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Project Title: The Swing Vote and the Attitudinal Model of the Supreme Court

Synopsis: This research examines the influence of the swing vote on the ideology of the Supreme Court over time within the attitudinal model.

Abstract: The decisions of the Court are partially grounded in the ideology of the justices themselves, which is the attitudinal model of the Court. I argue that the swing vote justice on the Supreme Court has a substantial effect in determining the ideological direction of the Court over time. If the attitudinal model of the Court is correct, then the swing vote justice on the Court has a disproportionate amount of influence on the direction of the Court over time. I examine the influence of the swing vote justices, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the swing vote on the Rehnquist Court and Justice Anthony Kennedy, the swing vote on the Roberts Court. Previous literature has identified the swing vote justice, but only to determine how powerful that justice is relative to the other justices on the Court. My manuscript not only establishes the swing vote justice and the power that they wield on the Court, but also determines how that power is sustained over time. This manuscript examines 5-4 Supreme Court decisions since O'Connor's appointment to analyze O'Connor's roles as the swing vote and determine the extent to which her political ideology as defined under the attitudinal model aligns with the direction of the Supreme Court during her tenure. I also look at the 5-4 decisions since Justice Kennedy joined the Court to determine his role on the Court during the period that Kennedy and O'Connor served concurrently, as well as Kennedy's position as the swing vote since O'Connor's departure.