.053)		0.011 (0.044)		0.172*** (0.056)
(Intercept)	0.193*** (0.022)	0.146* (0.075)	0.059*** (0.016)	0.034 (0.053)	0.101*** (0.018)	0.068 (0.049)
Observations	486	135	403	118	459	151
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	0.12	0.08	0.12	0.16	0.23

	Panel B. Post-WWII Immigration Votes							
	McCarran Internal Security Act (1950)		McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act (1952)		Refugee Relief Act (1953)		Immigration and Nationality Act (1965)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Old Europe Parents	0.144*** (0.038)		0.139*** (0.033)		0.193*** (0.036)		0.138*** (0.028)	
New Europe Parents	0.142*** (0.042)		0.368*** (0.051)		0.230*** (0.054)		0.097** (0.049)	
Non Europe Foreign Born Parents	0.122* (0.065)		0.137* (0.082)		0.313*** (0.094)		0.279*** (0.084)	
Old Europe Grandparents		0.086*** (0.013)		0.061*** (0.013)		0.108*** (0.014)		0.047*** (0.012)
New Europe Grandparents		0.087*** (0.019)		0.190*** (0.025)		0.131*** (0.025)		0.053** (0.024)
Non Europe Foreign Born Grandparents		0.077*** (0.030)		0.107** (0.042)		0.153*** (0.046)		0.118*** (0.036)
(Intercept)	0.739*** (0.021)	0.664*** (0.025)	0.224*** (0.023)	0.189*** (0.028)	0.482*** (0.025)	0.415*** (0.029)	0.102*** (0.019)	0.075*** (0.024)
Observations	436	387	451	394	465	404	414	354
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.13	0.12	0.15	0.09	0.16	0.08	0.07

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table decomposes MC family immigration history by region of origin. For each of seven landmark immigration bills, we have estimated the relationship between immigration sources and casting a vote that is permissive on immigration policy. The codings used to classify country of origin into groups (e.g., “Old Europe”, “New Europe”) are available in Appendix A.2.4. Explanatory variables referring to Parents count how many parents an MC has from the listed region; explanatory variables referring to Grandparents count how many grandparents an MC has from the listed region. Bills that most explicitly imposed or maintained restrictions on New Europe immigrants included: the Immigration Quota Act, Johnson-Reed Act, and McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act. These bills also exhibit the largest gaps in support between MCs with Old versus New Europe origins, though overall a family history of immigration, no matter the source region, predicted support for the more permissive position on landmark legislation.

**Table 10:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: All Bills Pooled, Family Migration History Controls

	Panel A. Pro Immigration Vote in Landmark Bill Sample							
	MC Foreign Born		MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:				Immigration Index	
	Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.272*** (0.063)	0.128** (0.056)	0.172*** (0.013)	0.084*** (0.012)	0.092*** (0.008)	0.032*** (0.007)	0.183*** (0.015)	0.077*** (0.014)
MC Migrant Ancestry	0.035* (0.020)	0.014 (0.018)	0.020* (0.011)	0.013 (0.010)	0.016 (0.010)	0.001 (0.009)	0.039** (0.017)	0.016 (0.014)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.039*** (0.006)		0.034*** (0.006)		0.038*** (0.008)		0.036*** (0.008)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,255	3,176	3,203	3,124	2,020	1,963	2,020	1,963
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.26	0.43	0.32	0.44	0.32	0.45	0.32	0.45
	Panel B. Pro Immigration Vote in All Immigration Bill Sample							
	MC Foreign Born		MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:				Immigration Index	
	Parents Foreign Born		Grandparents Foreign Born					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.119*** (0.028)	0.043** (0.022)	0.090*** (0.007)	0.045*** (0.006)	0.053*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.003)	0.093*** (0.007)	0.044*** (0.006)
MC Migrant Ancestry	0.019* (0.010)	0.002 (0.008)	0.013** (0.005)	0.014*** (0.005)	0.011** (0.005)	0.001 (0.004)	0.015* (0.008)	0.005 (0.007)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.023*** (0.003)		0.019*** (0.003)		0.017*** (0.004)		0.017*** (0.004)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,143	16,379	16,876	16,119	10,341	9,857	10,341	9,857
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.37	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.38	0.34	0.38

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table includes an additional control for domestic migrant family history in addition to our key variable, international immigrant family history. We define migrant history to be comparable to our definition of immigrant family history but where immigration identifies people who move across countries and migration identifies people who move across states (but within the U.S.). An MC is a migrant if he or she represents a state in Congress that is not his or her birthstate. An MC's parent is defined as a migrant if the MC was born in a different state from the MC and an MC's grandparent is defined as a migrant if the MC's parent was born in a different state from the MC's grandparent. As with immigration, we count up the number of migrant parents and grandparents that an MC has. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. In Panel A, the sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1, while in Panel B we include all immigration votes. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

# For Online Publication

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## A.1 Supplementary Historical Information

### A.1.1 Immigration Bills

In this appendix section, we describe the landmark immigration legislation (see Table 1 for the full list). The Immigration Act of 1917 was the first major bill designed to restrict European immigration into the United States that ultimately went into law. Passed by Congress over Woodrow Wilson’s veto at the end of the 64th Congress, the act imposed a literacy test on European immigrants, and barred immigrants from Asian countries. The Immigration Quota Act (also called the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 or Immigration Act of 1921) capped the number of immigrants and set quotas for immigration based on the number of people of each nationality already residing in the United States. The Immigration Act of 1924 (the Johnson-Reed Act) further lowered the number of immigrants allowed each year and heavily favored Northern European immigrants over those from Southern or Eastern Europe.<sup>41</sup> All three bills passed each chamber by large margins.

A second cluster of immigration acts followed World War II. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and Refugee Relief Act of 1953 temporarily increased the number of immigrants admitted due to the vast number of refugees in Europe after the war.<sup>42</sup> The McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act, passed by Congress in 1952 over the veto of Harry Truman, reorganized and consolidated immigration laws while preserving strict nationality quotas limiting immigration. Finally, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 overhauled the immigration system once again, eliminating the nationality-based quota system and replacing it with a multi-category system that prioritized special skills or having relatives already residing in the United States. The long-term effect of the bill was to end the preference for Northern European immigrants and allow for increased immigration from the rest of the world. Abramitzky and Boustán (2017) suggest that the 1965 bill led to a new era of Mass Migration, albeit with very different source countries than the previous one.

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<sup>41</sup>For a detailed account of the politics of immigration reform, see Tichenor (2002).

<sup>42</sup>The House of Representatives did not hold a final roll-call vote on the Displaced Persons Act of 1948; we only include the Senate vote in our analysis.

### **A.1.2 Race and Immigrant Experience**

The relationship between race and immigrant experience also marks a complex point of comparison between our period of study and today’s Congress. Most of the immigrant MCs in our historical sample are white, echoing both the history of race in American politics and the fact that immigration to the US from most non-European countries was nearly impossible for the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The shares from Europe were over 80% from 1850 to 1950, with immigrants from Canada making up another substantial share (Abramitzky and Boustan 2017). Immigration to the US from Asia was banned entirely for much of the period. But as scholars (for example, Painter (2011) and Roediger (2006)) have documented extensively, the concept of race and whiteness in the early 20th century was contested in American society. The contestation of race and whiteness extended to Congress. See Tichenor (2002) for detailed accounts of how Congress relied on racial tropes and discredited pseudo-science from groups such as the Immigration Restriction League when formulating immigration policy. American society, and lawmakers, did not always view European immigrants, especially those from southern and eastern Europe, as belonging to the same racial group as “white” Americans (Guglielmo 2003). Thus, while the analysis of historical legislative behavior in our study may not speak directly to the racial dynamics at play in today’s immigration debates, ideas about race still had bearing on the immigration policies applied to European immigrants in the early and mid 20th Century.

### **A.1.3 Mechanisms Affecting Group Boundaries**

Processes that make ethnic identity a more salient boundary for MCs include group consciousness and/or linked fate. The concept of “group consciousness” involves “identification with a group and a political awareness or ideology regarding the group’s relative position in society along with a commitment to collective action aimed at realizing the group’s interests” (Miller et al. 1981). The concept of “linked fate” suggests that some political beliefs and actions taken by people who belong to minority ethnic or racial groups can be explained by their perceptions of racial group interests. Most famously, researchers have posited that linked fate helps explain the political cohesion of black voters in the US (Dawson 1995). But notions of linked fate have since been shown to operate for groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, class and religion (Gay et al. 2016). For lawmakers

who belong to a relevant group, these processes link the interests of the group to those of the lawmaker. In traditional applications of group consciousness and linked fate, researchers have found that these concepts explain increased rates of political participation as well as more liberal views towards public policy (Verba and Nie 1987; Dawson 1995). The core logic underlying these empirical relationships is that individuals exhibiting group consciousness or a sense of linked fate *are more likely to engage in political behaviors advantageous to “their” group*. Extending this theory to a legislative context would suggest that, when these mechanisms are present, legislators with family histories of immigration would be more likely to prefer immigration policies seen as advantageous to their group.

## A.2 Supplementary Data Details

### A.2.1 Census Linking Overview

The complete 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940 Federal Censuses have recently been digitized by a joint effort of Ancestry.com and the Minnesota Population Center. The restricted-access version of the data, managed by IPUMS (Ruggles et al. 2020) and housed at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), includes transcribed names that enable us to link to external data sources at the individual-level. We search for each member in each of the decennial Federal Censuses from 1900 to 1940 to link MCs to census records. Individuals’ names as enumerated in the US Federal Census are restricted for 72 years following the census for privacy reasons, so we stop with the 1940 census, released publicly in 2012.

Recent advances in historical record linking make this work possible. See Abramitzky et al. (2021) and Bailey et al. (2017) for more details. We turn to the Feigenbaum (2018) census linking method for three key reasons. First, in a recent review of historical census linking methods, Abramitzky et al. (2021) finds that the most commonly used methods trace out a frontier, trading off false positives and false negatives in linking. The Feigenbaum method, by replicating the hand links a trained researcher would make, does particularly well at minimizing false negatives or records for which a true match exists but is not recovered. Because we link from high quality source data (the Congressional Biographical Directories including middle names and exact dates of birth) and link into *five* censuses, we believe we are creating a linked sample that is unlikely to

have many false positives as well. Second, Abramitzky et al. (2021) also note that choice of exact historical linking method, among those commonly used by recent economic historians working with the complete count census, tends not to affect research conclusions. Third, because we are linking from a non-census source into the census, we cannot use the off-the-shelf, census-to-census links like Abramitzky et al. (2020) or the IPUMS-linked samples.<sup>43</sup>

### A.2.2 Surname Scores

Surname-based measures are useful for individuals for whom we have less available information. This includes older MCs who we are unlikely to find residing at home with their parents. In addition, it is extremely difficult to census link failed candidates for Congress: for these challengers, we rarely observe either year of birth or place of birth, two variables key to census linking. Surname scores allow us to proxy for immigration histories of these challengers. And, in subsequent analyses, they provide a measure for public perceptions or visibility of immigrant background since they report the average immigration background for an individual based on surname alone.

While not a one to one correspondence, the correlation between actual immigration family history and surname score is very high. We view immigration history based on surname as measuring the variable of interest,  $\text{Immigration History}_i$ , but with some error—that is,  $\text{Immigration History}_i = \text{Surname Score}_i + \varepsilon_i$ . The error term can be thought of as the difference for each individual between the average immigration background of someone with that surname and the actual immigration background of the individual under study.

Figure A.1 illustrates the correspondence between  $\text{Immigration History}_i$  and  $\text{Surname Score}_i$  for House members. Each dot in a figure represents the average outcomes for all MCs in the sample *by state*.

### A.2.3 Key Terms for Identifying Topics of Speech

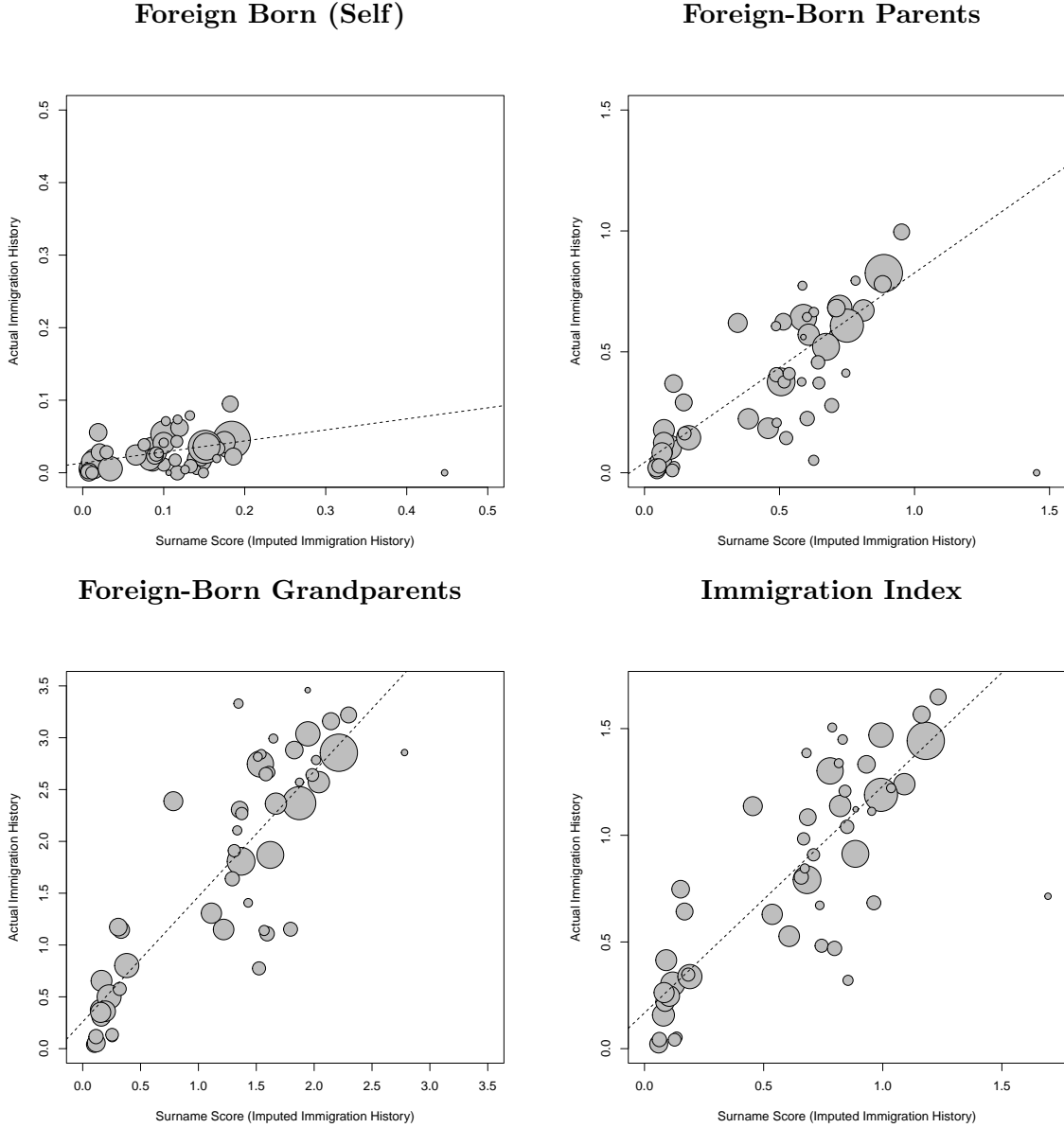
The key terms to identify immigration speech are: “across border”, “administr foreign”, “allow foreign”, “along border”, “american foreign”, “beyond border”, “billion foreign”, “border patrol”, “border protect”, “border region”, “border secur”, “border state”, “border unit”, “broken immigr”, “canadian border”, “citizenship immigr”, “come foreign”, “come illeg”, “comprehens im-

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<sup>43</sup>[https://usa.ipums.org/usa/linked\\_data\\_samples.shtml](https://usa.ipums.org/usa/linked_data_samples.shtml)



**Figure A.1:** Comparison of Actual Foreign-Born Status to Imputed Foreign-Born Status (Surname Scores) by State, House Members



*Note:* This figure displays the relationship between surname score, which is an imputed measure of family immigration history based on surname, and the actual immigration history of an MC. Each dot represents the average for a given state delegation. The label above each plot denotes the specific measure used. For example, Foreign-Born Grandparents captures the number of grandparents born abroad as non-citizens.

migr”, “control border”, “countri illeg”, “custom border”, “enforc immigr”, “feder immigr”, “flow illeg”, “foreign born”, “foreign languag”, “foreign student”, “foreign worker”, “illeg activ”, “illeg immigr”, “immigr act”, “immigr children”, “immigr come”, “immigr countri”, “immigr custom”, “immigr enforc”, “immigr issu”, “immigr natur”, “immigr polici”, “immigr problem”, “immigr

reform", "immigr refuge", "immigr servic", "immigr status", "immigr subcommitte", "immigr system", "immigr unit", "immigr visa", "involv foreign", "legal illeg", "legal immigr", "mani foreign", "mexican border", "million foreign", "million illeg", "nation border", "nation immigr", "need foreign", "northern border", "open border", "peopl foreign", "peopl illeg", "percent foreign", "protect border", "reform immigr", "report foreign", "resid alien", "restrict immigr", "secur border", "side border", "southern border", "southwest border", "state border", "state illeg", "stop illeg", "subcommitte immigr", "undocu immigr", "undocu worker", "within border".

#### **A.2.4 Coding Places of Origin into Regions**

We identify regions of origin based on the birth countries of parents and grandparents. Countries are grouped into regions as follows, using IPUMS country coding.

Old Europe includes people with census country codes for Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Lapland, Norway, Svalbard and Jan Meyen, Svalbard, Jan Meyen, Sweden, England, Channel Islands, Guernsey, Jersey, Isle of Man, Scotland, Wales, United Kingdom, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Northern Europe, Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine, Alsace, Lorraine, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland, Western Europe, Austria, Austria-Hungary, Austria-Graz, Austria-Linz, Austria-Salzburg, Austria-Tyrol, Austria-Vienna, Austria-Kaernten, Austria-Neustadt, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Bohemia, Bohemia-Moravia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany, Berlin, West Berlin, East Berlin, West Germany, Baden, Bavaria, Braunschweig, Bremen, Hamburg, Hanover, Hessen, Hesse-Nassau, Lippe, Lubeck, Oldenburg, Rheinland, Schaumburg-Lippe, Schleswig, Sigmaringen, Schwarzburg, Westphalia, Wurttemberg, Waldeck, Wittenberg, Frankfurt, Saarland, Nordrhein-Westfalen, East Germany, Anhalt, Brandenburg, Kingdom of Saxony, Mecklenburg, Saxony, Thuringian States, Sachsen-Meiningen, Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, Probable Saxony, Schwerin, Strelitz, Probably Thuringian States, Prussia, Hohenzollern, and Niedersachsen.

New Europe includes people with census country codes for Albania, Andorra, Gibraltar, Greece, Dodecanese Islands, Turkey Greece, Macedonia, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Azores, Madeira Islands, Cape Verde Islands, St. Miguel, San Marino, Spain, Vatican City, Southern Europe, Hungary, Poland, Austrian Poland, Galicia, German Poland, East Prussia, Pomerania, Posen, Prussian Poland, Silesia, West Prussia, Russian Poland, Romania, Transylvania, Yugoslavia, Croatia, Mon-

tenegro, Serbia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, Carniola, Slovenia, Kosovo, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Baltic States, Other USSR/Russia; Byelorussia, Moldavia, Bessarabia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Republic of Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tadzhik, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Siberia, USSR, Europe.

### **A.3 Supplementary Analysis**

#### **A.3.1 Miscast Votes**

Family history of immigration also helps us explain ideologically-surprising or “miscast” votes on immigration issues. Specifically, we examine bills where (1) an MC was predicted to vote pro immigration based on their ideological position (as measured by both dimensions of DW-NOMINATE) but instead voted anti immigration; and, (2) an MC was predicted to vote anti immigration but instead voted pro immigration. These “miscast” votes allow us to examine instances where immigration history led MCs to depart from what would be predicted by their overall political ideology. This approach moves beyond simply controlling for party, as in Table 4, which is useful because restrictionist ideologies cut across both parties, for example by bringing together Southern Democrats and some Western Republicans.

To implement this test, we divided our data into sub-samples: (1) Individuals predicted to cast a “pro” immigration vote; and, (2) individuals predicted to cast an “anti” immigration vote. Within each subsample, we then coded all individuals with a “miscast” vote with a 1 and those who voted according to expectations with a 0. Appendix Table A.1 reports the results. In all cases, the direction of the effects accords with our expectations. First, immigration history predicts a reduced rate of diverging from pre-existing ideology when an MC is predicted to vote in favor of immigration. We estimate that being foreign born is associated with a reduction of 11 percentage points in the rates of casting an anti-immigration vote that departs from existing ideology; an additional foreign-born parent is associated with a reduction of 4 percentage points; and a one percentage point effect for additional foreign-born grandparents. We also observe a positive relationship between immigration history and casting a pro vote despite having an overall political ideology that would predict casting an anti vote, with effect sizes similar to the prior case, but in the opposite direction.

**Table A.1:** Immigration History and Miscast Votes

	Panel A. Landmark Bills							
	Predicted Pro but Voted Against				Predicted Against but Voted For			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	-0.107 (0.068)				0.136** (0.067)			
Parents Foreign Born		-0.039*** (0.014)				0.051*** (0.014)		
Grandparents Foreign Born			-0.013* (0.007)				0.021*** (0.007)	
Immigration Index				-0.030** (0.014)				0.053*** (0.015)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District	-0.020* (0.010)	-0.022** (0.011)	-0.017 (0.011)	-0.017 (0.011)	0.019*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.006)	0.015* (0.008)	0.014* (0.008)
Other MC Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,120	998	833	833	2,153	2,034	1,132	1,132
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.10	0.11	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
	Panel B. All Immigration Bills							
	Predicted Pro but Voted Against				Predicted Against but Voted For			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	-0.048** (0.024)				0.038 (0.031)			
Parents Foreign Born		-0.035*** (0.007)				0.018*** (0.007)		
Grandparents Foreign Born			-0.021*** (0.004)				0.011*** (0.004)	
Immigration Index				-0.041*** (0.008)				0.024*** (0.007)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.006)	0.019*** (0.003)	0.018*** (0.003)	0.015*** (0.005)	0.015*** (0.005)
Other MC Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	6,602	6,103	4,311	4,311	9,316	8,782	5,091	5,091
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.09

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table splits the sample depending on whether an MC's ideological score (DW-Nominate) would predict a pro- or anti-immigration roll-call vote. Columns 1 through 4 are instances where the outcome variable takes a value of 1 if an MC was predicted to vote Pro but voted Anti, and 0 if they were predicted to vote Pro and did so. Columns 5 through 8 are instances where the outcome variable takes a value of 1 if an MC was predicted to vote Anti but in fact voted Pro, and 0 if they were predicted to vote Anti and did so. Each column includes bill and chamber fixed effects as well as MC controls (party, region, age and tenure). Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

### **A.3.2 Replicating Main Results Using Surname Scores**

Another possibility is that the pattern of missing data—particularly for foreign-born grandparents—might somehow bias our results. In particular, missingness for this measure occurs in our earliest sample years. As one check against this possibility, we re-estimate our core results using estimated immigration histories based on surname, which has the advantage of no missingness (though measures everyone’s immigration history with some error). Table A.2 in the Appendix replicates the results from Table 4 using only foreign-born scores derived from an MC’s surname and finds similar results as to when we measured immigration history using individual level census data.

### **A.3.3 Immigration History and Descriptive Representation**

Overall, we have shown that an MC places considerable weight on his or her immigrant background when casting roll-call votes on immigration. To what extent does the tendency to draw upon own immigrant background enhance representation of immigrant groups in the district? First, previous research has suggested that people who are first or second generation immigrants themselves express more permissive attitudes on immigration overall.<sup>44</sup> So, legislator actions in favor of permissive immigration policy accords with the views of immigrant groups in an MC’s district more often than not. Second, we know that congressional districts with higher numbers of foreign-born constituents tended to elect candidates with immigrant family histories. Figure A.2 displays a binned scatter plot that shows the strong, positive relationship between foreign-born population in a district and the Immigration Index for the MC elected. Table A.3 reports similar results from regressions that also control for the urban population in the district and region. Congressional districts containing constituencies with immigrant populations systematically selected candidates with immigrant backgrounds at higher rates than districts without these constituencies. Demand for descriptive representatives at the district level translated into the selection of MCs with immigrant backgrounds to draw upon when deciding how to vote on key immigration legislation; in turn, these MCs supported permissive legislation on immigration.

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<sup>44</sup>See Mayda (2006), O’Rourke and Sinnott (2006), and Schildkraut (2013) as examples of this empirical regularity.

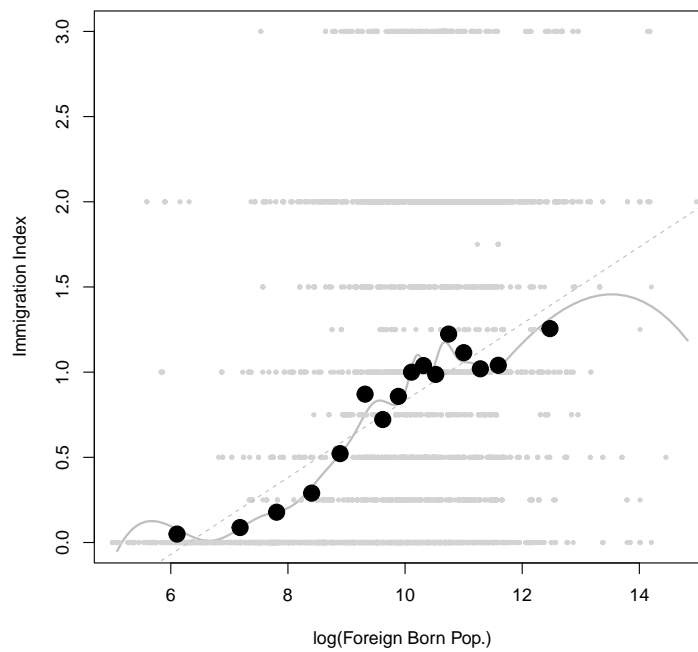
**Table A.2:** Immigration History using Visible Foreign Surname Measure and MC Vote Choice

	Panel A. Pro Immigration Vote in Landmark Bill Sample			
	MC Foreign Born	MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as: Parents Foreign Born	Grandparents Foreign Born	Immigration Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Surname Predicted				
MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.409*** (0.081)	0.126*** (0.020)	0.065*** (0.009)	0.113*** (0.016)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District	0.037*** (0.006)	0.034*** (0.006)	0.033*** (0.006)	0.035*** (0.006)
Other MC Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,365	3,365	3,361	3,350
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45
	Panel B. Pro Immigration Vote in All Immigration Bill Sample			
	MC Foreign Born	MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as: Parents Foreign Born	Grandparents Foreign Born	Immigration Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Surname Predicted				
MC Immigrant Ancestry	0.238*** (0.041)	0.081*** (0.009)	0.038*** (0.004)	0.067*** (0.008)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District	0.022*** (0.003)	0.020*** (0.003)	0.020*** (0.003)	0.020*** (0.003)
Other MC Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,228	17,228	17,215	17,165
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table replicates the main results in the paper using Surname Scores (i.e., imputed family immigration history based on average immigration levels for people with the same name and in the same region) rather than individual immigration histories based on census matching. All columns include bill and chamber fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Figure A.2:** Relationship between CD Foreign-Born Pop. and Immigration Index of Elected MCs



*Note:* This figure illustrates the relationship between a congressional districts' foreign born population and the family immigration histories of the MCs that they elect. Small gray dots represent each observation in the sample. The large black dots represent bins collapsing across observations. As is evident from the plot, the relationship between district foreign-born population and MC Immigration Index is positive and close to linear.

**Table A.3:** District Composition and MC Immigration History, 64th – 91st Congresses (House Only)

	MC Foreign Born	Parents Foreign Born	Grandparents Foreign Born	Immigration Index
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
log(CD Pop. Foreign)	0.012*** (0.003)	0.099*** (0.012)	0.357*** (0.035)	0.181*** (0.018)
log(CD Pop. Urban)	−0.0004 (0.001)	−0.001 (0.003)	−0.002 (0.008)	−0.004 (0.004)
Northeast	−0.017* (0.009)	0.074* (0.041)	0.071 (0.100)	0.070 (0.053)
South	−0.015** (0.007)	−0.249*** (0.035)	−1.007*** (0.109)	−0.386*** (0.051)
West	−0.031*** (0.009)	−0.189*** (0.046)	−0.395*** (0.138)	−0.214*** (0.066)
Congress FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
N	11,983	10,962	7,376	7,376
R <sup>2</sup>	0.024	0.129	0.286	0.270

\*p < .1; \*\*p < .05; \*\*\*p < .01

SEs clustered at district level by redistricting cycle.

*Note:* This table reports regressions of the key measures of family immigration history (listed above each column) on district foreign-born population, district urban population, region and congress fixed effects. There is a strong positive relationship between all four of these measures and the foreign-born population in the district, consistent with districts selecting descriptive representatives.



### A.3.4 Bill by Bill Results

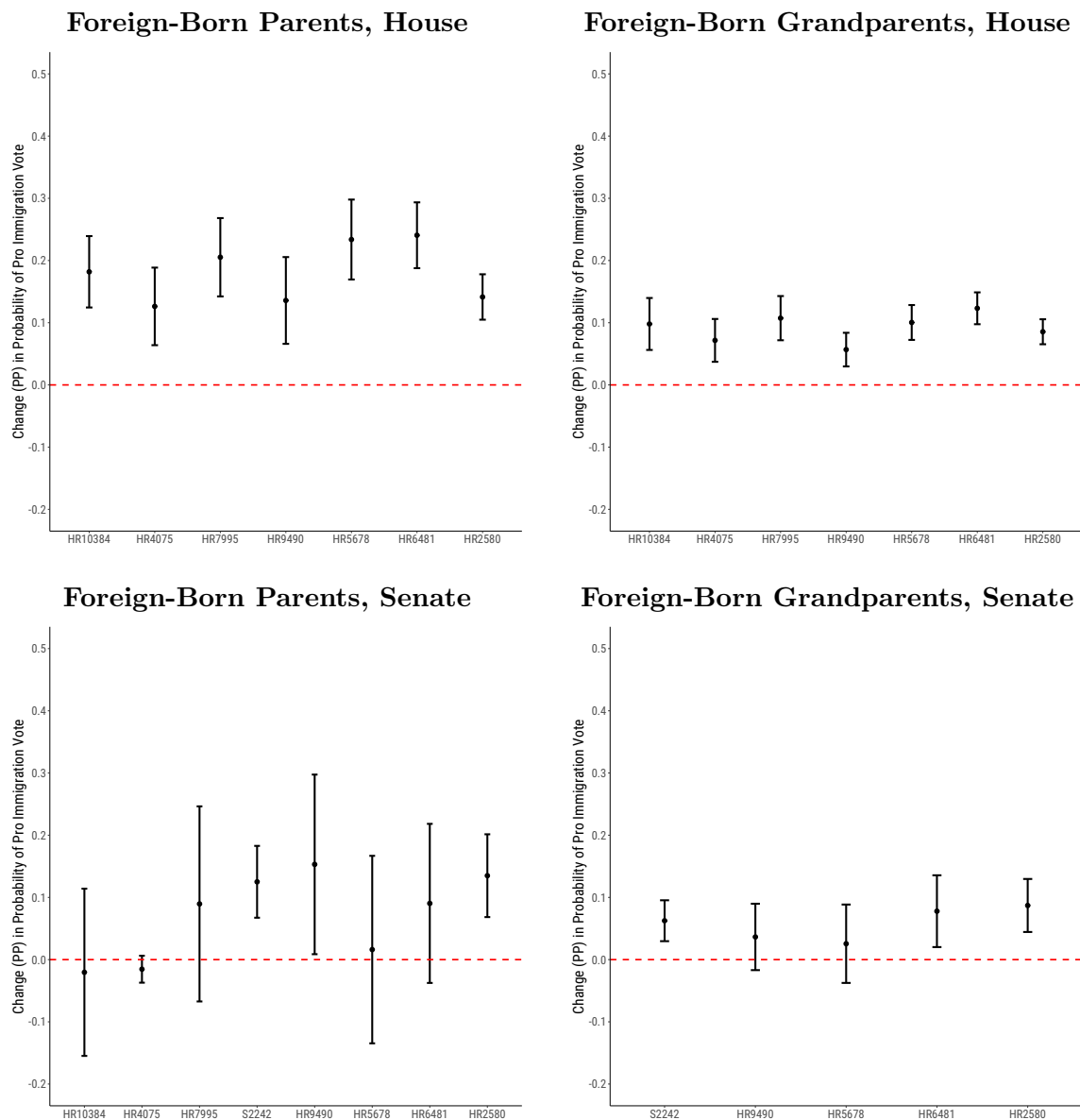
We can examine effects by bill, rather than pooling all votes together and including bill fixed effects, by estimating the model specified in Equation 2 and restricting the sample by vote and by chamber. Figure A.3 reports the results for the House and the Senate.<sup>45</sup>

In the House, we observe consistently positive and significant effects; both foreign-born parents and foreign-born grandparents were strongly associated with casting pro-immigration votes. In the Senate, the bill by bill results appear more mixed. Looking at parental immigration history, the effects register as positive for six of seven bills, but in most cases we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no effect. A similar pattern persists when examining foreign-born grandparent effects in the Senate.

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<sup>45</sup>For the Senate, we had to omit several votes; in some cases, we had insufficient variation in the outcome variable (i.e., HR4075 was a 90-2 vote) or insufficient data on foreign-born grandparents. HR10384, the Immigration Act of 1917, lacked enough data on foreign-born grandparents. This was because most MCs voting were also adults in 1900 or 1910 and not living with their parents. This made it difficult to determine the immigration histories of their grandparents.

**Figure A.3:** Effect of Foreign-Born Parents and Grandparents on Pro Immigration Vote on Individual Bills



*Note:* This figure plots estimates from bill-by-bill least squares regressions for each of the landmark bills in the sample. Right-hand side variables include a constant and a measure of family immigration history. Results are also broken down by chamber of Congress. We are forced to omit estimates for several Senate votes due to insufficient variation in the outcome variable or insufficient data on foreign-born grandparents. Landmark bills are ordered by Congress.

### A.3.5 Robustness Tables

**Table A.4:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: Landmark Bills Pooled, Reporting All Control Coefficients

	Pro Immigration Vote							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.256*** (0.062)	0.121** (0.055)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.165*** (0.013)	0.079*** (0.011)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.085*** (0.006)	0.031*** (0.006)		
Immigration Index							0.169*** (0.013)	0.068*** (0.013)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.039*** (0.006)		0.035*** (0.006)		0.038*** (0.008)		0.037*** (0.008)
Republican		-0.227*** (0.019)		-0.208*** (0.020)		-0.228*** (0.025)		-0.227*** (0.025)
Other Party		0.118 (0.120)		0.115 (0.119)		0.119 (0.132)		0.093 (0.128)
Northeast		0.153*** (0.020)		0.141*** (0.021)		0.149*** (0.026)		0.147*** (0.026)
South		-0.280*** (0.026)		-0.248*** (0.027)		-0.291*** (0.037)		-0.297*** (0.036)
West		-0.028 (0.024)		-0.019 (0.026)		0.025 (0.033)		0.025 (0.033)
Age		-0.010 (0.007)		-0.012* (0.007)		-0.003 (0.009)		-0.001 (0.009)
Age Squared $\div$ 100		0.008 (0.006)		0.010 (0.006)		0.002 (0.009)		-0.000 (0.009)
Tenure		-0.003 (0.002)		-0.004* (0.003)		-0.007* (0.003)		-0.006* (0.003)
Tenure Squared $\div$ 100		0.003 (0.009)		0.005 (0.009)		0.012 (0.013)		0.010 (0.013)
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oster $\delta^*$		5.98		2.01		1.31		1.71
Observations	3,448	3,367	3,203	3,124	2,037	1,980	2,037	1,980
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.27	0.44	0.32	0.44	0.32	0.45	0.31	0.45

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table repeats the results in Panel A of Table 4 and reports results from regressing an indicator for pro immigration roll-call votes on family immigration history, congressional district foreign-born population, and other covariates. MC Foreign Born is an indicator variable denoting if a member was born abroad as a non-citizen. Parents Foreign born ranges between 0 and 2 and counts the number of foreign-born parents. Grandparents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 4 and counts the number of foreign-born grandparents. Immigration Index ranges between 0 and 3 with each generation (self, parents, and grandparents) contributing one third of the weight to the index. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. The sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1. Democrats and the Midwest are the omitted categories. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table A.5:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: All Immigration Bills Pooled, Reporting All Control Coefficients

	Pro Immigration Vote							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.110*** (0.028)	0.041* (0.022)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.086*** (0.006)	0.040*** (0.005)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.049*** (0.003)	0.022*** (0.003)		
Immigration Index							0.088*** (0.006)	0.042*** (0.006)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.023*** (0.003)		0.020*** (0.003)		0.017*** (0.004)		0.017*** (0.004)
Republican		-0.165*** (0.009)		-0.151*** (0.009)		-0.160*** (0.011)		-0.162*** (0.011)
Other Party		-0.006 (0.037)		-0.018 (0.036)		-0.007 (0.038)		-0.017 (0.038)
Northeast		0.087*** (0.010)		0.082*** (0.010)		0.089*** (0.012)		0.087*** (0.012)
South		-0.153*** (0.013)		-0.133*** (0.013)		-0.152*** (0.018)		-0.159*** (0.017)
West		0.014 (0.012)		0.020 (0.012)		0.039** (0.016)		0.039** (0.016)
Age		-0.005 (0.003)		-0.004 (0.003)		-0.003 (0.004)		-0.003 (0.004)
Age Squared ÷ 100		0.004 (0.003)		0.004 (0.003)		0.003 (0.004)		0.002 (0.004)
Tenure		-0.004*** (0.001)		-0.004*** (0.001)		-0.004*** (0.002)		-0.004** (0.002)
Tenure Squared ÷ 100		0.007* (0.004)		0.010** (0.004)		0.005 (0.007)		0.004 (0.007)
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oster $\delta^*$		1.93		1.91		1.98		2.70
Observations	18,014	17,233	16,876	16,119	10,440	9,956	10,440	9,956
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.38	0.33	0.37	0.34	0.38	0.34	0.38

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table repeats the results in Panel A of Table 4 and reports results from regressing an indicator for pro immigration roll-call votes on family immigration history, congressional district foreign-born population, and other covariates. MC Foreign Born is an indicator variable denoting if a member was born abroad as a non-citizen. Parents Foreign born ranges between 0 and 2 and counts the number of foreign-born parents. Grandparents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 4 and counts the number of foreign-born grandparents. Immigration Index ranges between 0 and 3 with each generation (self, parents, and grandparents) contributing one third of the weight to the index. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. The sample includes votes on all immigration legislation. Democrats and the Midwest are the omitted categories. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table A.6:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: Excluding Foreign Born MCs

	Pro Immigration Vote					
	Panel A. Landmark Bills					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Parents Foreign Born	0.166*** (0.014)	0.078*** (0.012)				
Grandparents Foreign Born			0.085*** (0.007)	0.030*** (0.006)		
Immigration Index					0.193*** (0.015)	0.074*** (0.014)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.036*** (0.006)		0.039*** (0.008)		0.038*** (0.008)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oster $\delta^*$		1.83		1.21		1.50
Observations	3,119	3,047	1,953	1,903	1,953	1,903
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.45	0.32	0.46	0.32	0.46
	Panel B. All Immigration Bills					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Parents Foreign Born	0.090*** (0.007)	0.042*** (0.006)				
Grandparents Foreign Born			0.049*** (0.003)	0.021*** (0.003)		
Immigration Index					0.108*** (0.007)	0.049*** (0.006)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.021*** (0.003)		0.018*** (0.004)		0.018*** (0.004)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oster $\delta^*$		1.95		1.83		2.39
Observations	16,255	15,550	9,819	9,387	9,819	9,387
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.34	0.38	0.35	0.39	0.35	0.39

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table replicates the paper's main results but excludes foreign-born MCs from the sample, illustrating that the relationship between family immigration history and vote choice is not driven only by members who immigrated to the United States after birth. Parents Foreign born ranges between 0 and 2 and counts the number of foreign-born parents. Grandparents Foreign Born ranges between 0 and 4 and counts the number of foreign-born grandparents. Immigration Index ranges between 0 and 3 with each generation (self, parents, and grandparents) contributing one third of the weight to the index. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. In the top panel, the sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1. In the bottom panel, the sample includes votes on all immigration legislation. Other MC controls include party, census region, and quadratics in age and tenure. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table A.7:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: Oster  $\delta^*$ 

	Panel A. Landmark Bills			
	Measure of Immigration Family History			
	MC Foreign Born	Parents Foreign Born	Grandparents Foreign Born	Immigration Index
Baseline (Table 4 Panel A)	5.98	2.01	1.31	1.71
Add Additional District Controls	2.41	0.90	0.75	0.92
Add Additional MC Controls	2.40	0.91	0.76	0.94
Add DWNominate (1st+2nd)	3.03	0.77	0.72	1.13
	Panel B. All Immigration Bills			
	Measure of Immigration Family History			
	MC Foreign Born	Parents Foreign Born	Grandparents Foreign Born	Immigration Index
Baseline (Table 4 Panel B)	1.93	1.91	1.98	2.70
Add Additional District Controls	0.68	0.92	0.91	1.11
Add Additional MC Controls	0.68	0.93	0.92	1.14
Add DWNominate (1st+2nd)	0.61	0.69	0.71	0.96

*Note:* This table presents the  $\delta^*$  measure from Oster (2019) that how much additional explanatory power unobservables would have to have to push our coefficients of interest on family immigration history to zero. Panel A reports results from the landmark bill sample and Panel B reports results from the all immigration bill sample. In the first row, we present our baseline specification from Table 4 which includes fixed effects for bill, chamber, party, and region, as well as controls for the foreign-born population (in logs) in the district and second-order polynomials in MC age and MC tenure. In the second row, we add additional constituent controls with the log of total population and the inverse hyperbolic sines of both the urban population and the number of farms (we use inverse hyperbolic sines rather than logs because both urban population and number of farms take zeros). In the third row, we add to the controls in the second row a control for MC sex. In the fourth row, we add to the controls in the third row the first and second dimension of DW-Nominate scores. With controls for district, party, ideology, and more, there are few theoretically important controls remaining unaccounted for and even our lowest  $\delta^*$  of 0.61 when the coefficient of interest is on grandparents' foreign-born status suggests that omitted variables are unlikely to be driving our results.

**Table A.8:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: Chernozhukov et al. (2018) Double Machine Learning Results

	Landmark Bill Sample			All Immigration Bill Sample		
	Estimate	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Estimate	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
MC Foreign-Born	0.037	-0.066	0.141	0.007	-0.033	0.048
1+ Foreign-Born Parent	0.109	0.068	0.151	0.025	0.004	0.046
Both Foreign-Born Parents	0.068	0.023	0.113	0.009	-0.013	0.032
1+ Foreign-Born Grandparent	0.077	0.036	0.117	0.043	0.021	0.065
All Foreign-Born Grandparents	0.096	0.055	0.137	0.037	0.015	0.058
Immigration Index	0.098	0.054	0.141	0.024	0.002	0.046

*Note:* This table presents results from the double or debiased machine learning procedure proposed by Chernozhukov et al. (2018). We present estimated coefficients along with 95% confidence interval upper and lower bounds for our landmark bills sample and all bills samples. We use a random forest, though the results are robust to other ML model choices. In short, we “learn” very flexible mappings from our baseline set of control variable to our variable of interest (MC immigrant ancestry) and to our roll call outcomes with a random forest model. Though the coefficients on an MC’s own foreign-born status are not robust (possibly because such a small share of the sample is foreign-born), the other coefficients are (with one exception: both foreign-born parents in the all immigration bills sample). One difference between these results and those reported in Table 4 is that here we measure MC immigrant ancestry with indicator variables only. For example, rather than count the number of foreign-born grandparents, we create indicators for having one or more foreign-born grandparents and an indicator for having all four grandparents foreign-born. We use the package `DoubleML` package in R (Bach et al. 2021).

**Table A.9:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: Democrats Only

	Pro Immigration Vote							
	Panel A. Landmark Bills							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.475*** (0.073)	0.155* (0.093)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.266*** (0.017)	0.101*** (0.018)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.136*** (0.008)	0.041*** (0.010)		
Immigration Index							0.271*** (0.017)	0.090*** (0.021)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.045*** (0.008)		0.040*** (0.008)		0.047*** (0.011)		0.048*** (0.011)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,812	1,762	1,680	1,632	1,093	1,058	1,093	1,058
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.20	0.51	0.33	0.51	0.36	0.52	0.35	0.52
	Panel B. All Immigration Bills							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.255*** (0.025)	0.108*** (0.032)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.151*** (0.007)	0.065*** (0.008)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.079*** (0.004)	0.035*** (0.005)		
Immigration Index							0.154*** (0.007)	0.072*** (0.009)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.019*** (0.004)		0.015*** (0.004)		0.010** (0.005)		0.011** (0.005)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,675	9,153	9,084	8,577	5,752	5,413	5,752	5,413
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.29	0.38	0.33	0.38	0.33	0.36	0.32	0.36

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table replicates the paper's main results but includes only Democrats in the sample, illustrating that the relationship between family immigration history and vote choice is not driven only by members of one party. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. In the top panel, the sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1. In the bottom panel, the sample includes votes on all immigration legislation. Other MC controls include census region, and quadratics in age and tenure. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.



**Table A.10:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: Republicans Only

	Pro Immigration Vote							
	Panel A. Landmark Bills							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.083 (0.065)	0.091 (0.061)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.048*** (0.016)	0.046*** (0.015)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.022*** (0.008)	0.024*** (0.007)		
Immigration Index							0.045*** (0.016)	0.056*** (0.015)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.026*** (0.008)		0.027*** (0.008)		0.020** (0.010)		0.018* (0.010)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,618	1,589	1,506	1,477	933	912	933	912
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.43	0.48	0.44	0.48	0.46	0.53	0.46	0.53
	Panel B. All Immigration Bills							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.020 (0.023)	0.011 (0.024)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.021*** (0.007)	0.018*** (0.006)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.010*** (0.004)	0.011*** (0.003)		
Immigration Index							0.018*** (0.007)	0.021*** (0.006)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.025*** (0.004)		0.025*** (0.004)		0.022*** (0.005)		0.022*** (0.005)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,166	7,939	7,622	7,404	4,547	4,423	4,547	4,423
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.48	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.51

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table replicates the paper's main results but includes only Democrats in the sample, illustrating that the relationship between family immigration history and vote choice is not driven only by members of one party. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. In the top panel, the sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1. In the bottom panel, the sample includes votes on all immigration legislation. Other MC controls include census region, and quadratics in age and tenure. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table A.11:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: State Fixed Effects

	Pro Immigration Vote							
	Panel A. Landmark Bills							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.133** (0.064)	0.085 (0.055)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.091*** (0.012)	0.060*** (0.011)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.041*** (0.007)	0.025*** (0.006)		
Immigration Index							0.083*** (0.014)	0.055*** (0.013)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.014* (0.007)		0.016** (0.008)		0.018* (0.010)		0.017 (0.010)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,448	3,367	3,203	3,124	2,037	1,980	2,037	1,980
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.43	0.48	0.43	0.48	0.44	0.49	0.44	0.49
	Panel B. All Immigration Bills							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.045 (0.029)	0.025 (0.022)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.049*** (0.006)	0.031*** (0.005)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.026*** (0.003)	0.017*** (0.003)		
Immigration Index							0.045*** (0.007)	0.033*** (0.006)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.008** (0.003)		0.007** (0.004)		0.003 (0.005)		0.004 (0.004)
Other MC Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	18,014	17,233	16,876	16,119	10,440	9,956	10,440	9,956
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.38	0.37	0.39	0.37	0.39

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ 

*Note:* This table replicates the paper's main results but includes fixed effects for states in all columns. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. In the top panel, the sample includes votes on the key immigration legislation listed in Table 1. In the bottom panel, the sample includes votes on all immigration legislation. Other MC controls include party, and quadratics in age and tenure. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table A.12:** Immigration History and MC Vote Choice: All Bills Pooled, Saturating Family Immigration History

	Panel A. Pro Immigration Vote in Landmark Bill Sample					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
MC Foreign Born	0.256*** (0.062)	0.121** (0.055)	-0.016 (0.067)	0.002 (0.058)	-0.017 (0.068)	0.006 (0.059)
Parents Foreign Born			0.166*** (0.014)	0.079*** (0.012)	0.051** (0.021)	0.046*** (0.017)
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.068*** (0.009)	0.015* (0.008)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.039*** (0.006)		0.035*** (0.006)		0.037*** (0.008)
MC Age and Tenure Polynomials	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Region FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Party FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,448	3,367	3,203	3,124	2,037	1,980
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.27	0.44	0.32	0.44	0.32	0.45
	Panel B. Pro Immigration Vote in All Immigration Bill Sample					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
MC Foreign Born	0.110*** (0.028)	0.041* (0.022)	-0.032 (0.030)	-0.018 (0.023)	-0.027 (0.030)	-0.010 (0.023)
Parents Foreign Born			0.090*** (0.007)	0.042*** (0.006)	0.026** (0.011)	0.026*** (0.009)
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.040*** (0.005)	0.012*** (0.004)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.023*** (0.003)		0.020*** (0.003)		0.017*** (0.004)
MC Age and Tenure Polynomials	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Region FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Party FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bill FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	18,014	17,233	16,876	16,119	10,440	9,956
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.38	0.33	0.37	0.34	0.38

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table replicates the paper's main results but saturates the model with an MC's own foreign-born status, the MC's parents, and MC's grandparents. In the table, each column includes bill fixed effects and a variable indicating whether the member was in the House or in the Senate. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

**Table A.13:** Immigration History and Inverse Hyperbolic Sine of Immigration Speeches

	Immigration Speeches, Inverse Hyperbolic Sine							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
MC Foreign Born	0.211 (0.136)	0.073 (0.129)						
Parents Foreign Born			0.093*** (0.025)	0.051** (0.026)				
Grandparents Foreign Born					0.058*** (0.012)	0.031** (0.013)		
Immigration Index							0.119*** (0.026)	0.073*** (0.028)
Log Foreign Born Population in Congressional District		0.069*** (0.013)		0.064*** (0.013)		0.058*** (0.016)		0.057*** (0.016)
Republican		-0.038 (0.035)		-0.040 (0.037)		-0.018 (0.044)		-0.017 (0.043)
Other Party		0.131 (0.144)		0.115 (0.142)		0.141 (0.170)		0.128 (0.169)
Northeast		-0.078* (0.041)		-0.088** (0.044)		-0.088 (0.055)		-0.092* (0.055)
South		-0.049 (0.047)		-0.045 (0.048)		-0.088 (0.059)		-0.092 (0.058)
West		0.068 (0.050)		0.039 (0.051)		-0.007 (0.061)		-0.007 (0.062)
Age		0.019** (0.009)		0.018* (0.009)		0.003 (0.013)		0.003 (0.013)
Age Squared $\div$ 100		-0.027*** (0.009)		-0.025*** (0.009)		-0.013 (0.013)		-0.015 (0.013)
Tenure		0.052*** (0.005)		0.050*** (0.005)		0.047*** (0.006)		0.047*** (0.006)
Tenure Squared $\div$ 100		-0.090*** (0.018)		-0.087*** (0.018)		-0.077*** (0.022)		-0.078*** (0.022)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chamber FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,760	14,282	13,646	13,188	8,959	8,651	8,959	8,651
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.19	0.23	0.19	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.23	0.26

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Note:* This table replicates our main results for the relationship between immigration speeches and family immigration history. In the paper, the outcome variable is  $\log(1 + \text{Immigration Speech})$ . Here, we instead use the inverse hyperbolic sine of immigration speech as the outcome variable. All columns include congress and chamber fixed effects. Democrats and the Midwest are the omitted categories. Standard errors clustered at the MC level.

## A.4 RDD Robustness

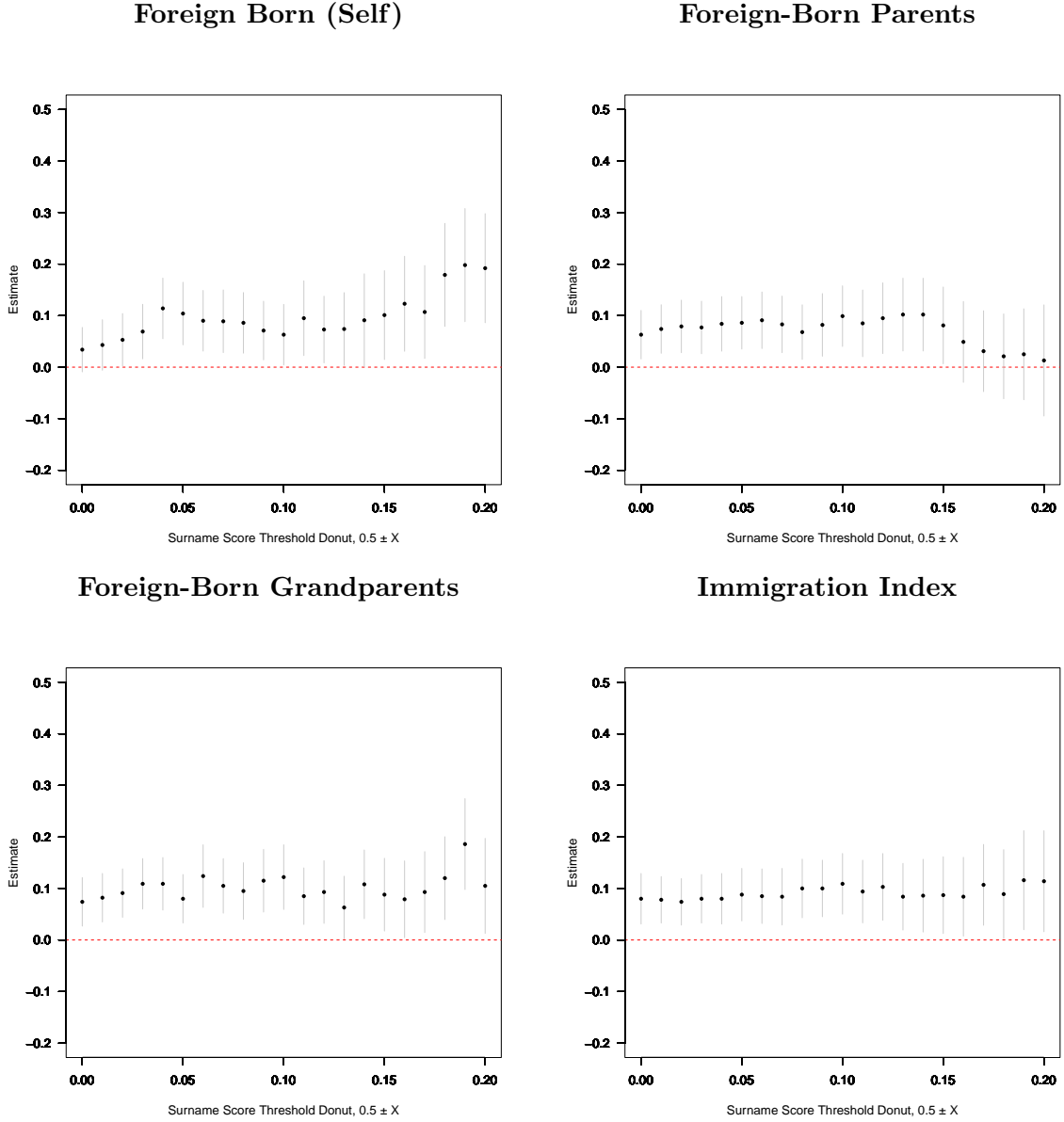
The RDD approach in our paper follows the standards for employing a regression discontinuity design in an electoral setting (Lee 2008). The key assumption hinges on the notion that winning a very close election occurs largely due to random factors. As an election grows closer, a candidate’s chance of landing narrowly on one side or the other of the 50% vote threshold, which determines the winner, begins to resemble a coin flip. By comparing the gap in vote choices between winners and losers at the 50% threshold we obtain an estimate of the effect of immigration background on vote choice. Crucially, this regression discontinuity approach relies on the continuity of the conditional mean function as we approach the threshold from at least one side (Lee and Lemieux 2010). We employ several robustness checks to provide additional evidence that (1) there are not jumps in the outcome at thresholds other than 50%, and (2) the assignment mechanism at the threshold is close to random.

### A.4.1 RDD Thresholds

The specific choice of threshold distinguishing “high” versus “low” probability of family immigration history based on surname does not appear to matter for the results. Figure A.4 visually displays the RDD results for different threshold choices. Moving from left to right along the x-axis varies the threshold calculation used to determine when the binary variable indicating an immigrant family history takes a value equal to one. For example, when  $x=0$  individuals with a Surname Score higher than the 50th percentile are classified as having a family immigration history and individuals whose Surname Score is below the 50th percentile are not. When  $x=10$ , then individuals with a Surname Score higher than the 60th percentile are classified as having a family immigration history equal to one and individuals with a Surname Score less than or equal to the 40th percentile are assigned a zero. As we move to the right, we increasingly restrict the size of the sample until it is no longer reasonable to perform the estimation. We continued to estimate the RDD results as long as we retained at least 50 effective observations.

Across all measures and all Surname Score thresholds, the results remain positive. In general, as we grow more restrictive in terms of defining who does and does not have a surname that denotes a family immigration history the effect sizes increase. This makes intuitive sense: setting

**Figure A.4:** RDD Robustness Check: Sensitivity of Estimates to Surname Score Cutoff Donut for Treatment Assignment (Optimal BW)



*Note:* This figure reports RDD estimates for different cutoffs in determining the threshold for classifying a surname as denoting foreign-born. The x-axis records the threshold. For example, at 0 individuals whose surname falls into the top half of all surnames would be classified as foreign born and those in the bottom half would be classified as not foreign born. At 0.17, the top third of surnames would be classified as foreign born and the bottom third would be classified as not foreign born; all others would be excluded from the sample. We perform a local linear regression to estimate the discontinuity and the sample is determined using an algorithm for optimal bandwidth in the running variable (vote share).

$x = 0$  classifies some people as having an immigration history equal to one and others with an immigration history equal to zero when their Surname Scores are very similar (i.e., someone in the 49th percentile would have an indicator variable equal to zero and someone in the 51st percentile

would have the indicator set to one). Such a coarse division likely adds considerable noise to our estimates. As the threshold grows more stringent, the distinction between a surname indicating an MC with a family history of immigration with an MC who does not have such a history grows sharper—until we no longer have enough observations to estimate the effects.

#### **A.4.2 RDD Robustness Checks**

Table A.14 reports the results of the same estimation procedure as in the main RDD, but using placebo outcomes as the dependent variable. We estimate the effects of quasi-random assignment of an MC with an immigrant history on pre-treatment covariates including region, district population characteristics, district-level presidential election Democratic vote shares, district-level turnout rate, age, party, tenure, and gender. Across all district-level placebo outcomes and all but two individual-level outcomes, we do not observe any meaningful relationship. Districts selecting immigrant candidates in close elections do appear to be slightly more likely to select Democratic candidates and candidates with fewer years spent in Congress. Overall, these results are in line with what we would observe by chance with  $p < 0.10$ . Table A.15 reports continuity checks for the RDD results. We reformulate our estimation as if the threshold between winning and losing an election was  $0.5 \pm c$  and re-estimate the results. Given that these thresholds are artificially constructed, we should observe no meaningful relationship between an MC’s immigration history and the outcome; put differently, we should not observe a jump in the probability of casting a pro-immigration vote anywhere except the actual threshold between electing an MC with versus without an immigrant background. Again, we do not observe statistically significant results at any of the alternative thresholds.

**Table A.14:** RDD Robustness Check with Placebo Outcome Variables: Imputed Immigration History (Surname Score) and Vote Choice, All Bills Pooled, Immigration Index

Panel A. District Level Placebo Outcomes												
	South	Midwest	West	log(FB Pop)	log(Black Pop)	log(Female Pop)	log(Male Pop)	log(Farms)	log(Pop)	log(Urban Pop)	Pres. Election D Voteshare	Pres. Election Turnout
Estimate	−0.034 (0.035)	−0.033 (0.057)	−0.017 (0.042)	0.18 (0.135)	0.244 (0.222)	0.016 (0.08)	0.02 (0.078)	−0.415 (0.277)	0.018 (0.079)	0.151 (0.114)	−.004 (0.009)	0.03 (0.019)
N	3723	3723	3723	3586	3598	3598	3598	3008	3598	3598	3720	3596
N (Effective)	1925	1855	1691	1937	1712	2284	2273	1381	2276	1784	1576	1364
BW	±10.082	±9.577	±8.479	±10.685	±8.88	±13.392	±13.316	±8.192	±13.351	±9.387	±7.821	±6.7789
Panel B. MC Level Bundled Treatment and Placebo Outcomes												
	Bundled Treatment				Placebo Outcomes							
	Age	Years in Congress	Dem	Female	Age <sub>t−1</sub>	Years in Congress <sub>t−1</sub>	Dem <sub>t−1</sub>	Female <sub>t−1</sub>				
Estimate	−1.7 (1.251)	−1.369** (0.614)	0.309*** (0.052)	0.003 (0.012)	0.902 (1.522)	0.616 (0.761)	−0.045 (0.062)	0.002 (0.015)				
N	3723	3723	3723	3723	3036	3036	3036	3036				
N (Effective)	1486	1587	2011	1482	1107	1108	826	1459				
BW	±7.23	±7.92	±10.743	±7.221	±7.358	±7.379	±5.484	±10.094				

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$   
SEs clustered at MC level.

*Note:* This table, as a robustness check, provides RDD estimates when we use a covariate as the outcome variable rather than voting on immigration. Each column lists the variable used as the outcome. We use an algorithm to calculate optimal bandwidth in the running variable, which is listed in the BW row. The N (Effective) row refers to how many observations remain in the sample after determining the optimal bandwidth. We perform a local linear regression to estimate the discontinuity.

**Table A.15:** RDD Continuity Check: Imputed Immigration History (Surname Score) and Vote Choice, All Bills Pooled

	40	45	50	55	60
Estimate	-0.047 (0.042)	-0.019 (0.035)	0.092*** (0.031)	-0.004 (0.028)	-0.033 (0.054)
N	4295	4295	4295	4295	4295
N (Effective)	1350	1614	2138	2061	800
BW	±7.054	±6.953	±9.651	±10.673	±5.774

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

SEs clustered at MC level.

*Note:* This table checks for continuity in the running variable. In each case, we recalculate treatment status based on an artificial threshold for vote share, different from the true threshold. In reality, the threshold distinguishing winners from losers is 50. As a result, there should not be discontinuities at other vote shares. Each column lists the threshold used. We use an algorithm to calculate optimal bandwidth in the running variable, which is listed in the BW row. The N (Effective) row refers to how many observations remain in the sample after determining the optimal bandwidth. We perform a local linear regression to estimate the discontinuity.



**Table A.16:** Donut Regression Discontinuity: Imputed Immigration History (Surname Score) and Vote Choice, 64th–91st Congress

	MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:											
	MC Foreign Born			Parents Foreign Born			Grandparents Foreign Born			Immigration Index		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Estimate	0.078** (0.038)	0.091** (0.041)	0.1** (0.043)	0.106*** (0.034)	0.103*** (0.037)	0.077** (0.035)	0.071** (0.035)	0.072** (0.036)	0.105** (0.043)	0.07** (0.034)	0.083** (0.036)	0.095** (0.039)
N	4182	4110	3957	4322	4252	4090	4302	4235	4065	4243	4174	4009
N (Effective)	1793	1666	1809	1961	1891	2089	1926	1846	1621	2057	1923	1974
BW	±8.008	±7.728	±9.33	±8.491	±8.491	±10.674	±8.352	±8.258	±8.021	±9.366	±8.975	±10.331
Donut	±0.25	±0.5	±1	±0.25	±0.5	±1	±0.25	±0.5	±1	±0.25	±0.5	±1

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

SEs clustered at MC level.

*Note:* This table replicates our main estimates but imposing a “donut” at the threshold between winning and losing an election. Elections with vote shares within a given donut are dropped from the sample. The size of the donut is listed in the row at the bottom of the table. The table reports estimates from a Regression Discontinuity where the sample is constructed by focusing on elections in which one candidate possessed an immigrant family history and one candidate did not. The estimate reported is the effect attributable to the candidate with the family history of immigration winning the election. Vote share is the running variable. We present estimates for each measure of family immigration history (Foreign-Born MC, Parents, or Grandparents as well as the Immigration Index) using an optimal bandwidth.

**Table A.17:** Regression Discontinuity: Imputed Immigration History (Surname Score) and Immigration Speeches, 64th–91st Congress

	MC Immigrant Ancestry Measured as:											
	MC			Parents			Grandparents			Immigration Index		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Estimate	-0.007 (0.074)	-0.067 (0.124)	-0.024 (0.087)	-0.128* (0.078)	-0.024 (0.126)	-0.121 (0.09)	-0.021 (0.081)	0.045 (0.138)	-0.038 (0.097)	-0.064 (0.079)	-0.04 (0.13)	-0.089 (0.094)
N	3534	3534	3534	3590	3590	3590	3650	3650	3650	3550	3550	3550
N (Effective)	1720	1001	1818	1634	1036	1846	1732	1067	1887	1721	1015	1817
BW	±9.068	±5	±10	±8.504	±5	±10	±8.798	±5	±10	±9.193	±5	±10

\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

SEs clustered at MC level.

*Note:* This table reports RDD estimates of the effect of a family history of immigration on immigration speeches given by an MC. The results are for members of the House of Representatives and Senate. The outcome variable is measured as  $\log(1 + \text{Immigration Speech})$ . We use an algorithm to calculate optimal bandwidth in the running variable in columns 1, 4 and 7. Bandwidths are listed in the BW row. The N (Effective) row refers to how many observations remain in the sample after determining the optimal bandwidth. We determine treatment status (i.e., family history of immigration versus no family history of immigration) based on whether member surnames fall in the top or bottom half of surnames indicating foreign birth, using census data on foreign births by region and surname. We perform a local linear regression to estimate the discontinuity.

## A.5 Summary Statistics

**Table A.18:** Summary Statistics for Key Variables, Landmark Bill Sample of Voting MCs Matched to Census Data

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Median
Foreign Born MC	852	0.03	0.18	0
Parents Foreign Born	783	0.38	0.73	0.00
Grandparents Foreign Born	505	1.70	1.81	1.00
Immigration Index	505	0.76	0.94	0.25
At Least One Foreign Born Parent	783	0.23	0.42	0.00
At Least One Foreign Born Grandparent	534	0.55	0.50	1.00
All Foreign Born Parents	783	0.15	0.36	0.00
All Foreign Born Grandparents	505	0.34	0.47	0.00
Surname Foreign Born MC	851	0.09	0.11	0.06
Surname Parents Foreign Born	851	0.48	0.46	0.35
Surname Grandparents Foreign Born	850	1.25	1.07	1.10
Democrat	852	0.45	0.50	0
Republican	852	0.55	0.50	1
Other Party	852	0.005	0.07	0
House	852	0.68	0.47	1
Nonwhite	769	0.00	0.00	0.00
Northeast	852	0.27	0.45	0
Midwest	852	0.30	0.46	0
West	852	0.16	0.37	0
South	852	0.27	0.45	0
CD Foreign Born Pop.	843	172,104.90	528,410.20	27,824.00
Age (Last Obs.)	852	56.24	10.84	56.5
Tenure (Last Obs.)	852	8.37	8.21	6

*Note:* This table reports summary statistics, including number, mean, standard deviation, and median, for the key variables in our data. The sample in this table is comprised of members of Congress who cast votes on one or more of the landmark immigration bills in our sample. The age and tenure variables (which change over time) are given for an individual's last observation in the data, in cases where there are a member has participated in multiple votes in the sample.

**Table A.19:** Summary Statistics for Key Variables, All Immigration Bills Sample of MCs Matched to Census Data, 64th–91st Congress

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Median
Foreign Born MC	2,915	0.04	0.19	0.00
Parents Foreign Born	2,660	0.42	0.76	0.00
Grandparents Foreign Born	1,569	1.87	1.83	2.00
Immigration Index	1,569	0.87	0.98	0.50
At Least One Foreign Born Parent	2,661	0.26	0.44	0.00
At Least One Foreign Born Grandparent	1,694	0.60	0.49	1.00
All Foreign Born Parents	2,660	0.17	0.37	0.00
All Foreign Born Grandparents	1,569	0.38	0.49	0.00
Surname Foreign Born MC	2,915	0.09	0.11	0.06
Surname Parents Foreign Born	2,915	0.47	0.45	0.35
Surname Grandparents Foreign Born	2,913	1.25	1.06	1.07
Democrat	2,916	0.52	0.50	1
Republican	2,916	0.47	0.50	0
Other Party	2,916	0.01	0.10	0
House	2,916	0.82	0.38	1
Nonwhite	2,596	0.003	0.06	0.00
Northeast	2,916	0.28	0.45	0
Midwest	2,916	0.32	0.47	0
West	2,916	0.12	0.33	0
South	2,916	0.28	0.45	0
CD Foreign Born Pop.	2,797	121,199.20	395,268.10	27,973.00
Age (Last Obs.)	2,915	55.95	11.31	56.00
Tenure (Last Obs.)	2,916	9.39	7.67	6

*Note:* This table reports summary statistics, including number, mean, standard deviation, and median, for the key variables in our data. The sample in this table is comprised of all members of Congress between the 64th and 91st Congresses. The age and tenure variables (which change over time) are given for an individual’s last observation in the data.

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