Mind what your voters read: Media exposure and international economic policy making*

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Abstract

We investigate how media exposure affects elected representatives' response to preferences on immigration and trade policy. Using a novel dataset spanning the period 1986-2004, in which we match individual opinion surveys with congressmen roll call votes, we find that greater exposure to media coverage tends to increase a politician's accountability when it comes to migration policy making, while we find no effect for trade policy. Our results thus suggest that more information on the behavior of elected officials affects decisions only when the policy issue is perceived to be salient by the electorate.

JEL classification: F22, J61.

Keywords: Trade Reforms, Immigration Reforms, Individual preferences, Media exposure.

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"To better understand the impact the media has on political accountability at the level of the politician, we need more studies of decisions made by individual politicians." (Lim, Snyder, and Stromberg 2014)

1 Introduction

Liberalizing trade and migration policies brings about efficiency gains, that have been documented in several studies, using a variety of theoretical frameworks.[1] Still, as argued by many observers, important distortions continue to exist to the international flow of both goods and workers, and a distinguished literature has developed over the years to understand why and how these distortions are put in place. As argued by Rodrik (1995), the starting block of all these analyses is represented by individual preferences towards globalization. While several studies have investigated the drivers of attitudes towards globalization, little *direct* evidence exists on the process through which they are taken into account in the actual policy making. Importantly, as argued by several scholars in economics and political science, knowledge of the behavior of elected representatives is key to insure their accountability to the electorate. The goal of this paper is to address this important question by investigating how media exposure affects the elected representatives response to constituent's preferences for immigration and trade reform.

Our analysis will focus on the United States, a country for which we have been able to gather information on the preferences of the electorate on these two issues, and for which we also have data on the decisions taken by elected officials. In particular, we have constructed measures of aggregate opinion towards trade and migration at the congressional district level, and combined that information with data on the voting behavior of each congressman on trade and migration policy, together with a wealth of additional district and individual policy maker information. Our data cover two decades spanning the period 1986-2004 during which Congress acted on several key pieces of legislation, like the 1993 approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the 1994 ratification of the Uruguay Round Agreements of the GATT and the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. To capture the role played by the media our analysis builds on previous work by Snyder and Strömberg (2010) who have convincingly argued that the geographic mismatch between the market for local newspapers and the shape of the congressional district provides useful insights on the actual information that is *exogenously* available to the individual constituent.

Our analysis suggests that important differences exist between the mechanisms through which

[1] E.g. see Hamilton and Whalley 1984, Feenstra 1995, Arkolakis, Costinot, and Rodriguez – Clare 2012, di Giovanni, Levchenko, and Ortega 2012, Battisti et al. 2014.

preferences towards international trade and migration inform the actual policy making. In particular, we find that greater exposure to the scrutiny exercised by the media has a statistically significant and sizeable disciplining effect when it comes to migration policy. The same is instead not true when we consider international trade. This basic result continues to hold when we control for a variety of additional district and individual level characteristics that have been found in the previous literature to be important drivers of representative's voting behavior in international economic policy making.

How can these findings be rationalized? Standard economic models in the tradition of Heckscher and Ohlin suggest that trade and migration share similar causes and have analogous consequences when it comes to the labor market position of workers in the destination country. At the same time, it is well known that there are important differences between the drivers of preferences towards trade and migration. For instance, welfare state considerations are likely to play a much bigger role for the latter rather than the former, and the same is true when it comes to cultural factors (Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2007). As a result, while in many opinion surveys immigration appears as one of the most important issues facing the individual respondent, this is hardly the case for trade policy. For example, data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study highlight that in 2006 over 40% of the respondents in the United States thought that migration was an extremely important issue in determining whom they voted for, suggesting that this issue is as relevant as social security, taxes and education. Trade, on the other hand, was rated at the same level of salience only by 16% of the respondents (see Guisinger 2009). One possible explanation for our findings is thus that media exposure enhances accountability only for issues which are perceived to be salient by the electorate.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 relates our work to the existing literature, whereas section 3 presents the measure of media exposure. Section 4 presents our dataset, and section 5 discusses our main results. Section 6 addresses potential reverse causality concerns , while 7 assesses the robustness of our findings. Section 8 concludes.

2 Literature

The analysis carried out in this paper contributes to fill an important gap in the literature by directly exploring the link between individual preferences towards globalization and the voting behavior of U.S. representatives on trade and migration policy reforms. In particular, our focus is on the role of the media in enhancing political accountability. Thus, our work is related to at least three strands of literature: the growing set of studies that have analyzed public opinion towards globalization and its determinants; the research that has investigated the drivers of the voting be-

havior of elected officials on these matters in the U.S. Congress, and the more recent contributions that have studied the causal effect that media exposure has on political accountability.

The literature on public opinions has analyzed and emphasized the role that both economic and non–economic individual–level characteristics play in shaping preferences towards trade and migration. The main message that emerges from studies in this tradition is that economic drivers that work through the labor market and the welfare state do play an important role in informing opinions towards migration and (at least when it comes to the labor market channel) trade (see for instance Scheve and Slaughter 2001a, Mayda and Rodrik 2005, Facchini and Mayda 2009, Blonigen 2011 etc.). Non–economic drivers are also found to matter. This is true both in the case of opinions towards migration – where the role of cultural and national-identity issues and of racial and cultural prejudice has been emphasized (see Mayda 2006, Dustmann and Preston 2007 and Card, Dustmann, and Preston 2012) – and towards trade (Mayda and Rodrik 2005), where patriotic and nationalistic feelings have been found to reduce support for opening up the economy to international competition. Importantly, while many studies have highlighted the role that the public's preferences play in a democratic society as a key driver of economic policy making (e.g. Rodrik 1995), very limited evidence is available on how this process actually takes place (for an exception, see Facchini and Mayda 2010).

The determinants of congressional action on trade and migration policy have been extensively analyzed. Several contributions have examined individual pieces of legislations (for trade, see for instance Baldwin 1985, Marks 1993 and Baldwin and Magee 2000; for migration, see Gonzalez and Kamdar 2000, Fetzer 2006). A few studies have instead taken a broader, longer term perspective. Hiscox (2002) has investigated the determinants of support for thirty major pieces of trade legislation introduced between 1824 and 1994 to compare the relative performance of the Heckscher–Ohlin and Ricardo–Viner models in explaining support for trade reforms. Conconi, Facchini, and Zanardi (2012) looked instead at the determinants of support for trade liberalization in the post–1970 era, considering fifteen major trade bills introduced in the period, and uncovering the important role played by election proximity in shaping protectionist behavior. Milner and Tingley (2011) and Facchini and Steinhardt (2011) focus instead on a large set of migration policy reforms, introduced after 1970, and investigate the role of both economic and non-economic determinants. In a recent paper, Conconi, Facchini, Steinhardt, and Zanardi (2012) consider congressional action on both trade and migration liberalization during the same period. Interestingly, they find that economic factors that work through the labor market play a similar role in both areas. Importantly, in these studies, the role of public opinion towards trade and migration is not explicitly considered as a driver of the voting behavior of individual representatives. The purpose of this paper is to fill this gap, by modeling the impact that the scrutiny of a representative's

action by the media has in shaping her voting behavior.

For this reason, this paper is also related to the growing literature in economics and political science that studies how the media shape public opinion and the electoral accountability of politicians. As argued by Ashworth (2012) in his recent review, the key challenge in this research area is to identify plausibly exogenous variation in the features that the theory identifies as important determinants of the responsiveness of politicians to their electorate. To this end, Snyder and Strömberg (2010) have exploited mismatches between the geography of congressional districts and the geography of media markets in the United States to trace the entire process through which an increase in information leads to greater or smaller responsiveness to election concerns. Interestingly, in their analysis of broad patterns in roll call votes, Snyder and Strömberg (2010) find that representatives of districts characterized by higher congruence tend to vote less often in line with their party orientation, and they also find that the extra news coverage induced by higher congruence makes representatives roll call votes less ideologically extreme. In our analysis of roll call votes on trade and migration we contribute to this literature by investigating whether the media's information transmission has a different impact depending on the saliency of the issue at stake, which as argued by Guisinger (2009) is likely to be comparatively high in the case of migration and low in the case of trade.

3 Measuring media exposure

Assessing the role of media exposure on a politician's responsiveness to his/her constituency preferences presents a series of significant challenges. First and foremost, media coverage is typically endogenous vis a vis most of the outcomes we might be interested in studying. For instance, consider the role that the media can play in supporting the work of democratic institutions. The observation that countries with a freer press are more democratic does not necessarily lead to conclude that free media *cause* an increase in democracy, as it is governments that are in the position to allow or not political coverage, and less democratic governments have stronger incentives to silence the press. Similarly, evidence suggesting that more news coverage of political activities results in better informed citizens can hardly be deemed causal, as both higher demand for news and better knowledge could be simply the result of the unobserved intrinsic preferences of the electorate for more information (see Ashworth 2012).

Several attempts have been made to address the potential endogeneity of media coverage with respect to political accountability. Particularly relevant for our analysis is the recent contribution by Snyder and Strömberg (2010), who introduce the measure of "congruence" between the electoral district of a representative and local media markets in the United States which we will be using

throughout our analysis. As it had already been pointed out by Hess (1991) and Vinson (2003) media like local television provide substantially less coverage of congressmen activities than local newspapers. For this reason Snyder and Strömberg (2010) build their measure focusing on the markets for local newspapers. To grasp the basic idea behind their research design, consider a metropolitan area including an inner city district and multiple suburban districts. In this example, it is likely that many of the suburban voters will obtain their local news from a paper based in the big city and sold all over the metropolitan area. If the newspaper dedicates more attention to the politician elected in the inner city district, then inner city voters will obtain more information on their representative than their suburban counterparts. If models of electoral accountability are correct, this will lead to greater responsiveness to the electorate for the inner city representative, closely scrutinized by the media, than for the representatives elected in the suburbs receiving only limited attention.

The basic assumption that must hold for this type of measure of political coverage to be exogenous is that the "economic geography" factors that shape media markets should be different from the "political geography" factors that determine congressional district boundaries. This is likely to be the case, as on the one hand congressional districts boundaries are drawn so that all districts in each state have the same population, representation is guaranteed to different racial groups, incumbents are protected etc. On the other hand, the boundaries of local newspaper markets are driven by other factors. In particular, local newspapers are typically based in urban areas, with strong demand for advertising and news about the city's public affairs. At the same time, their sales in the surrounding areas strongly depend on the distance between the suburb and the newspaper's headquarters and on the socio–economic characteristics of the area's residents.[2] As a result the overlap of congressional districts and local newspaper markets exhibits substantial variation across space. Formally, Snyder and Strömberg (2010) define their measure of congruence for district d as follows:

$$Congruence_d = \sum_n MarketShare_{nd} ReaderShare_{nd} \tag{1}$$

where $MarketShare_{nd}$ indicates newspaper's n share of total newspaper sales in district d, and $ReaderShare_{nd}$ is the share of newspaper's n readers that live in district d. This measure varies depending on the number of newspapers serving a given district, their respective market shares as well as on the importance that each district has for a newspaper's total sales. The measure ranges between zero and one, with the latter value representing a situation in which an electoral district is perfectly matched with newspapers' markets. As noted by Snyder and Strömberg (2010) "...since

[2]For an excellent analysis of the working of the US newspaper market, see Fan (2013).

Congruence is defined using market shares, it is not dependent on total newspaper penetration... This is important since total newspaper readership in an area is related to characteristics such as education and income levels which are also related to political knowledge" (see also Lim, Snyder, and Stromberg 2014).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 APPROX HERE]

To fix ideas consider Figure 1, where we illustrate three equally sized congressional districts A, B, C covered by three local newspapers a, b, c. In the left panel we consider the situation in which there is perfect overlap between congressional districts and media markets, i.e. each district is served by only one newspaper ($MarketShare_{nd} = 1$ if $n = d$, and 0 otherwise), and each newspaper is only sold in one district ($ReaderShare_{nd} = 1$ if $n = d$, and 0 otherwise). As a result, congruence takes a value of one everywhere. In the central panel, we depict instead an alternative scenario, in which newspaper a sells only in district A, and no other paper is read there. Newspapers b and c are instead sold in both districts B and C and split each market equally. In this case congruence takes a value of 1 in district A and a value of $1/2$ in districts B and C. Finally, the right most panel illustrates a situation in which all newspapers are sold in all districts and they enjoy the same market share in each of them. Consequently congruence takes a value of $1/3$ everywhere.

Using this measure, Snyder and Strömberg (2010) show that greater congruence implies that more information about the representative is available to a district's resident. In particular, their results suggest that in each electoral term "...congruence going from zero to one is associated with 170 more articles about the congressman appearing in an average paper selling in his or her district. It is associated with 100 more articles reaching an average household and around 30 more articles being read." Furthermore, they provide evidence that the average district resident takes advantage of this increased information flow and is better able to recognize her representative's name, ideological leanings etc. For all these reasons, *Congruence* appears to be a good proxy for the amount of information available on the behavior of House Representatives to their constituents, and we will use it to study the role that media exposure might play in insuring that an elected politician's choices will reflect her constituency preferences on international economic policy.

To causally identify the effect of media exposure on the accountability of an elected official to her constituency's preferences on trade and migration one identifying assumptions must be satisfied: *Congruence* must not be systematically correlated with the voting behavior of Representatives on trade and migration. If this were the case, our estimates would be biased. For instance if congruence and voting on migration liberalization were positively correlated, we would over–estimate the effect of media coverage on a politician's responsiveness to her constituency's

preferences. Our data allow us to directly assess the validity of this assumption and we find that there is no statistically significant relationship between *Conrguence* and representatives' voting behavior on either trade or migration.[3]

4 Data

The construction of our dataset draws on a number of different sources. We collect information on legislative votes on trade and migration policy measures in the U.S. House of Representatives, which have been obtained from the Congressional Roll Call Voting Dataset of the Policy Agenda Project and the Library of Congress (THOMAS). Since these datasets provide only rough information about the content of the bills, we have supplemented them using additional sources, like the Congressional Quarterly publications and existing historical accounts like the ones by Gimpel and Edwards (1999) and Destler (2005) (see also Conconi et al. 2012 for more details).

As for legislation related to trade, we focus on all major trade bills introduced in the U.S. Congress between 1986 and 2004 (see Table 1).[4] In particular, we include in our analysis votes on the implementation of multilateral trade agreements (Tokyo and Uruguay rounds of the GATT) and preferential trade agreements (e.g. NAFTA) negotiated in this period, as well as the votes on the conferral and extension of fast track trade negotiating authority to the President, which, as it has been argued by the literature, makes it easier to negotiate trade agreements (see Conconi et al. 2012). With respect to immigration, following Facchini and Steinhardt (2011) we restrict our analysis to bills with a potential impact on labor supply, i.e. that either regulate legal immigration or tackle illegal immigration. We proceed in this way to more closely match the voting behavior of elected representatives to the available information on individual preferences towards immigration.[5]

We restrict our attention to final passage votes, which determine whether a bill clears the House or not. In particular, we do not consider votes on amendments. We follow this approach because voting on amendments is often strategic and therefore is less likely to distinctly reflect the interests of a legislator's constituency. Table 1 summarizes the votes on trade and immigration legislation that took place in the U.S. House of Representatives between 1986 and 2004, which

[3] In particular, regressing the representatives' voting behavior on congruence and state–year interaction we obtain a coefficient (standard error clustered at the district level) of -0.0289 (0.202) for migration and 0.132 (0.109) for trade.

[4] In particular we cover bills granting or extending fast track authority and ratifying bilateral or multilateral trade agreements.

[5] In particular, we exclude, for instance, bills that deal primarily with the provision of public goods to illegal migrants or the federal reimbursement of health and education costs to states.

constitute the basis of our empirical analysis.[6]

[INSERT TABLE 1 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

Next, we combine our data on trade and immigration bills with the corresponding records of individual voting behavior of House representatives. This information is provided by the VOTEVIEW project (http://voteview.ucsd.edu) of Poole and Rosenthal (1997). In addition, the VOTEVIEW database includes information on congressmen's name, party affiliation, state of residence, and congressional district, which enable us to link legislators to their constituencies. With respect to information on representatives' age and gender, we use data from three sources: up to 2000, we rely on ICPSR Study number 7803 and the data base built by Swift et al. (2000); from 2001 onwards, we rely on data provided by the Biographical Directory of the US Congress.

Finally, we match our data on individual voting records with information on the characteristics of electoral constituencies. For this purpose, we use data from the American National Election Studies (ANES), a biannual representative survey carried out in election years that contains detailed information on the place of residence of individual respondents,[7] and the Congressional District Data Files of Lublin (1997) and Adler (2003), who have aggregated Census data at the congressional-district level, taking into account the decennial redistricting. We supplement them using information taken directly from the U.S. Census whenever needed.

Our dependent variable is the representative's votes on bills regulating trade and immigration ($Vote_{bdt}$). In the case of bills liberalizing trade or migration, a vote coded 1 indicates that the district's representative supports more open trade or immigration, and 0 otherwise. In the case of legislation restricting trade or immigration, a vote is coded 0 if the representative votes in favor of a restrictive policy and 1 otherwise. In other words we have coded these variables so that a value of 1 indicates a vote supporting the liberalization of trade or immigration, or opposing their restriction. Conversely, a value of 0 indicates that the representative has voted in favor of restrictions, or against lifting restrictions, on trade or migration.

Our key explanatory variables are a measure of a district's preferences towards trade and migration and the indicator for congruence between media markets and congressional districts described in section 3. We assess individual opinions towards international economic policy using two questions that have been asked in several waves of the ANES and which have been extensively used in the literature to study the determinants of preferences towards trade and migration (e.g.

[6]Note that this is not an exhaustive list because of limits to the availability of our key explanatory variable. For details on the full sample of votes on migration and trade that took place in this period, see Conconi, Facchini, Steinhardt, and Zanardi (2012).

[7]This data has been used extensively in the literature. For recent analyses based on it, see for instance Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter (2007) and Snyder and Strömberg (2010).

see Citrin et al. 1997, Scheve and Slaughter 2001a, Scheve and Slaughter 2001b and Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2007). The question on trade reads as follows: "Some people have suggested placing new limits on imports in order to protect American jobs. Others say that such limits would raise consumer prices and hurt American exports. Do you favor placing new limits on imports, or not?" and the possible answers are "Favor new limits", "Oppose new limits", "Don't know" and "Haven't thought much".[8] We have constructed a "pro–trade" dummy that takes a value of one if the respondent answered "Oppose new limits" and zero if the answer was "Favor new limits", while we have disregarded "Don't know" and "Haven't thought much" replies. As for the question on migration, it reads as follows in all years: "Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be increased, stay as now, or decreased?". We have constructed a "pro–immigration" dummy that takes a value of one if the individual is in favor of increasing migration or leaving it as it is now, and zero otherwise. Also in this case we have disregarded "Don't know" and "Not available" replies.[9] For our main specification we use the mean of the "pro–trade" ($TradeOp_{dt}$) and "pro–immigration" ($MigOp_{dt}$) dummies to measure district–level preferences. In robustness checks we have also experimented using their median values.

Two additional sets of drivers are used to explain voting behavior. The first focuses on district-level characteristics, whereas the second considers instead individual features of the representative. As it has been argued in the literature (see for instance Conconi et al. 2012) a district's factor endowment might play an important role in shaping policy preferences, and we capture it using the variable $SkillRatio_{dt}$, which measures the proportion of high-skilled individuals in the total population over 25 years of age at time t in congressional district d. High-skilled individuals are defined as those having earned at least a bachelor's degree. To proxy for the sectoral structure of the local economy, we use instead the share of individuals in the labor force employed in each one digit sector.[10] We also include a measure of district-level unemployment ($Unemployment_{dt}$), which is defined as the share of individuals in the total labor force not having a job, but who have been looking for it in the past four weeks.

The literature on public opinions towards trade and migration has emphasized that the redistribution among different groups within society carried out by the welfare state is an important driver of preferences towards globalization (Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2007, Facchini and

[8] In 1986 the "Haven't thought much" option was not available.

[9] The share of of "Don't know" and "Haven't thought much" in the migration question is approximately 3 percent, whereas for the trade question, it is consistently above 30 percent. In our robustness checks we experiment with different definitions of both variables, obtaining broadly similar results.

[10] Details on the data construction are available from the National Historic Geographical Information System website, https://www.nhgis.org/ and Bureau of Labor Statistics website http://www.bls.gov/iag/home.htm.

Mayda 2009). To capture the role of the welfare state in our analysis, we consider the mean family income within a district ($Log\ mean\ family\ income_{dt}$). Alternatively, in robustness checks we experiment with the median family income ($Log\ median\ family\ income_{dt}$) or with the ratio of average to median family income, which measures the extent of inequality within a district ($Inequality_{dt}$).

Finally, we include also proxies for the degree of urbanization and ethnic composition. To this end we use Census data, and construct the variable $Urban_{dt}$ that captures the share of the population living in urban areas, to account for potential differences in attitudes towards immigration and trade between rural and urban areas. In a robustness check we use also a measure of population density per square mile ($Log\ Pop\ Density_{dt}$). Next, we define the variable $Foreign-born_{dt}$, which measures the share of foreign-born in the district's population. Finally, we explore the existence of possible coalitions among minorities in shaping migration policy by including $African-American_{dt}$, i.e. the share of blacks in the population.

Turning now to individual-level controls for the representative's characteristics, we start with a measure of ideology, which is proxied by $Democrat_{dt}$, a dummy variable taking a value of one if the representative is a member of the Democratic party. We have also used two alternative indicators: the first dimension of the DW nominate score ($DW-Nominate\ score_{dt}$), and the ADA score ($ADA\ score_{dt}$), which have been normalized so that a higher score identifies a more liberal politician.[11] Age ($Age-Representative_{dt}$) and gender ($Gender-Representative_{dt}$) have been shown to play a significant role in shaping individual attitudes towards trade and migration (see for instance Mayda and Rodrik 2005 and Facchini and Mayda 2009). For this reason, we also include these demographic characteristics of legislators in our analysis, and in robustness checks we also experiment with a measure of tenure in office ($Tenure_{dt}$). As educational background might affect the voting behavior on globalization, in some specifications we account also for whether a representative has attended an elite educational institution ($Educ-Representative-ivy_{dt}$). This information is recorded in the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress.[12] The last individual-level controls we use are proxies for the influence of pressure groups on U.S. representatives. In particular, we employ data on labor and corporate Political Action Committees (PACs) contributions ($PACLabor_{dt}$ and $PACCorporate_{dt}$ respectively), which are provided by the Federal Election Commission (http://www.fec.gov/).

[11] The DW-nominate measure is provided by the VOTEVIEW project (http://voteview.ucsd.edu), whereas the ADA score is constructed by the American for Democratic Action, a lobby group. The main difference between the former and the latter is that the ADA score uses only votes on a sub-sample of bills, whereas the DW nominate score employs every roll call votes in each congress, and is based on a more sophisticated estimation procedure.

[12] This information is available in digital format as ICPSR Study 3371 until 1989, and then from the following website http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp.

Opinions on trade and migration are not elicited in every bi-annual wave of the ANES. In particular, the former are available for the 1986 through 2000 and 2004 election cycles, and the latter for the 1992 through 2000 and 2004 election cycles. Thus, our sample covers those Congresses during which a bill on trade or migration came to the floor and information on public opinion on the two issues is available in the ANES. As a result, our analysis considers the 13 bills listed in Table 1. For an overview of the content of the various pieces of legislation we include in our analysis, see Conconi et al. (2012).

[INSERT TABLE 2 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

Table 2 provides summary statistics for the data used in our analysis, where we report separate figures for votes on trade and migration. The first stylized fact that emerges is the broad difference in support for trade and migration in the US House of Representatives: while in only 40% of our observations a vote in favor of freer immigration was recorded, the corresponding figure for trade was 63%. Turning to our main explanatory variables, the value of congruence is remarkably similar in the two samples at just above 40 percent. As for the opinion variables, the mean value of the pro–trade dummy is 36% while the value of the pro–immigration dummy equals 45%. Note, though, that given the difference in the phrasing of the two questions, the two measures are not directly comparable.[13] As for the other regressors, they all appear not to differ significantly across samples.

[INSERT FIGURES 2,3 APPROX HERE]

Figures 2 and 3 highlight a clear pattern that emerges from the data. The first illustrates California's congressional districts 6 and 39 in 1998. Both districts are characterized by electorates that support more open immigration policies. In particular, over 53 percent of the population in district 6 and 69 percent of the population in district 39 have declared to be in favor of increasing migration or leaving it as it is now (panel (b)). At the same time, only district 6 exhibits a high level of congruence (57 percent), whereas district 39 is characterized by low levels of congruence (9 percent; see panel (c)). Interestingly, the representative from the "high congruence" district 6 voted in favor of freer migration, supporting H.R. 3736, whereas the representative of the "low congruence" district ended up opposing that bill (panel (d)).

Figure 3 focuses instead on Texas' districts 7 and 9 in 1998. Also in this case, public opinion in the two constituencies is similar: in both cases well over two thirds of the electorate is in favor of trade liberalization, but while in district 9 congruence is high at 63.2 percent, in the

[13] Given that in our empirical analysis we will exploit the variation of opinions on each separate topic across districts, this is not a concern for the interpretation of our main results.

case of district 7 congruence is low, at approximately 14 percent. Importantly, in this case, there is no obvious relationship between the electorates' preferences and the voting behavior of House Representatives. Focusing on H.R. 2621, we see that Nick Lampson, elected in district 9 ended up voting against trade liberalization, even if the congruence between his district and the local newspaper market was very high, while William Archer Jr. ended up voting in favor of it even if congruence was low.

While these examples suggest that congruence plays an important role in shaping the voting behavior of elected officials when it comes to migration, they also indicate that this is not true in the case of trade policy. In the remainder of the paper, we will systematically investigate the role that the media play in enhancing the accountability of elected officials on these two dimensions of international economic policy.

5 Empirical Analysis

In this section we present the core of our analysis. We start by describing our empirical strategy, we turn then to discuss our main results and finally we present evidence on the role played by electoral concerns in explaining our findings.

5.1 Specification

In our empirical analysis we study to what extent the probability that a representative votes pro-trade or pro-migration depends on the preferences of its electorate and on the press coverage that the politician's behavior receives. Specifically, we estimate a fully interacted linear probability model which allows us to formally assess whether the impact of our key drivers is the same for both votes on migration and trade bills:[14]

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Vote}_{bdt} &= [\alpha^1 \text{Op}_{bdt} + \beta^1 \text{Cong}_{dt} + \gamma^1 \text{Op}_{bdt} \times \text{Cong}_{dt} + \mathbf{X}_{dt}\delta + I_{st}] \times \text{M}_{bt} + \\ &+ [\alpha^2 \text{Op}_{bdt} + \beta^2 \text{Cong}_{dt} + \gamma^2 \text{Op}_{bdt} \times \text{Cong}_{dt} + \mathbf{X}_{dt}\delta + I_{st}] \times \text{T}_{bt} + u_{bdt} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where $Vote_{bdt}$ is a dummy variable which takes a value of one if the representative of district d has voted pro immigration or pro trade at time t. Op_{bdt} is the share of residents of district d that, in year t, are in favor of more open policies on the subject dealt with by bill b (either migration or trade), and $Cong_{dt}$ is the measure of "congruence" between the electoral district and the market for local newspapers defined in section 3. These are our key variables of interest. The vector

[14]Note that this procedure leads to the same result as estimating two separate models for migration and trade bills.

$\mathbf{X}_{dt}$ contains instead additional controls at the district and individual representative level. In particular, we account for a district's economic characteristics – skill composition, unemployment rate, income level, sectoral composition of employment – and demographic features like the share of urban, foreign born and African-American in the population. As for the individual representative, we control for party affiliation, age and gender. In all our specifications we include also a set of state–year interaction dummies I_{st} to account for unobserved state-specific effects, which can vary over time. M_{bt} and T_{bt} are dummy variables denoting respectively votes on migration and trade. u_{bdt} is a mean zero idiosyncratic shock, which we assume to be uncorrelated with the explanatory variables. We allow for the shock to be correlated within congressional districts and cluster standard errors at the district–decade level.[15]

The key parameters of interest in our analysis are the coefficients γ^1 and γ^2. A positive sign indicates that an increase in congruence will make the elected official's behavior more in line with the prevailing opinion of her electorate. Conversely, a lack of significance would instead indicate the absence of any accountability–enhancing effect of press coverage.

5.2 Main results

Our main results are reported in Table 3. While we estimate the fully interacted model specified in equation 2, we have chosen to report each set of results in two separate columns, to simplify the comparison of the effects of the various drivers of votes on trade and migration bills. In column (1) we simply regress our dependent variable on districts' average opinion and state–year interactions. Our results suggest that representatives of more pro–migration districts are more likely to support legislation aimed at liberalizing the flow of foreigners. At the same time, the electorate's opinions do not play a significant role when it comes to trade. What drives this effect? In the remaining columns of the Table, we show that the impact of migration attitudes is driven by more congruent districts. In particular, in column (2) we allow the effect of opinion to vary across districts depending on their level of *Congruence*. The results show that the estimates of the coefficients of the interaction term between opinion and congruence is different between immigration and trade. In the former case it is positive and highly significant, whereas in the latter it is not different from zero. This suggests that – in the case of migration – higher congruence between the representatives' district and local newspapers' markets makes it more likely that the elected official will cast a ballot in accordance with the preferences of her constituency. This is not true for the case of trade.

[15]Decadal redistricting implies that district borders are redrawn every ten years and we need to take this into account while clustering.

[INSERT TABLE 3 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

When deciding how to vote, a representative is likely to have imperfect information on the exact distribution of opinions in the district. For this reason, she might base her choices on a broader set of socio-economic and demographic characteristics that would allow her to better infer the preferences of her electorate. In column (3) we start by controlling also for the skill composition, unemployment rate and mean family income of the district. We additionally account for the sectoral composition of employment by including the share of employees in each one digit sector, whereas in column (4) we include also a set of district level demographic controls, i.e. the share of the urban population, the share of foreign born and the share of African Americans. Last, in column (5) we add also a set of representative's characteristics including her party affiliation, age and gender. Introducing all these additional controls does not alter the sign, significance and magnitude of our key coefficient of interest.[16] Moreover, focusing on the result reported in column (5), several interesting patterns emerge. First, our findings suggest that a higher average skill level is associated to a more open stance towards migration, while this effect is not significant for trade. As for family income, it does not play a role on either dimension of international economic policy. Turning to sectoral cleavages, we find that the share of workers employed in agriculture positively affects support for trade liberalization, and this result could be driven by the comparative advantage enjoyed by the United States in agricultural products. We also detect a positive impact of employment in the wholesale and retail trade and transportation sector on support for migration liberalization, and this finding could be driven by the fact that these service sectors tend to employ large numbers of immigrants.

Finally, we find that districts characterized by a higher share of foreign born tend to be more in favor of both migration and trade liberalization. This result is likely to be driven by the role that ethnic channels play in channeling support for migration, as well as by the role that ethnic networks play in international trade. During the first half of our sample in particular, growing regional integration with Mexico and other Latin American countries was at the forefront of the political debate and several latino pressure groups were actively engaged in the promotion of these preferential trading arrangements (see Baldwin and Magee 2000).

All other controls do not play a role. Among the representatives' characteristics, we find that only affiliation with the democratic party has an effect, negatively influencing support for trade liberalization, whereas it has a positive impact on migration, even if the latter is not statistically significant. These results are broadly consistent with previous findings in the literature (see for

[16]Wald tests reject the equality of γ^1 and γ^2 in all specifications, with p-values ranging from 9% in the basic specification of column (2) to 0.55% in the full specification of column (5).

instance Baldwin and Magee (2000), Conconi, Facchini, Steinhardt, and Zanardi (2012) etc.).[17]

[INSERT FIGURE 4 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

To quantify the impact of public opinion on the representative's voting behavior on migration and trade, we focus on our benchmark specification in column (5), and in Figure 4 we illustrate how the marginal effect of public opinion on the representative's voting behavior changes with congruence. Panel (a) focuses on migration, whereas panel (b) illustrates the effect for trade. As we can see, the marginal impact of a district's average opinion on support for migration is not statistically significant for low levels of congruence. For values of congruence above 0.43 the effect becomes instead positive and significant at the five percent level. As a result, in a district characterized by slightly above average congruence – like Florida's 4th in 1996 – a ten percentage points increase[18] in the share of the population which favors pro-migration policies would lead to a 2.9 percentage points[19] increase in the probability of the representative casting a pro-migration vote. At the same time, for a congressional district with a congruence score of 0.70 (at the 90th percentile of the congruence distribution) like Pennsylvania's 5th congressional district in 1998, the same increase in the share of pro-migrant's population would lead to a 7.4 percentage points (over 14% of a standard deviation) increase in the probability of a pro-migration vote. On the other hand, as it is apparent from panel (b) of the figure, even for very high levels of congruence, public opinion does not significantly affect a representative's voting behavior on trade policy.

5.3 The role of electoral accountability

Why are elected officials from more "congruent" districts more likely to follow their constituents' preferences on migration? In this section we provide evidence suggesting that electoral considerations play a key role. In particular, we show that the results identified in section 5.2 are driven by those districts in which politicians in office have faced more competitive races. The basic idea we exploit is that if representatives respond to electoral pressures, we expect them to adhere more closely to the preferences of their constituents whenever they won their seat in a more strongly contended election (Mian, Sufi, and Trebbi 2010). We capture this idea in two ways. First, we expect the effect of congruence to be larger in those districts where the margin of victory in the previous election has been smaller. To empirically assess this hypothesis, we allow for the effect of congruence to be heterogeneous by defining an indicator variable MoV_{dt} that takes a

[17] Note that – differently from previous studies in the literature – in all our specifications we are already capturing the pro–migration stance of the democratic electorate by including average opinions in the district.

[18] Corresponding to approximately half a standard deviation.

[19] Corresponding to about 6% of a standard deviation.

value of one if the representative in office has been elected with a margin of victory above the average in that congressional election, and interact it with our measure of congruence. Formally, we have estimated the following specification, where to simplify notation we define the vector $(t_o, t_c, t_m) = (\mathrm{Op}_{bdt}, \mathrm{Cong}_{dt}, \mathrm{MoV}_{dt})$:

$$\begin{aligned} Vote_{bdt} &= [\sum_i \alpha_i^1 t_i + \beta_{oc}^1 t_o t_c + \beta_{om}^1 t_o t_m + \beta_{cm}^1 t_c t_m + \gamma^1 t_o t_c t_m + \mathbf{X}_{dt}\delta + I_{st}] \times \mathrm{M}_{bt} + \\ &+ [\sum_i \alpha_i^2 t_i + \beta_{oc}^2 t_o t_c + \beta_{om}^2 t_o t_m + \beta_{cm}^2 t_c t_m + \gamma^2 t_o t_c t_m + \mathbf{X}_{dt}\delta + I_{st}] \times \mathrm{T}_{bt} + u_{bdt} \quad (3) \end{aligned}$$

where $i \in \{o, c, m\}$. We report the results of our estimation in Table 4, which mimics the structure of Table 3.

[INSERT TABLE 4 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

We are interested in studying the behavior of the marginal effect of opinion on the probability to vote for migration or trade liberalization for representatives elected in districts with respectively a high and low margin of victory. The former is given by $\alpha_o^j + \beta_{om}^j + (\beta_{oc}^j + \gamma^j)\,\mathrm{Cong}$, whereas the latter is given by $\alpha_o^j + \beta_{om}^j + \beta_{oc}^j \mathrm{Cong}$ where $j \in \{1, 2\}$. We illustrate them in Figure 5.

[INSERT FIGURE 5 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

In the left panel we display the marginal effects for votes on migration, respectively in districts with a large (left migration panel) and small (right migration panel) margin of victory. As we can immediately see opinion does not have any effect on the voting behavior of representatives for any value of congruence when the past election was not close. On the other hand, in competitive districts a higher congruence leads to greater responsiveness of politicians to the preferences of their electorate. As a result, the average effect we have uncovered in Figure 4 appears to be driven by competitive districts. Turning now to votes on trade, the right panel shows that constituents' opinions do not have an impact on politicians' voting behavior in either competitive or non competitive districts and for any value of congruence.

A second way to assess the role of the competitiveness of the election is to look at the extent of voter participation in the poll. In fact, as suggested by the literature, more competitive elections typically see higher turnout rates (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978, Blais 2000). To assess this idea we have therefore collected information on voter turnout in the previous election, and repeated the analysis carried out in equation 3, by replacing the MoV_{dt} indicator with a dummy $Turnout_{dt}$ that takes a value of one if the representative in office has been elected in a district characterized by a turnout rate above the average in that congressional elections. The marginal effects of opinion

on the probability to vote for trade or migration liberalization are illustrated in Figure 6.[20] Our results confirm the patterns we have observed in Figure 5, i.e. the average effect we uncovered for votes on migration appears to be driven by districts characterized by a higher turnout rate, whereas no significant heterogeneity exists when it comes to votes on trade.

[INSERT FIGURE 6 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

6 Reverse Causality

One concern with the estimates of section 5.2 is that they may be biased because of reverse causality. If the political discourse shapes individual opinions, then politicians can influence their electorate's views toward migration and trade. What is more, their influence could well be greater in districts where newspapers' coverage of local politicians' is higher, i.e. in districts characterized by higher congruence. This would lead to an upward bias in our estimates of γ^1 and γ^2, as they would measure not only the influence of the electorate's opinions on the voting behavior of the representative for a given level of congruence, but also the influence of the representative's stand on international economic policy issues on her electorate's attitudes.

We are particularly concerned with the possibility that the political discourse may influence the electorate's opinions through local media, as this would directly bias our estimates of γ. Therefore, we start by investigating whether congruence and opinions are systematically correlated. To this end, we run a series of specifications reported in Table A2, which show that district–level opinions are not systematically correlated with congruence, both in the case of migration and trade. These results are reassuring evidence against the possibility of reverse causality. Still, since the presence of one endogenous regressor might bias all our estimates, to further address this concern, we implement an IV strategy that builds upon the literature on individual level determinants of attitudes towards trade and migration. We proceed in two steps. In the first step, we construct for each individual a measure of opinion based on individual characteristics that are predetermined with respect to politicians' terms in office and that is therefore arguably exogenous to politicians' stand and voting behavior on any issue. To this end, we build on Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2007 and use data from the ANES to regress individual opinions on trade and on migration on gender, age (we include dummies for 5-years age groups), education (dummies for high-school, some college and college or above, with high school dropouts as the reference category) and interaction of the education dummies with a Black and an Hispanic dummy). We report results of this regression in Table A3 in the Appendix. Consistently with expectations (see Hanson, Scheve,

[20] See Table A1 in the Appendix for the corresponding point estimates.

and Slaughter 2007) we find that a higher level of education is associated with both a higher likelihood of being pro–migration and of being pro–trade. Younger individuals are also more likely to be in favor of trade and migration liberalization, although the effect of age is only statistically significant for trade. College educated Hispanics are more pro–migration but also less pro–trade than whites with the same level of education, whereas Hispanic high-school dropouts are more pro–immigration than white high school dropouts but display no significant difference when it comes to trade. Low–educated blacks (high school dropouts and those with high school) are more likely to be in favor of a more liberal migration policy than comparable whites, whereas the opposite is true for college–educated blacks, who are also less likely to be in favor of trade liberalization. Based on the results of these individual–level specifications we then construct an individual level "predicted opinion" on trade and migration. In the second step we compute district–level averages of individual "predicted opinions", and construct a variable $\widehat{Op}_{bdt}$ which can be interpreted as the share of residents of district d predicted to be in favor of more open migration and trade policies in year t based on their personal characteristics. We then estimate (2) by 2SLS using $\widehat{Op}_{bdt}$ and $\widehat{Op}_{bdt} \times \text{Cong}_{dt}$ as instruments for Op_{bdt} and $Op_{bdt} \times \text{Cong}_{dt}$.

IV regressions results are reported in Table 5. As in Table 3 we gradually include additional control variables as we move from columns (1) to (4). The last row of each column reports the Kleibergen-Paap version of the Wald F statistic routinely performed, and the results suggest that our instruments are sufficiently strong.[21] Importantly, the IV results are reassuringly in line with the OLS findings of Table 3: the coefficient on the interaction term is positive and significant only for migration bills. It is instead close to zero and not statistically significant, once districts' characteristics are controlled for, in the case of trade bills. The marginal effect of a district's average opinions on the probability of representatives' casting a pro–migration vote are larger than those implied by the OLS estimates, and only statistically significant at 5% for values of congruence above 0.58. Our IV estimates imply that for a district characterized by that level of congruence a ten percentage points increase in the share of the population which favors pro-migration policies would lead to a 9.9 percentage points increase in the probability of the representative casting a pro-migration vote. Note that IV estimates indicate a stronger marginal effect of opinions on representatives' voting behavior than implied by OLS estimates. This suggest that reverse causality is not a concern as it would have led to a higher OLS estimates compared to the IV. On the other hand, our IV estimates suggest that if anything the OLS estimates may suffer from measurement error–induced attenuation bias. In the section 7 we systematically tackle

[21] The values of this statistics for votes on trade are always reassuringly high, while the values for votes on migration bills are below the "rule of thumb" value of 10 suggested by Staiger and Stock 1997, but above the values tabulated by Stock and Yogo 2005 under the assumption of i.i.d. errors, which give a critical value of 7.03 (4.58) for maximum 10% (15%) bias of the IV estimator in the case of two endogenous regressors and two instruments.

this issue.

7 Additional results

In this section, we assess the robustness of our empirical findings by implementing a number of additional specifications. We start by experimenting with different sub–samples of our votes. We turn next to consider alternative measures and definitions of our key explanatory variable. We then experiment with alternative district level controls and politician's characteristics. Next, we carry out a series of placebo test, taking advantage of the richness of the issues covered in the ANES public opinion questions. Finally, we experiment with an alternative econometric methodology.

Our first concern is that the results in column (5) of Table 3 might be driven by differences in the sample of votes on trade and migration. In fact, as shown in Table 1, we can match individual opinion with votes on eleven trade related bills, but only with votes on two migration related initiatives, which were on the House floor respectively in 1996 and 1998. To address this concern we have experimented by restricting our sample of trade bills to those that took place in years close to 1996 and 1998, and the results are reported in Table 6. In column (1) we start by restricting our sample of trade votes to those two bills that were voted during or immediately before the congresses for which we have observations on migration policy initiatives (i.e. H.R. 5110 of 1994 and H.R. 2621 of 1998). In column (2) we slightly expand that set to include also H.R. 1876 and H.R. 3450 of 1993. In column (3) we focus instead on the trade votes that took place during or immediately after the congresses for which we have observations on migration policy initiatives (i.e. we include H.R. 2621 of 1998 and H.R. 2738 and H.R. 2739 of 2003), whereas in column (4) we expand that sample to include also H.R. 4759 and H.R. 4842 of 2004. Importantly, the results we have uncovered for the full sample of trade bills presented in Table 3 continue to hold when we look at all the different subsamples considered in this Table. In particular, greater congruence between the congressional district and the local newspaper market does not increase the likelihood that the elected official will vote in favor of trade liberalization.

[INSERT TABLE 6 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

Our second set of concerns is with our measure of individual opinion towards trade and migration. First, we are worried with the fact that while the ANES is a representative study of the U.S. population, its sample size is not very large, as each cross–section included in our analysis on average involves 1800 individual observations. As a result the number of datapoints available for some districts might be low, and we are concerned with the accuracy of the opinion measures included in our sample. We address this issue in several ways in Table 7. First, in column (1) we

use information on the average opinion by district during the decade in which the bill was voted on, in other words we take advantage of information contained in up to five rounds of the ANES survey. In columns (2), (3) and (4) we drop instead from our analysis districts for which respectively a maximum of one, two or three individual observations are available. Our main results are unaffected, i.e. greater media exposure continues to increase accountability on migration, whereas there is no significant effect when it comes to trade policy. Moreover, while comparing the magnitudes of the coefficient of the interaction term in columns (2), (3) and (4) we can see that the effect increases as we focus on districts for which more accurate information on individual preferences is available, suggesting that our baseline estimates may suffer from a measurement–error induced attenuation bias. Second, in our benchmark analysis the district level measure of preferences is based on the average opinion; in column (5) we replace this with a measure based on the district's median opinion. While the standard errors tend to be larger in this case, the basic patterns we have uncovered in our benchmark specification continue to hold. Finally, in column (6) instead of using the mean or the median of our pro-migration dummy, we take full advantage of the three possible answers for the migration question listed in the ANES survey – "increased", "same as now" and "decreased" – and code them as 2, 1 and 0 respectively. We then use the mean of this variable in our regression, and obtain results which are similar to those in the benchmark.[22]

[INSERT TABLE 7 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

A related concern is that while constructing our measure of opinion, we have disregarded replies suggesting that the respondent did not have a view, namely "Don't know" and "Haven't thought much" answers. This choice is unlikely to have an impact on our results for migration as less than 3 percent of the individuals surveyed did not express a preference. At the same time, when it comes to trade, these answers might contain valuable information on individual preferences, given the large proportion of "Don't know" answers. To tackle this issue in Table 8 we have redefined our key explanatory variable by respectively classifying the "Don't know" and "Not available" answers together with the "Pro liberalization" and "Against liberalization" opinions respectively in columns (1) and (2). Importantly, including these answers in the construction of our main explanatory variable does not affect our benchmark results.

[INSERT TABLE 8 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

In Table 9 we assess the robustness of our findings to the inclusion of alternative district level controls. In columns (1) and (2) we further explore the role that welfare state considerations

[22]Note that the answer to the trade question only takes two values, and as a result we cannot carry out a similar robustness check.

might play in shaping a representative's voting behavior on international economic policy. In column (1) we control for median rather than mean family income in the district, whereas in column (2) we include also a measure of the extent of inequality within the district. Neither of these controls appear to play an important role, but more importantly, they do not affect our main results.[23] In our benchmark specification we control for the potential differences in attitudes towards trade and migration by accounting for the share of the population living in urban areas. In column (3) we also account for population density, but this does not have a direct impact on the representative's voting behavior on either dimension of globalization. Moreover, doing so does not affect our main results. Finally, as the ANES is designed to be a representative sample of the US population, and it is well known that turnout rates in congressional elections are often low,[24] the set of individuals actually voting might have preferences that differ from those of the underlying population. To account for this possibility, in column (4) we control also for the turnout rate in the previous election and we find that differences in voters' electoral participation rates do not affect the representative's voting behavior. More importantly, accounting for differences in turnout does not affect our main results.

[INSERT TABLE 9 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

Our benchmark analysis accounts for a wealth of individual level characteristics of the representatives. In Table 10 we expand/experiment with this set of controls in several ways. First, in column (1) we replace the representative's age with his/her tenure in office, and we find that more experienced members of the House are more likely to support migration liberalization, but not trade. In column (2) we additionally control for a representative's education, using information taken from the Congressional Directories and digitized in ICPSR study 3371. Interestingly, we find that representatives who attended an Ivy League school are more likely to support both immigration and trade liberalization than members of the House who either did not go to college or attended another type of higher education institution, even if only the latter effect is strongly statistically significant. In columns (3) and (4) we experiment with alternative measures of the ideological orientation of the representative and replace democratic party affiliation with the normalized DW nominate score (column 3) and ADA score (column 4). More liberal–leaning representatives are more likely to vote against trade liberalization and in favor of migration liberalization. Importantly, our main result continues to be unaffected. So far, our analysis has focused on the role played by the opinions of the districts' average or median voter. In column (5), we

[23]Note that any heterogeneity in the size of welfare provisions at the state level are already accounted for with the inclusion of a full set of state–year interactions.

[24]In particular, the average turnout in our sample is 0.43.

include information on organized groups, which have received great attention both in the trade and migration literature.[25] Our measure of the intensity of the lobbying activity is given by Political Action Committee Contributions (PACs), which can be easily traced to the elected officials receiving them. In particular, we focus on the role played by contributions offered by corporations (*PacCorporate*) and by unions (*PacLabor*). As PACs measure lobbying effort on a variety of different issues, we have considered a politician to have been "influenced" if the corporate (labor) contributions he/she has received are at or above the eightieth percentile of all corporate (labor) contributions in that year.[26]

In line with the existing literature, we find that lobbying activities do affect the voting behavior of elected representatives on trade policy. In particular, larger contributions by labor organizations tend to result in a more protectionist bias by the politician, whereas larger contributions by business related lobbies have the opposite effect. This result confirms earlier findings by Baldwin and Magee (2000). At the same time, corporate and labor PAC contributions do not appear to affect the voting behavior of elected officials on immigration policy. This is in line with the findings of Facchini, Mayda, and Mishra (2011), who show that PAC contributions are not a significant driver of immigration policy, whereas the opposite is true for lobbying expenditure directly related to migration policy.[27]

[INSERT TABLE 10 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

Next, in Table 11 we carry out a series of placebo tests on the effects of individual voters opinion on representatives' voting behavior. In particular, while our robustness checks indicate that greater congruence between a congressional district and local newspaper markets increases the accountability of elected officials to local voters' preferences towards immigration, but not on trade, we expect that opinions towards other issues should not have an impact on how elected officials vote on migration or trade. For this reason, we take advantage of the richness of the range of preferences elicited in the ANES dataset to carry out a falsification exercise using opinion on four additional public policy matters, that are not directly related to either migration or trade.

[25] For a survey, see Facchini (2004).

[26] We have experimented with different thresholds, and the results are unaffected.

[27] Facchini, Mayda, and Mishra (2011) use a dataset that allows to identify the purpose of the lobbying activity in the United States, showing that pressure groups at the sectoral level have a statistically significant and important effect on the allocation of work and related visas. Unfortunately, this data cannot be used in our analysis of congressmen's voting behavior, since it does not contain information on the identity of politicians contacted by lobbies.

The first is based on opinion towards abortion;[28] the second on opinion towards religion;[29] the third on trust in the federal government[30] and the last on the role of women in society.[31] Our results, reported in columns (1)-(4), show that – as expected – the patterns are quite different from those identified in our benchmark specification. In fact, the direct impact of opinion is never significant and, more importantly, the same holds true for the sign of the interaction term between the opinion variable and congruence. This confirms that opinions towards other issues do not affect voting behavior on migration or trade.

[INSERT TABLE 11 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

Our last set of robustness checks concerns the econometric methodology we have followed. All of our specifications have been run using linear probability models. We have employed this approach because the linear probability model is consistent under weak assumptions, it works well with fixed effects, and its coefficient estimates – especially in the presence of interaction terms – are simple to interpret. In Table A4 in the Appendix we reproduce our main results from Table 3 using instead a probit specification and reporting the corresponding coefficient values. As it can be immediately seen, the broad patterns we have identified in Table 3 continue to hold.

8 Conclusions

In this paper we have carried out what is – to the best of our knowledge – the first empirical analysis of the effect of media exposure in shaping the accountability of individual representatives'

[28] In particular, we use question VCF0838 "There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view?" The possible answers are "By law, abortion should never be permitted", "The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger", "The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established", "By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice". After excluding the "Not Available" and "Don't know" responses, we construct an *Opinion on Abortion* dummy that takes a value of one if the individual suggests one of the two last options, and zero otherwise.

[29] In particular, we use question VCF0846"Do you consider religion to be an important part of your life, or not?" The possible answers are "Yes, important" or "No, not so important". After excluding the "Not Available" and "Don't know" responses, we construct an *Opinion on Religion* dummy that takes a value of one if the individual chooses the first answer and zero otherwise.

[30] In particular, we use question VCF0605"Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?" The possible answers are "Few big interests" or "Benefit of all". After excluding the "Not Available" and "Don't know" responses, we construct an *Opinion on TrustinFedGov* dummy that takes a value of one if the individual chooses the last answer and zero otherwise.

[31] In particular, we use question VCF0834 "Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1). Others feel that a women's place is in the home. Suppose these people are at the other end; at point 7. And of course, some people have opinions somewhere in between, at points 2,3,4,5, or 6.) Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this?".

to public opinion towards trade and migration. Focusing on the role of local newspapers, we have shown that greater congruence between a representative's district and a local newspaper market makes congressmen more accountable to their constituency on international migration, whereas we do not find a systematic effect when it comes to international trade. How can this result be explained?

The very heated debates during the last US presidential election indicate that migration continues to be perceived as a "salient" issue by the electorate. At the same time, a large literature suggests that trade is a much less important issue. In a recent contribution, Guisinger (2009) finds "...trade policy salience to be relatively low in terms of stated importance, in voters knowledge of their representatives policy positions..." Importantly, this pattern is confirmed if we use information from the ANES for the time period covered by our analysis. In particular, our data point out that very few respondents did not have a well defined opinion on migration – between 1 and 3 percent of the total, whereas the corresponding figure was between 25 and 45 percent for trade. Thus, one possible explanation for our findings is that media exposure can succeed in making a politician accountable to her electorate, but only if the issue is perceived to be important enough.

We can think of at least two directions along which our analysis could be extended. First, the empirical measure we have used for the information conveyed to the electorate is based on the congruence between the market for local newspapers and electoral districts. In recent years, the printed press has seen its readership decline and at the same time new media have started to play an increasingly important role. In particular, in the recent US presidential campaign social media and blogs have been the focus of much attention,[32] and it would be interesting to construct indicators that would allow us to measure the individual's exposure to these additional sources and assess their effect on electoral discipline.

Second, our analysis has pointed out the role that the salience of the issue plays in making the elected official accountable to her electorate. It would be interesting to investigate whether the pattern we have identified for migration and trade policy holds also in other areas, like like gun control or environmental issues. While these are interesting questions, they are left for further research.

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[32]See for instance the article by David Rehr on the 2012 campaign "Social media's impact on the presidential election" available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-k-rehr/social-medias-impact-on-t_b_2504414.html.

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