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All Politics is Local: Reexamining Representation and the Electoral Connection

Author
Johnston, Travis Miller

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All Politics is Local: Reexamining Representation and the Electoral Connection

by

Travis Miller Johnston

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Committee in charge:

Professor Eric Schickler, Chair
Associate Professor Rob P. Van Houweling
Associate Professor Gabriel Lenz
Professor Michael Hout

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Abstract

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What qualifies as good or bad representation has plagued scholars and officeholders for years. These studies often focus on outputs of two general types: the distribution of particularistic goods, *allocative responsiveness*, and the member's position on roll call votes, *policy responsiveness*. My dissertation unites these disparate literatures on representation, asking a simple but fundamental question: what are elites doing, and how do constituents respond?

Early work on electoral incentives contends that a record of narrow distributive accomplishments is essential to winning reelection. Broader policy achievements, however, are believed to be either too difficult to take credit for, or of little import to the member's constituency. My dissertation challenges the notion that member strategies and voter responses continue to operate along these lines. Compared to the early 1970s, actors in the contemporary political environment are better *sorted* along policy lines at every level, from elites in the beltway to activists in the electorate. This means that an officeholder's core supporters are more interested in their record on policy. Moreover, by taking credit for centrist policy achievements, officeholders can avoid alienating moderates.

For a first cut at constituent preferences, I examine what voters like about their representative, and how these trends have changed over time. Since the 1970s, the percent of respondents who identify distributive goods as a reason for liking their member of Congress has remained fairly flat, whereas justifications based on specific policies has risen steadily. Digging deeper, these data suggest that reliable voters, activists, and donors are most likely to provide policy justifications. Distributive answers are not correlated with these measures of electoral intensity. If distributive and policy strategies appeal to different electorates, then the latter may produce greater returns by motivating those groups most vital to reelection.

To evaluate these claims further, I deployed a series of experiments to test the conditions under which voters are receptive to representatives who focus on broad policy achievements. I find that policy-based credit claims can be just as effective as pork. Building on these initial results, I fielded a second set of experiments using a simulated news story about two anonymous incumbents running for a redistricted seat. In the end, I find that constituents often prefer policy-based records, but this choice is driven by the issue area and ideological position of the policy.

After examining representation from the voter's perspective, I then examine novel data on the advertising strategies of members of Congress. If campaign messaging reflects a member's perception of the respective benefits from distributive and policy work, then ad buys afford a unique way of studying electoral strategies under a budget constraint. Looking at the 2008 elections, I find that broader legislative appeals are actually more common than distributive credit claims, both in terms of the number of airings and in dollars spent.

Finally, I synthesize many of the earlier findings by combining the advertising data set with survey data on voter behavior and legislative effectiveness. By merging the member-level campaign variables with individual-level data, I show that policy appeals are not only common in congressional campaigns, but also potentially more beneficial at the ballot box. Using a series of multi-level models, I find that spending on broader policy achievements is consistently correlated with vote choice, whereas the benefits of other forms of campaign advertising are less apparent. What is more, when the sample is restricted to incumbents, I find that those who prioritize policy ads are relatively more productive in office. This finding demonstrates the value of advertising data. These results suggest that the tradeoff between local distributive goods and broader policy is significantly misunderstood with respect to voters and representatives alike.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the reelection prospects of a single incumbent. Indeed, the collective outputs of Congress depend upon whether individual members spend their time working on local goods or national policy. If officeholders overindulge on narrow particularistic goods, then the chamber fails to pass large policy accomplishments. Representation, I contend, is driven less by a motivation to allocate, and more from an incentive to run on policy. While the end goal may differ, individual incentives continue to undercut the outputs of Congress as a whole. If individual members are unwilling to compromise on policy issues, then Congress runs the risk of producing little more than gridlock and empty position-taking.

To Angela.
From start to finish, and the road in between.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In June 2012, the maligned 112th Congress overcame its partisan differences and passed the first long-term transportation bill in nearly three years. The omnibus bill not only included $100 billion dollars in local spending, but also reforms to the federal student loan system and an expansion of the national flood insurance program. The legislation's transportation elements marked what many pundits believed would be the "session's big jobs bill" and provided a perfect opportunity for credit claiming (Everett and Snider, 2012). True to form, Democrats and Republicans alike speedily issued press releases to announce the receipt of construction projects directed at their constituencies. This frenzy of credit claiming came as no surprise, especially during campaign season. Members of Congress (MCs) routinely take credit for narrow particularistic goods, or *pork*.[1] Yet, the credit did not stop with these local transportation projects. Many MCs, particularly Democrats, went a step further and trumpeted the bill's larger policy achievements as well. Claiming credit for a local transportation project is a common practice among politicians, but what of these broader appeals?

Claiming credit for particularistic benefits is among a member's most important electoral strategies (Mayhew, 1974a). This well-accepted finding is evident in both the degree to which members highlight their credit-seeking activities (Grimmer, 2013a), as well as the connection between distributive outlays and the member's behavior (e.g. Alvarez and Saving, 1997; Lazarus and Steigerwalt, 2009; Evans, 2011). The conventional wisdom, going back to Mayhew, insists that narrow, distributive goods are effective in garnering electoral support, while larger policies of national import are relatively less helpful. Officeholders

[1] Throughout the dissertation, I use "pork" as shorthand for locally targeted, particularistic goods. This is not to suggest that every project is an example of wasteful or earmarked spending by the member. Quite the contrary, many distributive accomplishments are allocated by formula as part of larger spending bills. This runs slightly counter to Mayhew's definition of particularistic benefits (2004, p. 54), but remains true to the behavior of credit-seeking officeholders.

readily take credit for all manner of projects, even those for which the member played little role in producing. When it comes to broader legislative achievements, however, members are thought to be either incapable of claiming credit (Arnold, 1990), or reluctant out of fear that the ideological nature of policy will turn away moderates. In short, the presumption here is that voters reward members for local distributive goods but not national legislation, thus incentivizing members to pursue the former. Instead of expending effort on behalf of these policy issues, members take positions that signal their support or opposition to relevant constituencies. Because of these individual incentives, Congress as a whole is far less likely to tackle important issues like tax reform or health care. But is credit actually rewarded along these lines? Do representatives behave as if they believe that their record on broad policy is unhelpful?

In tackling these questions, this dissertation bridges theoretical and empirical work on mass behavior and elite decision-making. Members of Congress do not operate in a vacuum; their behavior is shaped by the larger political environment. An attempt to understand why MCs take credit for policy must first consider the "electoral connection" that underlies these strategies (Mayhew, 1974a). Likewise, the actions of constituents cannot be understood in the absence of opinion leaders (Lenz, 2013). In other words, if we wish to understand the behavior of either voters or officeholders, then we must bring the two together. By uniting these strands under one study of representation, this dissertation evaluates two seemingly straight-forward questions: what are officeholders and candidates doing, and how are constituents responding?

Before addressing how I intend to answer these questions, the following section offers a brief discussion on two different forms of responsiveness: allocation and policy. Both activities figure prominently in research on elite incentives and representation, and yet few studies explicitly evaluate distributive goods and broader policy within the same work. This discussion helps to situate the project within a larger literature on representation and highlights the need for a more comprehensive study of elite strategies and mass preferences.

1.1 Competing Approaches to the Study of Representation

Research on what voters look for in a representative has ranged from debates over descriptive representation to the role played by different valence attributes (Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran, 1996; Lublin, 1999; Reingold, 1992; Stokes, 1992; Stone and Simas, 2010). These factors are undoubtedly important, but say little about the officeholder's actual record. If voters hold their elected officials accountable on the basis of their ac-

complishments (Key, 1966), then the representative's record on substantive issues should play a major part in candidate choice. Two areas that warrant particular attention are the officeholder's ability to secure distributive goods for the district, *allocation responsiveness* (Levitt and Snyder, 1995; Alvarez and Saving, 1997; Evans, 2011), and the degree to which members accurately reflect their district's policy preferences, *policy responsiveness* (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan, 2002; Ansolabehere and Jones, 2010). Individually, allocation and policy receive significant attention, but they are rarely addressed in the same study (Ashworth and Mesquita, 2006; Griffin and Flavin, 2010; Grimmer, 2013b). Further work must endeavor to unite these literatures in order to understand how voters prioritize the two.

Allocation Responsiveness

Scholars have long maintained that distributive goods are central to a member's reelection. In his travel accounts with incumbents, Fenno (1978) finds that MCs regularly take credit for local projects as a means for shoring up their electoral prospects. Spending projects have the potential to create jobs and improve the lives of constituents. Voters, the story goes, observe these goods and reward their officeholders accordingly. The strategic logic for members of Congress is best articulated in Mayhew's (1974) study of elite incentives. Recognizing the limited benefits of other activities, members devote their legislative efforts into securing localized, particularistic benefits. While this logic is internally sound, the empirical reality is far more complicated.

Countless studies find a correlation between distributive outlays and electoral returns, but these results are often conditional on the member's party and ideology (Alvarez and Saving, 1997; Sellers, 1997; Lazarus and Reilly, 2010). Scholarship on other race-specific factors further complicates our understanding of when pork works. Looking at individual elections, Stein and Bickers (1994) find that spending helps electorally vulnerable incumbents, but not safe members. Moreover, they continue, only the most attentive constituents will even learn about these projects, making the impact all that much smaller. In addition to these member-level variables, recent work on geographical heterogeneity finds that regional differences are important in understanding whether members are rewarded for spending (Clemens, Crespin, and Finocchiaro, 2011; Crespin and Finocchiaro, 2013).

Altogether, these studies present a suggestive, albeit complex picture of the incentives and effects of distributive spending. When it comes to pork, the electoral benefits are not one size fits all. Some members, particularly Democrats, see greater returns at the ballot box. In the end, can we conclude that these projects are what voters really want from their representative?

Policy Responsiveness

An alternative take on representation focuses on votes instead of spending. This fertile line of research, going back to Miller and Stokes (1963), treats policy congruence between members and constituents as the central metric for studying representation. Methodological critiques notwithstanding (Achen, 1978), the implications are clear: members of Congress are expected to vote according to the views of their constituencies, or suffer their wrath.

Work by Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan (2002) suggests that this is no idle threat. In a study of over fifty years of roll call voting, they find that MCs experience a drop in support when the member's voting record is ideologically extreme. Hence, members who are "out of step" with their constituents are more likely to lose office. In related work, Carson et al. (2010) use experimental and observational data to show that the public punishes members who are overly loyal to the party on divisive votes. While perhaps a stretch to think that constituents are paying close attention to every roll call, Ansolabehere and Jones (2010) find that voters not only have preferences on specific bills, and they use this information to hold officeholders accountable.

But, how good are constituents at performing this role, do they pay sufficient attention to their incumbents' policy records? The notion of a vigilant electorate is difficult to reconcile with high levels of voter inattention. Existing work suggests that members of Congress have considerable leeway in what they can get away with, and that the quality of substantive representation suffers as a result (Arnold, 1993; Bartels, 2009). Officeholders, according to Bawn et al. (2012), are able to exploit the "electoral blindspot," effectively giving members greater latitude to vote how they or the party wishes. Indeed, recent work by Henderson (2013) suggests that MCs strategically utilize advertisements to appear more moderate, making it much harder to hold officeholders accountable. We are left to ask: are constituents really using the member's record on broader policy to determine vote choice?

Comparing Representational Records

Assuming that representatives are judged, at least in part, on the basis of their accomplishments (Key, 1961), then we need to consider two questions: what do constituents want from their representative, and what characterizes member credit claiming? Scholarship on these questions, as previous discussion suggests, is largely split in terms of whether local spending or broader legislation drives these processes. To resolve these issues, we must evaluate particularistic goods and policy at the same time.

Coming at the question from the perspective of voters, Griffin and Flavin (2010) used data from the American National Election Study to measure how voters rank the importance of different forms of responsiveness, i.e. allocation and policy. They find that respon-

dents are more likely to identify policy as the most important "sphere" of representation.[2] But does this descriptive finding about constituent preferences predict how voters decide, let alone how officeholders behave?

Theoretical work by Ashworth and Mesquita (2006) suggests that the answer is *no*. They argue that candidates prioritize particularistic achievements over broad public goods. In their model, incumbents divide the resources into securing either local goods, such as pork and other services, or global public ones that include broad legislation. On the basis of these efforts, as well as the incumbent's ideological leanings, voters then select the better qualified candidate.[3] Officeholders, they find, are more likely to labor on behalf of local issues when the partisanship of the constituency is balanced. This finding stems from the fact that voters are inclined to reward incumbents for tangible projects, but not larger policies that require time to take effect.[4]

However, with much of a campaign's efforts spent on advertising the member's accomplishments, it would be a serious oversight to maintain that voters learn of a member's record exclusively through spending that flow into the district. The decision to reelect the incumbent is not simply a question of whether constituents received local benefits, but more a product of how the representative and her record are understood by constituents (Grimmer, 2013b). While district spending matters, I contend that policy considerations have greater influence on this electoral calculus. With big policy debates at the forefront of modern political contests, constituents are more likely to think about members of Congress in these broader policy terms.

1.2 Dissertation Overview

To appreciate these representational dynamics, we need a more holistic account of congressional behavior, one that evaluates not only how MCs divide their time, but also the degree to which different types of achievements resonate with a member's electoral coalition. An investigation of credit claiming and representation, then, presents two broad empirical questions: what are elites thinking and doing, and how are "relevant political

[2] This preference for policy is especially true among white respondents. African Americans and Latinos placed relatively greater weight on allocation. In absolute terms, however, all groups indicate a stronger desire for policy responsiveness.

[3] The voter's policy preferences, or ideology, is denoted by the difference between their ideal point and the actual policy. Incumbents are assumed to be either left or right of center, and share the policy positions of their party.

[4] As Arnold's (1990) work on traceability suggests, this logic is totally reasonable. Big legislative acts take time before their effects are felt and, even then, the magnitude is often quite small.

actors" responding to these overtures?[5] If broader policy is more important today, then we should see this in terms of what members spend their time on, as well as how these issues impact constituents.

In the next chapter, I develop a more extensive discussion on the conditions in which voters and members will care more about distributive goods or policy achievements. By highlighting the partisan changes to the political environment, Chapter 2 raises an important question about representation, namely, how does the electoral connection influence the behavior of today's member of Congress? Early work on electoral incentives contends that distributive accomplishments is essential to winning reelection, while policy achievements are either too difficult to take credit for or liable to alienate voters. The chapter challenges the notion that member strategies and voter responses continue to operate along these lines. Compared to the early 1970s, actors in the contemporary electoral environment are better *sorted* by policy (Levendusky, 2009). These trends are evident at every level, from elites in the beltway to activists in the electorate. On the demand-side, this means that an officeholder's core supporters are more interested in their record on policy. Moreover, as party brands grow more pronounced, members find it increasingly difficult to focus on local issues alone. With individual reputations tied to the national party, an electoral strategy centered on local distributive goods is less beneficial.

Part II, consisting of Chapters 3 and 4, marks the beginning of the empirical portion of the dissertation and starts with an evaluation of voter behavior. Chapter 3 takes a first cut at the question of constituent preferences from a more descriptive perspective. Using data from the American National Election Study, I examine what voters like about their representative, and how these trends have changed over time. Since the 1970s, the percent of respondents who identify local distributive goods as a reason for liking their member of Congress has remained fairly flat, accounting for around 5% of all answers. The number of respondents who justify their support using a specific policy issue, by contrast, has risen steadily over time. At the start of the period, the proportion who indicate a pork or policy reason is roughly equivalent. By 2000, the two trends have drastically departed, with policy now responsible for around 25% of the answers.

Digging deeper into who says what, these data suggest that policy justifications are provided by reliable voters, activists, and donors. Pork answers, however, are not correlated with these measures of electoral intensity. If distributive and policy-focused strategies appeal to different electorates, then the latter may produce greater returns by motivating those groups and individuals most vital to parties and officeholders alike. To further scrutinize these observational results, I conducted an experiment to measure how different credit claims shape voter evaluations. I find that policy-based appeals can be just as effective as

[5] In addition to voters, Mayhew cites other actors, such as fundraisers, interest groups, and activists, as vitally important to a member's reelection calculus.

pork, but the individual effect is conditional on respondent-level factors, such as whether the subject is of the same party as the member.

Building on these initial experimental results, Chapter 4 examines a second set of experiments using a simulated news story about two anonymous incumbents running for a redistricted seat. This approach controls for important features about the member and allows for a more direct test of whether candidates who run on a record of localized goods are more attractive than representatives who focus on broad legislation. In the end, I find that constituents often prefer policy-based records, but this choice is driven in large part by the issue area and ideological position of the policy.

In Part III, I turn the lens from voters to officeholders. Chapter 5 begins the section with an analysis on the advertising strategies of members of Congress. Most existing work on representational strategies comes in the form of qualitative studies or press releases. These existing approaches cannot explain how officeholders allocate their limited resources during an election. If campaign messaging reflects a member's perception of the benefits associated with distributive and policy work, then ad buys afford a unique way of studying electoral strategies under a budget constraint. Looking at the 2008 elections, I find that broader legislative appeals are actually more common than distributive credit claims, both in terms of the number of airings and in dollars spent. The chapter goes on to examine how other factors, such as the partisanship of the constituency and differences by chamber, affect these campaign strategies.

The final empirical chapter extends on this discussion of candidate strategies by combining the advertising data with information on voting behavior and legislative effectiveness. By merging the member-level campaign variables with individual-level data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), I show that policy appeals are not only common in congressional campaigns, but also potentially more beneficial at the ballot box. Using a series of multilevel models, I find that spending on broader policy achievements is correlated with vote choice, whereas the benefits of other forms of campaign advertising are less apparent. What is more, these advertising strategies can also teach us something about what representatives do in office. I find that those who prioritize policy ads are relatively more "effective" (Volden and Wiseman, 2014). This result suggests that political advertisements are more than mere cheap talk - those incumbents who trumpet their broader policy achievements tend to be better more productive legislators. Altogether, the results demonstrate that the tradeoff between local distributive goods and broader policy is significantly misunderstood with respect to voters and representatives alike.

This concluding chapter offers a brief summary of the major findings and, more importantly, their implications for dyadic and collective representation. On the whole, voters appear to get what they want. Constituents express interest in broad legislation, and candidates respond by spending much of their limited resources trying to inform voters of their policy achievements. Voters, in turn, select candidates more on the basis of the broad pol-

icy accomplishments than narrow distributive goods. What is more, members of Congress who claim credit for policy appear to be more better legislators. If we are to judge representational quality in terms of what voters claim to want and who they seem to select, then these findings bode well.

However, the dissertation also finds that constituents gravitate towards partisan policy. This conflicts with the members drive to claim credit for relatively centrist policy. As the share of moderates in the electorate continues to shrink, politicians from either side of the aisle are compelled to play to the party's base. In the end, while individual incentives may spur member to work on policy, those same motivations may result in partisan gridlock.

PART I: THEORY

Chapter 2

The Electoral Connection Then and Now

"Reelection underlies everything else."

- David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*

Members of Congress, Mayhew (1974a) noted, are driven above all else by reelection. How this drive for reelection influences the member's behavior, not to mention the very organization of Congress, is the core idea behind the "electoral connection." Despite countless institutional and cultural changes, the electoral connection has remained remarkably stable since the nation's founding.[1] How this relationship materializes into tangible policy outputs is a different story. In this chapter, I push back on the idea that the representational link between voters and officeholders operates in the same fashion as when the *The Electoral Connection* was published. Given the rise of polarization among party elites, activists, and interest groups alike, it would be a serious mistake for contemporary works to assume that legislative behavior has not changed in the intervening years. Indeed, Mayhew devotes much of the preface to his 2004 edition in discussing this very fact (2004, p. *xv-xx*). As this new political environment interacts with these stable electoral pressures, the representational strategies of individual officeholders adapt in turn.

Existing scholarship has much to say on why members take credit for distributive goods and how they line up on roll call votes. Far less, however, is understood with respect to how members utilize policy-based credit claims to create a record of broader legislative achievements. Credit claiming is a rich concept that goes beyond pork barrel spending,

[1] In *Federalist 52* Madison argues that the House's frequent elections and small districts would intimately tie the MC to their constituents. At the time, this form of representation was seen as an effective means for ensuring accountability among the people's delegates.

yet when other works discuss credit claiming, they exclusively focus on particularistic benefits. After discussing this conventional view, I then consider several important developments that complicate our understanding of the electoral connection. By contrasting today's political environment to that of the 1970s, this chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the electoral calculus of the contemporary "single-minded reelection seeker." From there, I then develop a theory of congressional behavior that considers how specific features of a constituency motivate different electoral strategies. Localized distributive goods, once thought essential to a member's prospects for reelection, are of less import than existing works typically assume. Conversely, with better sorted parties in Congress and the electorate, I argue that records focusing on broader policy offer greater rewards to the individual member.

2.1 Reelection and Representation

Though published more than three decades ago, David Mayhew's model of the single-minded reelection seeker remains central to our understanding of congressional behavior. In *The Electoral Connection,* Mayhew persuasively argues how nearly every action taken by a officeholder is designed to serve their electoral needs. Even the internal organization of Congress can be traced back to the pressures of reelection. For members from marginal and safe districts alike, the threat of defeat is ever present. If the individual member can make the slightest difference in improving their chances, then they will.[2] While unfairly caricatured at times, the notion that members of Congress are driven by electoral self-interest continues to be a central feature of most models of congressional behavior (e.g. Arnold (1990); Sulkin (2005); Grimmer (2013a)).

Tactics in the Pursuit of Reelection

Members of Congress, Mayhew observed, attempt to improve upon their chances for reelection by engaging in three key activities: advertising, position taking, and credit claiming. While no two members are completely identical, every MC exhibits these behaviors to some degree. As a necessary first step, members must engage in *advertising* to get their name out. With half the electorate unable to recall the name of their House Representative, Mayhew notes, "just getting one's name across is difficult enough" (2004, p. 49). Given such low levels of information in the electorate, name recognition alone is often a decisive

[2] When making this argument, Mayhew draws heavily from Kingdon (1973) and Fenno's (1973) examinations of congressional candidates. Every member saw themselves as potentially being one bad election cycle away from losing, no matter how unrealistic this uncertainty may appear to onlookers.

advantage for incumbents. In a pre-social media world, the franking privileges were an important tool for reaching constituents. Information technology makes advertising easier, but no less important. Though, as Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood (2012) find, advertising appeals alone is less effective than an advertisement that mentions an accomplishment (i.e. credit claim).

Second, members of Congress take personal responsibility for specific actions, goods, or particurlarized benefits, otherwise known as *credit claiming*.[3] Rather than conceptualizing of legislators as part of a larger team, as Downsian (1957) models conceive of parties, MCs look for chances to remind their supporters that a particular good would not have been possible without their efforts. Credit claiming is so important that, as Mayhew notes, "much of congressional life is a relentless search for opportunities to engage in it" (Mayhew, 2004, p.53). Credit claiming is typified, in the U.S. and across the world, by spending projects earmarked for the legislator's home district. Credit claiming, in this idealized form, entails a tangible, particularized benefit that is clearly received by a specific group or geographic unit. To facilitate credit claiming, this good is usually allocated in an ad hoc fashion, i.e. earmarked.

In addition to traditional distributive goods, members of Congress also claim credit for performing "casework" for voters and other relevant political actors. A reputation of having addressed a constituent's issues, such as solving a bureaucratic problem, can be very helpful come election time (Fiorina, 1977; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987). Although less visible than a bridge, casework is not necessarily less effective. Large construction projects may generate positive feelings, but they cannot guarantee an increase in vote share. Solving a voter's personal problem, by contrast, all but ensures a loyal supporter for elections to come. Knowledge of these acts, whether publicized by the campaign or not, are rarely confined to the specific individuals who benefited. Yet, as Mayhew acknowledges, sometimes casework is not just about serving one's voters, but helping out other actors who play an important role in financially supporting the campaign. Hence, assisting one individual in this case may have far greater consequences than a particular highway project.

Finally, members of Congress routinely engage in *position taking*, or taking a stand on topics of public interest. Position taking can take the form of a roll call vote, or simply a public statement of support for an issue. For the most part, position taking has been studied in the form of roll call votes, but the concept is much larger than a simple yes or no vote. By signaling agreement with a specific position, members attempt to win over voters, particularly among issue publics for which the topic is highly salient (Krosnick,

[3] Mayhew defines credit claiming as "acting so as to generate a belief in a relevant political actor (or actors) that one [the MC] is personally responsible for causing the government, or some unit thereof, to do something that the actor (or actors) considers desirable" Mayhew (2004, p. 53).

1990). While relatively costless, at least in terms resources, position taking can hurt the member. If the policy is ideologically polarizing, then it may alienate voters who hold opposing views (Grimmer, 2013a). What is more, given that politicians take any number of positions, they also pay a reputational cost if forced to reposition themselves (Tomz and Van Houweling, 2010). This is no idle threat as primary voters require candidates to take ideologically extreme positions in order to win.

Collective Implications of Individual Incentives

From this simple premise of individual incentives, Mayhew derives a much broader lesson on the institutional arrangement of Congress. The electoral connection has a profound effect on how a member structures her time, as well as the legislative outputs of Congress as a whole. In the book's key insight, Mayhew shows how electoral incentives, when aggregated across the chamber, create a perverse representational dynamic. MCs are induced to pursue local goods that explicitly shore up their reelection prospects to the detriment of national policies that provide no direct benefit to the member. In other words, the rational member has no reason to "stick your neck out" for broad legislation.[4] Instead of working to pass broad legislation for the country, Congress allocates its resources into producing narrow, particularistic goods.[5]

Although a potent source of electoral support, credit claiming is not without its limits. Most importantly, Mayhew asserts, the credit act must be believable. For instance, members cannot reasonably claim to have fixed the U.S. economy on their own. Such claims of responsibility are simply not credible given the size of the problem and the fact that no single member can produce legislation that addresses these national challenges (Arnold, 1990). Hence, there is little incentive to expend personal resources on behalf of these larger legislative accomplishments, especially when MCs can simply take a position in support of the issue. Since members are unlikely to receive electoral returns from such claims, it follows, members devote their time and energy to securing particularized benefits for potential supporters. The logic behind this dynamic is sound, but is it appropriate in today's Congress?

[4] Senator William B. Saxbe (R-OH), quoted by Mayhew (2004, p. 11).

[5] U.S. legislative institutions are particularly well-suited to this task. As Mayhew remarks, "if a group of planners sat down and tried to design a pair of American national assemblies with the goal of serving members' electoral needs year in and year out, they would be hardpressed to improve on what exists" Mayhew (2004, p. 81-82).

2.2 Stable Incentives Amid Changing Institutions

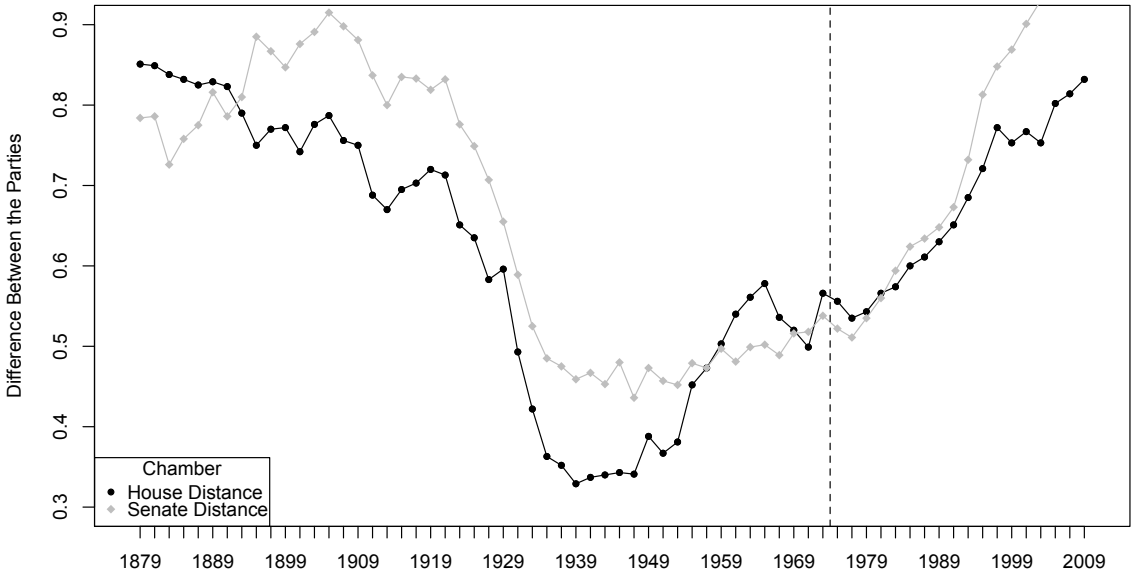
For a book written more than thirty years ago, much of *The Electoral Connection* rings true to this day. Winning the support of constituents remains the primary goal of reelection seekers. This incentive animates much of what members of Congress do, both during the campaign and while in office. Yet, even as the key players remain the same, much of the larger "electoral context" has changed considerably (Aldrich and Rohde, 2000, p. 6). Grounded in the electoral environment of a different age, Mayhew's model makes a number of key assumptions that warrant revisiting, chief of which being the decision to focus exclusively on members of Congress.

With partisanship at relatively low levels (See Figure 2.1), Mayhew asserted that a study of Congress should be about individual MCs, and that neither parties nor pressure groups are the appropriate units of analysis.[6] Yet, no congressional scholar today would endeavor to study Congress without explicitly considering the role of parties. Mayhew himself has acknowledged that his earlier remarks understates the importance of parties in today's political environment (2004, p. *xvii-xx*). I agree that the individual member is the appropriate unit for studying representation, but to ignore the fact that other political institutions have changed around these officeholders would be a gross oversight by contemporary works. It is impossible to understand member incentives and voter preferences in a vacuum, we must first examine how other actors alter the reelection calculus.

Constituent pressures on representatives have remained, at least theoretically, largely unchanged over the last several decades. The same cannot be said of other influential actors, none more so than political parties and interest groups. Parties and groups have grown more important to the electoral connection on two fronts: during candidate selection, and in setting the agenda. Who runs, and on what, is heavily constrained by national party organizations and their ideological partners (Cohen et al., 2008). Groups and parties not only provide material resources, but they also influence the legislative agenda and subsidize the policymaking process (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Hall and Deardorff, 2006). Changes to candidate selection and agenda-setting, taken together, can drastically alter the member's perspective with regards to representational strategy. This is particularly true given the increased importance of winning over primary activists and general election voters alike.

[6] Writing on the heels of the pluralist debates, Mayhew argued that previous accounts treated members as mere "analytic phantoms" (2004, p. 6).

Figure 2.1: Elite Polarization



Following Poole and Rosenthal, the figure above plots the distance between the party means using the members' first dimension DW-NOMINATE scores. The dashed line denotes the publication date of Mayhew's *Congress.* For more on nominate see, Poole and Rosenthal (1997); Poole and Rosenthal (2001).

Sorted Officeholders and Voters

Rather than operating solely on behalf of officeholders, parties have grown increasingly active in nearly every aspect of the political process.[7] As organizations, national party committees play a vital role in everything from candidate selection and fundraising to crafting the coalition's brand.[8] Consequently, while members may want or attempt to distance themselves from the party (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan, 2002; Henderson, 2013), no candidate can afford to go it alone.[9]

For the party in government, the past forty years have been characterized by a general weakening of individual power bases and an expansion of party control (Rohde, 1991;

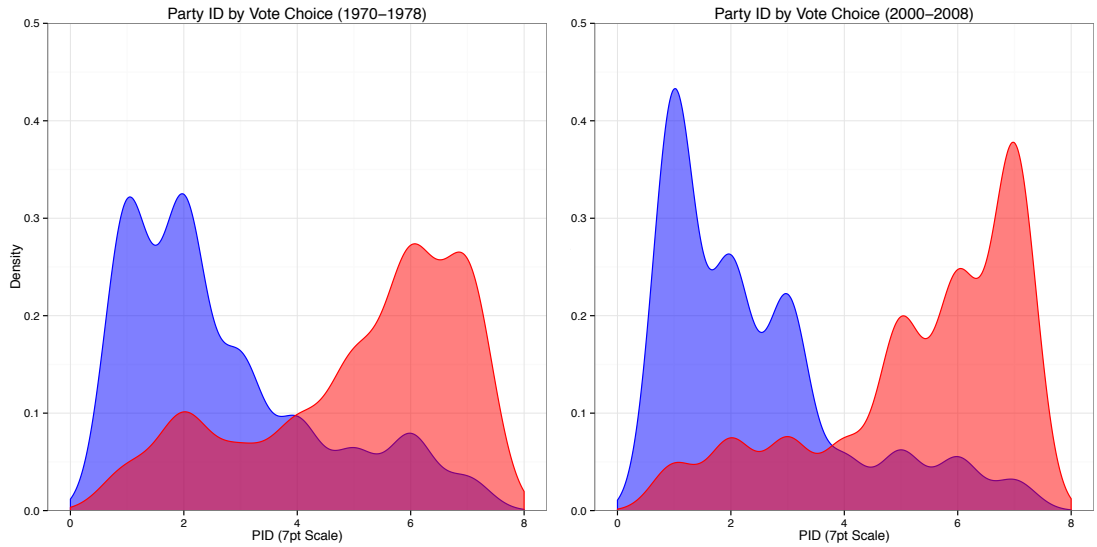
[7] Schlesinger (1985) conceptualizes of parties in a functionalist manner, seeing them as organizations designed to serve the needs of officeholders. This is an important addition to the Downsian (1957) definition of party as a team of men seeking office. Nonetheless, this model leaves something to be desired, as Bawn et al. (2012) rightfully points out.

[8] For more on the role parties play in campaigns and policymaking, respectively, see Cohen et al. (2008) and Cox and McCubbins (2005).

[9] With increasingly costly elections, the backing of the party, both financially and through endorsements, is often the difference between winning and losing.

Schickler, 2001). In Congress, officeholders have grown much more disciplined, with parties often operating as teams locked in some win or lose contest. Individual members find it increasingly difficult to defect, or break from the party line (Cox and Mccubbins, 1993). In addition to becoming more disciplined, the parties have grown more ideologically extreme, or polarized. The distance between the average Democrat and Republican, as Figure 2.1 shows, has continued to grow in recent years. When Mayhew published *The Electoral Connection*, denoted by the dashed line in the plot, the gap between the parties in Congress was relatively low, especially when viewed alongside the subsequent decades. Democrats and Republicans of the 1970s, though more distinct than they appeared in the 1950s (APSA, 1950), were by no means the homogeneous, policy-focused organizations of today. Regardless of one's preferred measure or definition, most scholars accept that the two parties are unquestionably more cohesive by party.[10] Put simply, officeholders are *sorted* into camps of like-minded politicians (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008).

Figure 2.2: Mass-Based Sorting, Party Identification 1970-2008



The figures plot the density of partisans, ranging from "Strong Democrat" (1) to "Strong Republican" (7), who intend to vote for the Democratic (blue) or Republican (red) candidate. Figures created using the American National Election Studies (ANES) (2010) Cumulative File (1970-2008).

[10] For the robustness of these findings, see Bond and Fleisher (2000). If, and when, the general public polarized, however, is a hotly contested issue. To be sure, there are some core differences between the two groups. That said, much of the debate is about degree and the methodological choices that produce these results. For a good summary of this debate, see Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2008), and Abramowitz and Saunders (2008).

Even if polarization in the electorate is low (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, 2005), considerable evidence suggests that voters are, as Figure 2.2 suggests, better sorted than they were in the 1950s (DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson, 1996). The figure plots the relationship between vote choice and partisanship.[11] Compared to the 1970s, vote choice is much more consistent among partisans. In other words, Democrats reliably vote for the Democratic candidate, while Republicans support the GOP candidate. With partisan elites sending clearer cues as to what the party stands for, voters are more consistent at matching their party identification to their ideology (Levendusky, 2009). This in turn, Levendusky continues, reinforces partisanship at the elite-level. In short, while mass sorting cannot account for polarization in Congress (Jacobson, 2000), intensified partisanship in the electorate has certainly exacerbated the process. With members and voters sorted into one party or the other, representational strategies are bound to look very different today, as I explore later in this chapter.

Pressures from Groups and Policy Demanders

Before going into why rising partisanship complicates the electoral connection, one other development deserves greater attention: the explosion of interest group activity at the national-level (Baumgartner and Leech, 2001). Scholars have long argued that pressure groups are a central part of the political process, yet much of the earlier debates considered elite-focused questions of group capture, ideological balance, and democratic accountability (Schattschneider, 1960; Dahl, 1961; Lowi, 1969). Recent work focuses instead on the proliferation of groups that pressure members using a combination of inside and outside strategies (Kollman, 1998; Baumgartner et al., 2009). Rather than focusing exclusively on a specific committee or the party in power, it is important to remember that these groups often share long-running relationships with one of the two parties. As Walker explains, the "constituency and policy communities anchor the system and orient it toward the two major political parties" (1991, p. 10).

Pressure groups, as Bawn et al. (2012) argue, are much more than lobbyists, they are integral actors within the party coalition. Parties, they continue, should not be seen as organizational handmaids of the candidates, but instead as coalitions of officeholders and "intense policy demanders." The latter of which is comprised mostly of interest groups and partisan activists. Interest groups insert themselves into the nominating process (Cohen et al., 2008), and even shape what positions officeholders take while in office (Karol, 2009). Compared to inattentive voters, these intense policy demanders are able to hold officeholders accountable to the coalition's policy positions. Elected officials are incentivized to

[11] For more on the ideological sorting of voters, see Figure 2.4.

work on relatively partisan policies in order to satisfy their coalitional allies, a crowd that is both more vigilant and less forgiving.

Challenges to Winning Two Electorates

Compared to earlier periods, the contemporary party system is characterized by a degree of ideological consistency and considerable influence by groups and policy demanders. In addition to these partisan changes, the electoral environment has also been subject to institutional reforms to the primary system. Since the 1970s, primaries have grown increasingly important to candidate selection. Taken together, these partisan and institutional developments compel today's member of Congress to alter their representational strategies. *The Electoral Connection* acknowledges that officeholders must satisfy "two electorates" (2004, p. 45), but Mayhew could not anticipate how the existing primary system would evolve into the policy-focused contests of today. Indeed, policy has come to be both the point of contestation and the turf in which politics are fought (Hacker and Pierson, 2014). Consequently, when the member emerges from the primary, she continues to eschew the median voter in favor of a partisan strategy that favors the base (Fiorina, 1999).

Primaries, as an institution, have changed little since the 1970s. Yet, when coupled with the increased role of parties and groups, this selection process poses serious problems for members that might have preferred to position themselves as moderates for a general election (Brady, Han, and Pope, 2007). With intense policy demanders interested in nominating the *right* candidate, primary elections have increasingly become the central turf where groups can maintain the ideological purity within the party (Cohen et al., 2008; Herrnson, 2009).[12] If a member fails to uphold a policy commitment to a specific platform of pledge, conservative MCs can expect groups like the Club for Growth or Americans for Tax Reform to fund primary challengers in the following election (Herrnson, 2009). Policy demanders on the left have become similarly vocal with Democrats who take positions contrary to the group's interests. In the 2010 primaries, for instance, moderate Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) faced stiff opposition from labor unions after she refused to support the Employee Free Choice Act.

Interest groups are not the only actors motivated by policy. With voters better sorted by party, especially among the extreme primary electorate, elections have tended to focus less on particularized goods and more on policy.[13] These partisan activists play a key

[12] Given the proliferation of political action committees (PACs), this is no small issue. In the past several decades, the number of PACs has skyrocketed from around 500 in 1974 to over 4,000 in 2008. Spending by these groups has followed a similar trend, going from $50 million in 1974 to $350 million in 2006 Kernell, Jacobson, and Kousser (2009, p. 640).

[13] In fact, when distributive goods are discussed in primaries, the projects are often denounced as pork. As wasteful spending took center stage during the recession, member earmarking behavior has grown detri-

role in holding members accountable on policy. By forcing members to take extreme positions, activist behavior during a primary leads to "conflict extension" on a greater number of issues (Layman and Carsey, 2002). Furthermore, this creates a self-reinforcing cycle whereby activists encourage candidates to be more extreme. These candidates, in turn, contribute to polarization by leading other partisans to bring their political views in line with a more extreme party (Layman et al., 2010).

In addition to changes to primary behavior, reelection-minded members have also adjusted their general election strategy to accommodate a sorted electorate. Compared to Fenno's (1978) travel companions, it is much more difficult for members of contemporary congresses to justify their positions to constituents of different political views.Personal connections and casework can go a long way towards softening a member's image (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987), but these strategies are not as effective with hardened partisans. In short, persuading voters to cross-over is much more difficult in recent years. As a result, general election campaigns increasingly channel their resources on mobilizing habitual supporters (Fiorina, 1999; Goldstein and Ridout, 2002). With a greater distribution of the reliable voting electorate sorted into one camp or the other, the optimal electoral strategy is one in which the candidate plays to the base (Levendusky, 2009). But do member strategies actually operate this way?

2.3 Member Strategies for a Sorted Electorate

Today's member of Congress faces unprecedented levels of elite polarization, intense partisan activism in the electorate, and highly vigilant organized interests. To say that MCs operate within a very different political landscape would be an understatement. Should we, then, expect the rational member of 2015 to engage in the same electoral strategies of 1974? More concretely, do MCs rely on distributive credit claiming as much as they did, and do voters continue to evaluate members using such criteria? With many elections more about turning out the base than swaying the hollowed out middle (Abramowitz, 2010), are policy claims really as ineffective as they once were?

By conceiving of member strategies as a choice between particularistic credit claiming and position taking, existing work on the electoral connection has ignored other tactics at the member's disposal. I contend that a reliance on this dichotomy has led scholars to overlook an activity that falls in between credit claiming and position taking: policy-based credit claiming. This is an important omission, both theoretically and empirically. Policy-based credit claims present MCs with an opportunity to trumpet an achievement while simultaneously reaching out to partisans on an ideological level.

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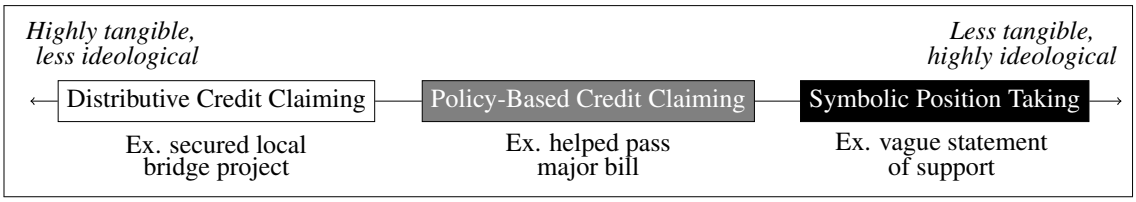
mental to the MC's election prospects.

To organize this discussion, Figure 2.3 presents how these activities (distributive credit claiming, symbolic position taking, and policy-based credit claiming) vary along two dimensions. The first, *tangibility*, concerns whether the appeal references a concrete good or legislative act. The second factor addresses whether the appeal conveys *ideological* or policy content. This figure offers a parsimonious analytical framework for considering how these activities relate to one another. More importantly, it provides insight into why existing works attribute high benefits to distributive goods and few to position taking.

Figure 2.3: Spectrum of Legislative Behavior



Distributive goods, in theory, deliver highly visible benefits to a specific locality. These projects can help constituents directly in the form of spending and jobs, or indirectly by stimulating regional economic growth. An officeholder's ability to secure distributive goods conveys a sense of competence, and plays an important role in boosting electoral support (Ashworth and Mesquita, 2006). Distributive goods also help with name recognition by presenting officeholders with an opportunity to be seen cutting a ribbon in front of a new bridge or factory.

Unlike targeted spending, symbolic position taking provides nothing tangible to constituents. Though lacking a concrete benefit, these statements convey ideological information, for better or worse, by signaling the member's support of some policy. Compared to the supposedly universal benefits of distributive goods, the persuasive effect of these statements is highly conditional on who receives the message. As a result, position taking can be counterproductive among voters, particularly opposing partisans. But, to the right issue public or policy-demander (Krosnick, 1990; Cohen et al., 2008), these appeals can generate intense levels of support.[14] Officeholder strategies, Grimmer (2013a) finds, tend to follow this logic: politicians who represent more partisan electorates prioritize position taking over distributive credit claiming.

[14] In Chapter 4, I examine why voters like their House member, and find that policy justifications are provided by reliable voters, activists, and donors. Pork answers, however, are not correlated with these measures of electoral intensity. If distributive and policy-focused strategies appeal to different electorates, then the latter may produce greater returns by motivating those groups and individuals most vital to parties and officeholders alike.

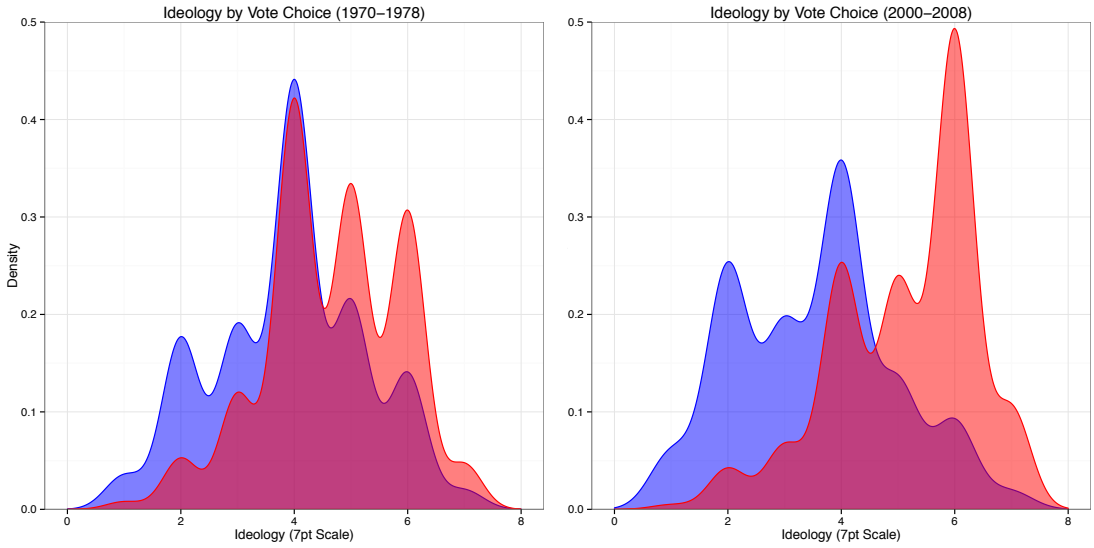
Policy-based credit claiming shares attributes with both distributive credit claiming and position taking. Like distributive claims, policy appeals reference an achievement that has the potential to directly impact voters (e.g. the transportation bill's flood insurance reform). Though less traceable than an earmarked construction project, these legislative accomplishment are no less real, and members routinely take credit for them. Members use campaign advertisements, as I show later, to explain how these policies offer benefits at the national and local level. Like position taking, these policy achievements excite activists and other partisans who agitate for policy change. Yet, unlike symbolic position taking, which is increasingly targeted at partisan audiences, policy-based credit claims are often less ideological, or at least appear to be. Though potentially ineffective with out-party voters, legislative accomplishments can win over centrists who long for government action. In short, taking credit for broader policy achievements runs the risk of alienating some constituents, but it also holds greater promise by exciting partisan supporters and swaying centrist voters.

The appropriate comparison, then, is not credit claiming versus position taking. Instead, we should compare the incentives and benefits of distributive credit claims against that of policy-based credit claims. Conceptually, when officeholders take credit for policy, these actions resemble distributive credit claiming more than position taking. This comparison also makes sense from a normative perspective. If what we care about is collective representation, as Mayhew does, then we must pay greater attention to how MCs allocate their legislative efforts between local particularism and broad policy.

In the following chapters, I evaluate these claims as they relate to the behavior of constituents and officeholders. The *Electoral Connection* is primarily a study of congressional institutions, but it is equally concerned with constituent preferences and the threat of electoral reprisal. For that reason, the dissertation's empirical chapters starts with these mass pressures (Part II). Chapter 3 begins with an analysis of observational data on what voters like or dislike about their officeholders. This descriptive first cut offers insight into what different subgroups want from elected officials. By looking at these views over time, these data speak to how changes to the larger electoral environment have influenced voter preferences. Before moving on to the member's perspective (Part III), Chapters 3 and 4 also present results from a series of survey experiments designed to test whether distributive and policy-based credit claims are capable of moving voter evaluations.

2.4 Appendix

Figure 2.4: Mass-Based Sorting, Ideology 1970-2008



PART II: THE VOTER'S PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 3

Evaluating Members of Congress

Since Mayhew (1974a), scholarship on representation and the electoral connection has focused primarily on two activities: credit claiming over localized appropriations, and position taking of an ideological nature (Grimmer, 2013a). The first activity concerns how well members deliver particularistic goods to her constituency, *allocation responsiveness*. A second line of research addresses *policy responsiveness*, or the degree to which a representative reflects the aggregated preferences of their constituents. This second aspect of representation primarily concentrates on the member's roll call record and other forms of empty position taking. Taken together, these research agendas encompass much of the work on congressional representation. Yet, by ignoring one or the other, existing work tends to overemphasize the importance of either pork or policy. Consequently, scholars remain divided on why voters care about these activities, and the conditions under which officeholders will prioritize policy over allocation.

Few areas consume as much of the member's time and effort as distributive goods and broader policy issues. How an officeholder divides her attention between these pursuits has important implications for both dyadic and collective representation. Existing wisdom contends that a record of distributive-based credit claims are essential come reelection. Conversely, policy is frequently depicted as less helpful because of either credibility issues or the potential of alienating voters (Arnold, 1990; Grimmer, 2013a). Despite these assertions, every election cycle provides new examples of campaigns dominated by big policy debates. This is true among primary and general election races alike. What explains this seemingly contradictory information? Are scholars missing something? To borrow a phrase from Key (1966), candidates are not *fools*. Policy must offer some electoral benefit to candidates, not only among the party's coalitional allies (Cohen et al., 2008), but also voters.

Members have and will continue to highlight their distributive accomplishments, but do these appeals hold the same significance as they once did? Given contemporary partisan-

ship, I argue that distributive records are relatively less effective than in years past. Over the last several decades, voters have become better *sorted*, meaning that the match between an individual's party identification and their policy positions is more internally consistent (Levendusky, 2009). Instead of appealing to a "hollowed out middle" (Abramowitz, 2010), the optimal electoral strategy is one in which the candidate appeals to her partisan supporters, particularly during the primaries. The question then become,s what do sorted voters want from their representatives? While local issues certainly matter, partisan activists and other loyal supporters often engage in broader policy debates. Indeed, policy demanders play a central role in candidate selection (Cohen et al., 2008), and are partially responsible for continued polarization among salient issue areas (Layman et al., 2010). Consequently, as the previous chapter argued, policy-based appeals have the potential to carry greater weight for co-partisans voter. Moreover, by claiming credit for policy success, officeholders can also appeal to centrist voters.

This chapter examines constituent preferences towards distributive goods and broad policy in two parts. I begin by looking at existing data from the American National Election Study. These data provide evidence on the criteria by which constituents evaluate their representative. From there, I then adopt an experimental approach in an effort to understand how different types of credit claims shape constituent evaluations. In short, how do voters respond to candidates who take credit for pork or policy?

3.1 Why Do Constituents Like their Member of Congress?

For a first cut at constituent preferences, the following section examines what voters like about their representative, and how these trends have changed over time. While fairly descriptive, these data afford a preliminary look into the foundations of electoral support. What is more, by analyzing how public opinion varies across constituents, I engage with the previous chapter's theoretical discussion on the benefits of different representational strategies.

Data: American National Election Study "Likes" Data

For the last several decades, the American National Election Study (ANES) has included open-ended questions about political parties and officeholders. The items follow-up on closed form evaluations of the political groups and individuals. After indicating their level of support, respondents were asked to justify the position. If the respondent answers that they like or dislike a given candidate, then the enumerator prompts them to explain why. Dislikes are typically an outright negation of the claim. For instance, to be coded as

disliking the member's record of delivering distributive goods, the respondent would have said something along the lines of "my member doesn't bring enough back to the district."[1]

Because of time constraints and coding issues, the "likes" data were rarely used by scholars (Miller and Wattenberg, 1985). More recent works, however, have used these questions to study how people think about political parties (Grossmann and Hopkins, 2015) and the criteria by which voters judge presidential candidates (Wattenberg and Powell, 2015). For the purposes of understanding congressional representation, I focus on the two questions relating to House candidates:

- **VCF 1020:** "Was there anything in particular that you liked about [NAME], the Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives?"
- **VCF 1032:** "Was there anything in particular that you liked about [NAME], the Republican candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives?"

The ANES coders were instructed to parse out the number of distinct points supplied by each respondent, and then assign the appropriate codes for up to five likes and dislikes per answer. Respondents are not forced to provide reasons for liking the candidate, but roughly half (47%) of the sample provided at least one like or dislike to the question. Despite a fairly high response rate, there is bound to be considerable bias in terms of who supplies an answer. Figure 3.1 largely supports this reasoning. The histograms depict the number of respondents, by variable, who provided or failed to provide a justification for their views.

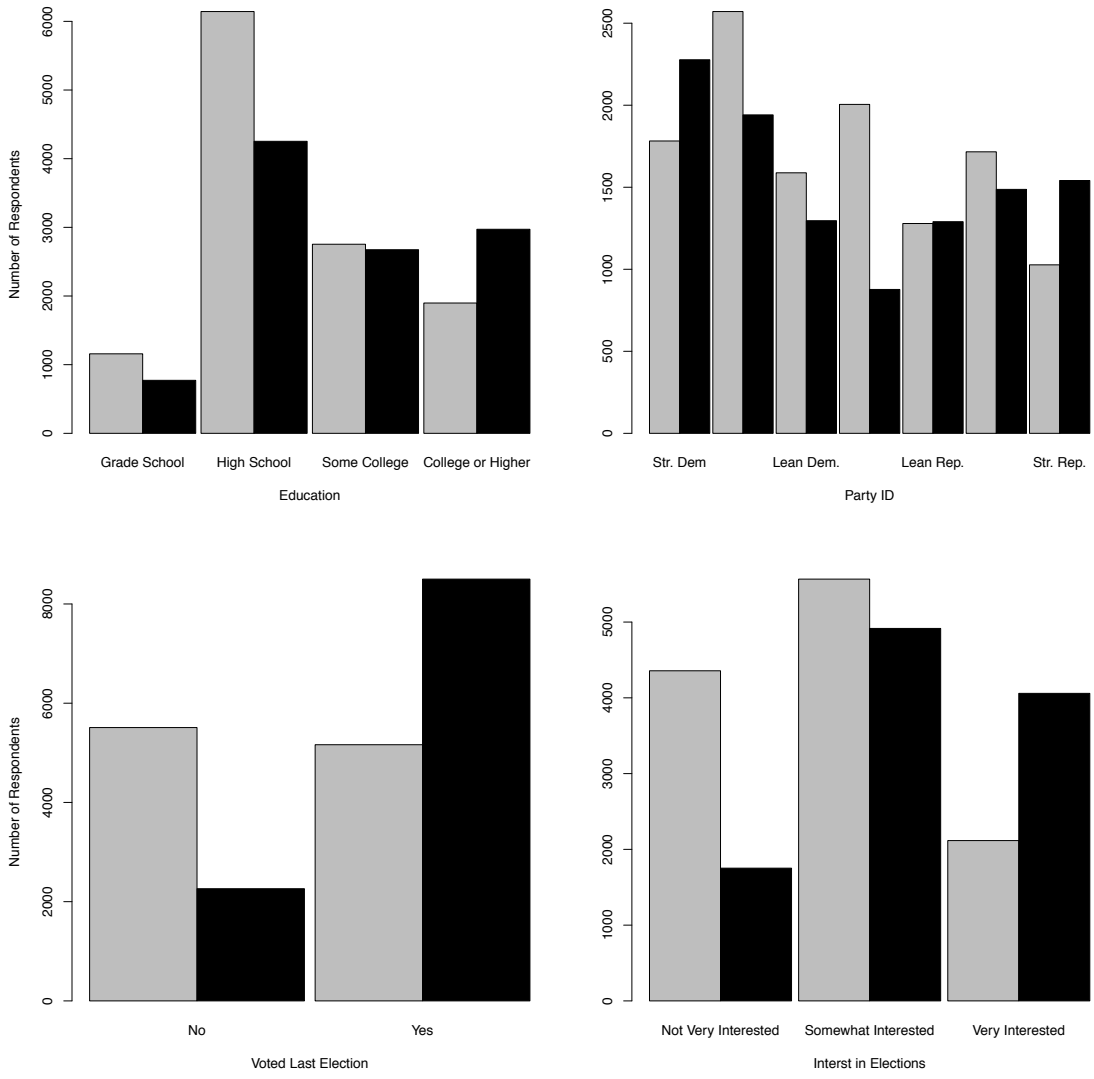
Respondents who offered a like or dislike are better educated and hail from the political extremes of the party system. These individuals are also more likely to have voted in the last election and tend to be more interested in elections. Taken together, the likes data are biased in favor of the more informed and politically active constituents. These results are hardly surprising, but it remains important to keep these factors in mind when considering the following analyses.

How are Pork and Policy Viewed Over Time?

In order to establish whether voters care more about allocation or policy, the following analyses focus exclusively on likes mentioning either local distributive goods or domestic policy issues. To address the question of representational strategies more directly, the following analyses is restricted to only those candidates running for reelection. This choice has little effect on the larger findings, however, as the vast majority of the likes or dislikes are about incumbents.

[1] For more on the coding, see `http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/cdf/cdf.htm`.

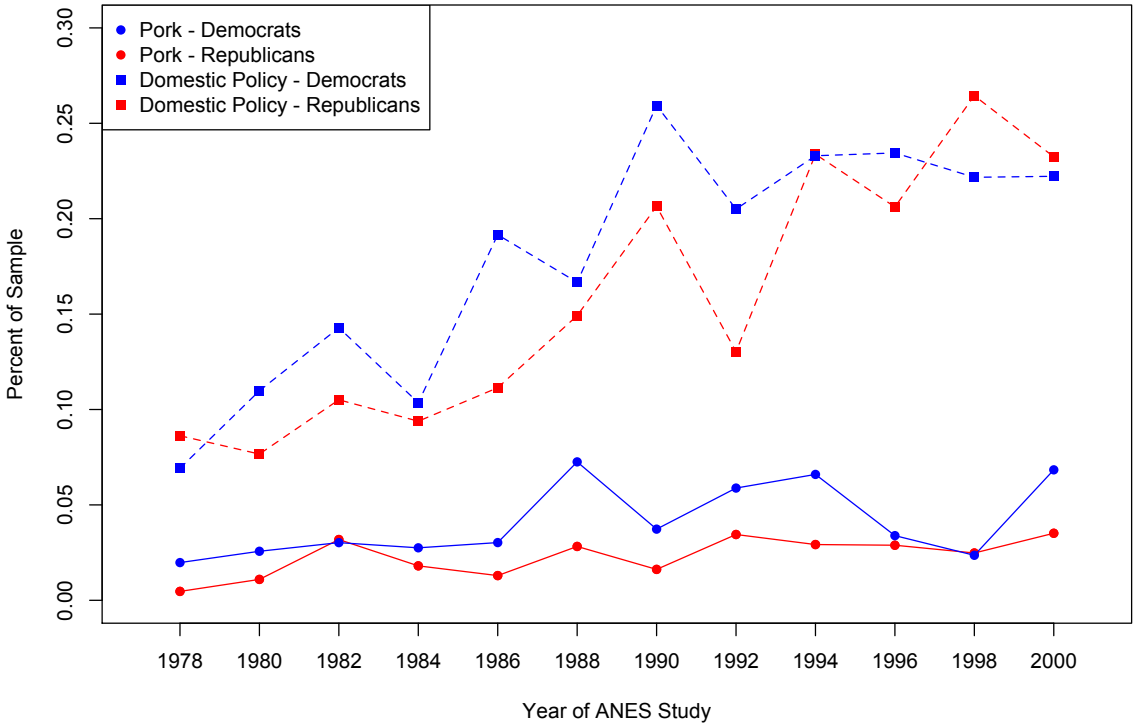
Figure 3.1: Respondents Providing a Justification



Black bars depict the number of ANES respondents who provided enumerators with a like or a dislike, while the gray bars indicate the number who gave no answer.

The first level of analysis builds on the last chapter's discussion of how the electoral connection has changed over time. When constituents are asked to justify why they support or oppose an officeholder, answers have increasingly cited the member's policy record. Since 1978, as Figure 3.2 shows, the percent of respondents who identify local distributive goods as a reason for liking or disliking their member has rarely accounted for more than five percent of the sample. This does not imply that distributive goods are entirely unimportant to voters, as constituents may experience the benefits of these projects without explicitly thinking about them. Nonetheless, the officeholder's distributive record is not at the forefront of the voter's mind. When respondents try to explain why they like or dislike the member, they rarely justify their position on allocative grounds.

Figure 3.2: What Constituents Like About their Representative



The points indicate the percent of ANES respondents, by year, who provided either a pork or policy justification for why they like or dislike their House incumbent.

The differences between pork and policy, in this regard, are striking. Compared to the flatness in the pork trend line, the percent of respondents who list a specific domestic policy issue has more than doubled over the same period. Comparing magnitudes is not entirely fair as pork is one coding, whereas the policy trends are composed of a myriad

issues. The important thing to note, however, is how much the two trends differ - one remaining flat, while the other increases significantly over time.

These data suggest that there is a growing tendency among voters to think about members of Congress in terms of their policy records, or at least the party's branding on these issues. Given the question's inherent selection problems, these data are problematic for making inferences that generalize to all voters.[2] Yet, by giving voice to the most attentive, these responses reflect the opinions of those individuals that officeholders "find it prudent to heed" (Key, 1961). In essence, the figure captures the opinions of enthusiastic primary voters, activists, and issue publics - those groups who are most likely to pay attention to a member's record, and then actively support or oppose the candidate. In following section, I dig deeper into these data by examining which individuals offer pork or policy justifications.

Who are the Policy and Pork Supporters?

To unpack these trends, I now turn to a series of regression models. Rather than looking at the temporal dimension, these models examine cross-sectional differences in order to identify which groups think about officeholders in terms of distributive goods or policy issues. In short, these analyses ask the question: who identifies policy or pork as a reason for liking their House member? More formally,

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(PolicyLike_i = 1) \sim logit^{-1}(&\alpha_i + \beta_1 Pol._i + \beta_2 PID_i + \beta_3 Job_i + \beta_4 Inc._i + \beta_5 Home_i \\ &+ \beta_6 Eth._i + \beta_7 Edu_i + \beta_8 Gender_i + \beta_9 Age_i + \varepsilon_i) \end{aligned} \tag{3.1}$$

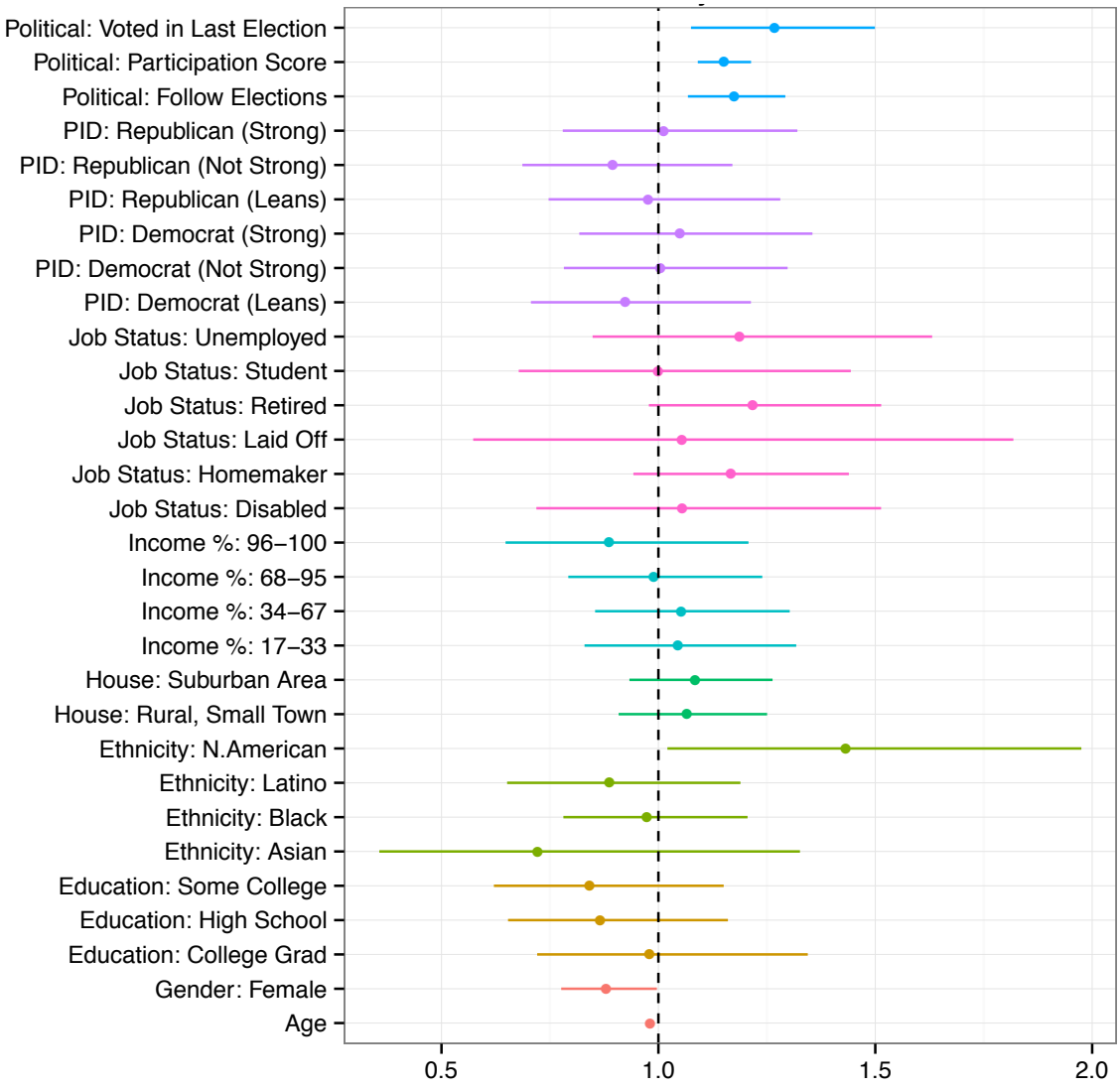
$$\begin{aligned} Pr(PorkLike_i = 1) \sim logit^{-1}(&\alpha_i + \beta_1 Pol._i + \beta_2 PID_i + \beta_3 Job_i + \beta_4 Inc._i + \beta_5 Home_i \\ &+ \beta_6 Eth._i + \beta_7 Edu_i + \beta_8 Gender_i + \beta_9 Age_i + \varepsilon_i) \end{aligned} \tag{3.2}$$

For each of the models, the dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether the respondent provided a like (1) or not (0). The right-side of the equation comprises individual-level political variables (e.g. an electoral participation score, party identification) and respondent demographics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, income). For ease of interpretation, Figures 3.3 and 3.4 display the substantive effects of these models. The full regression results can be found in Table 3.5 of the Appendix.

Figure 3.3 presents the logged odds ratios from the regression of *PolicyLike* on respondent characteristics (Eqn. 3.1). Policy answers tend to be provided by reliable voters and individuals who are especially active and interested in campaigns. This variable is essentially a summed score of the number of activities that the respondent engaged in during

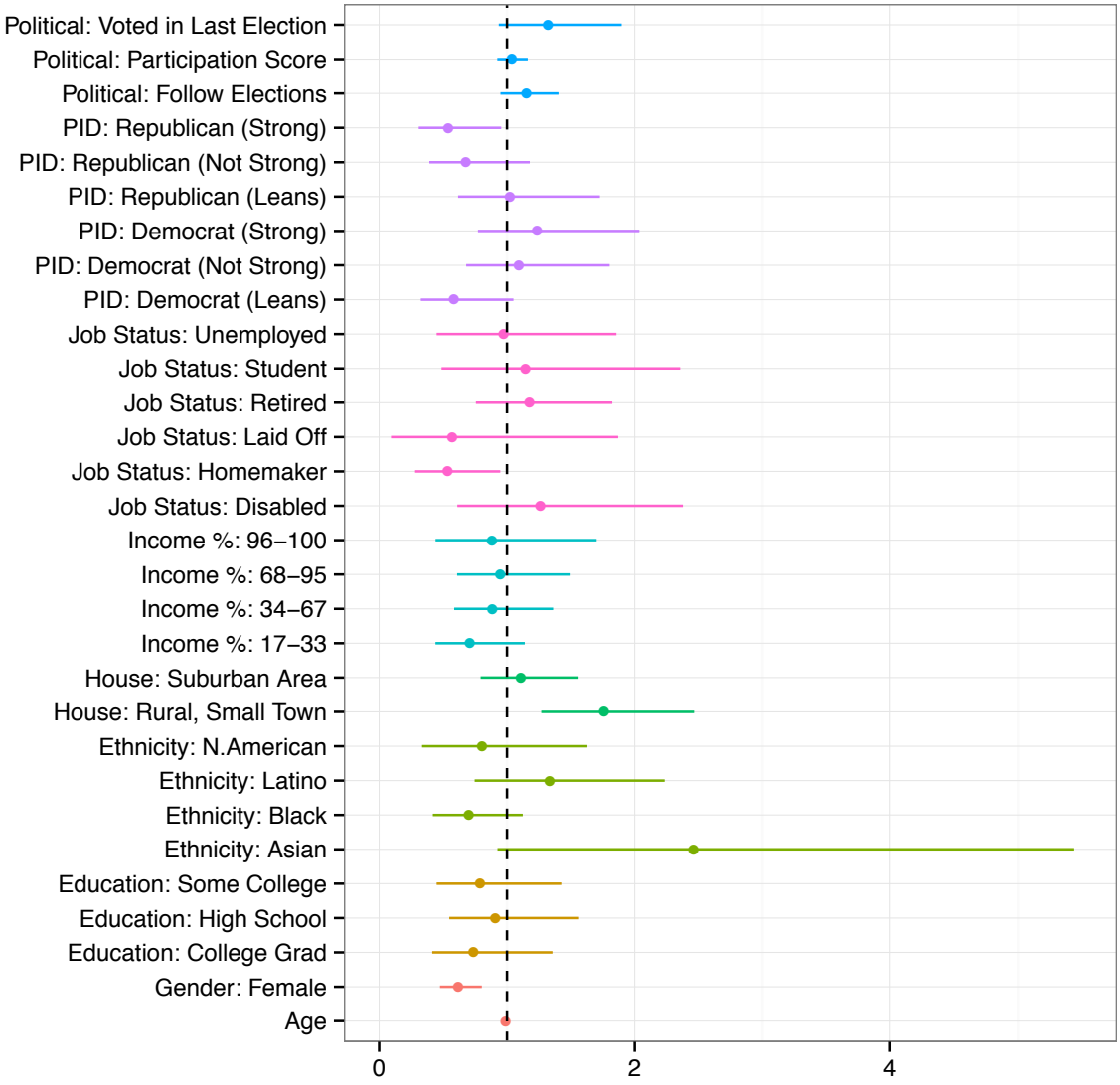
[2] Roughly half of all respondents provide an answer. Given the cognitive demands and our expectations about voter competence, this response rate is not that bad, all things considered.

Figure 3.3: Logistic Odds Ratios of Providing a Policy "Like"



Points indicate the conditional odds of providing a justification of policy. Bars are 95% confidence intervals using robust standard errors.

Figure 3.4: Logistic Odds Ratios of Providing a Pork "Like"



Points indicate the conditional odds of providing a justification of pork. Bars are 95% confidence intervals using robust standard errors.

the previous campaign (e.g. volunteered for a campaign, donated to a campaign, etc). In other words, policy justifications are prevalent among those individuals who are the most likely to play an important role in campaigns, both in terms of voting and volunteering. Figure 3.1 established that likes are more common among voters and politically attentive individuals. Even after accounting for this fact, respondents who provide policy answers are still more likely to be politically active.

Individuals who provided pork answers, however, are not correlated with these measures of electoral intensity. If anything, it seems that more politically extreme individuals are less likely to think about incumbents in terms of distributive goods, at least among strong Republicans. References to the incumbents record on allocation are more common among men and individuals who live in rural areas. Altogether, it appears policy has grown increasingly important over time, and far more relevant to valuable electoral subgroups.

3.2 What Moves Constituent Evaluations?

As the previous section suggests, voters appear to care more about policy than existing works typically assume, but do these trends hold under further empirical scrutiny? Are voters really moved by broad legislative appeals? To tackle this question, I conducted an experimental study of credit claiming. Experiments permit a direct test of how different claims shape constituent evaluations. Instead of simply assuming that an individual received a message, survey experiments allow for greater control over what information is exposed to a subject. Subjects were randomly assigned to receive one of three conditions: a distributive credit claim, a policy credit claim, or a placebo message about Congress. Unlike designs that use hypothetical candidates, this experiment examines representational strategies using the true incumbent-voter dyad and provides respondents with information about one of their actual members of Congress. After being exposed to a credit message, subjects were then asked to assess their MC's effectiveness on a range of activities.

Experimental Data

The experiment was fielded as part of the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). The CCES is a large, nationally representative survey that studies representation and other electoral issues.[3] In its entirety, the CCES boasts a sample of more than 30,000

[3] The CCES uses a matched random sampling design intended to produce a sample with demographic clusters that reflect the entire population. While more Democratic and educated than the true population means, the sample is fairly representative of U.S. adults. The CCES sample begins with a list of all U.S. consumers, this includes 95% of the adult population. From there they use clustered matching algorithms to construct their sample. For more information on the study's sampling methodology, see Ansolabehere

respondents, most of whom complete a pre-election and post election survey. The vast majority of the survey is devoted to the CCES's "Common Content," providing data on countless variables from basic demographics to the respondent's views on specific roll call votes. For the purposes of the experiment, however, the sample size is reduced to approximately 1,000 subjects drawn from the full CCES sample.[4]

Design and Procedures

After completing the CCES's standard battery of questions, respondents are then assigned to complete an individual "module." Subjects assigned to the UC Berkeley Module were then exposed to either a placebo message about Congress, or a short statement informing them of an action by their member.[5] Rather than simply asking respondents whether they can recall a project in the district, the survey experiment primes the subject with information about a specific bill supported by one their members of Congress. To generate the legislator sample, I randomly selected one U.S. Senator from each state. For cases in which the senator was retiring, the other senator was selected.

I used senators for two reasons, one theoretical and one practical. First, by studying the Senate, I exploit the fact that only one third of the members are running for reelection at any given time. This heterogeneity allows me to study whether Senate cycle (i.e. the senator is currently up, will be running in the next election, or was just reelected) mediates the treatment effect. If campaigns are capable of shaping the public's knowledge or perception of candidates, then we should expect that the treatment may be less effective among respondents with senators currently running for reelection. Second, focusing on senators provides a practical benefit by minimizing the number of unique treatments. If every House member was used, then there would be even greater noise and a general lack of clarity regarding what the treatment entails.

I then combed through the members' press releases to select two pieces of legislation. The first type, *pork*, contains classic examples of localized, distributive spending. The second type, *policy*, consist of broad legislative items with little local impact, but large national implications. For more on the issues used, see Table 3.7 in the Appendix. In terms of the message's text, all conditions share the same basic structure: a two-sentence

(2012).

[4] For summary statistics on the sample, see Table 3.6 in the Appendix.

[5] Technically, this is not a pure control, but instead a unique treatment condition. I refer to this as the control because it serves as the baseline for all other comparisons. If anything, this message about Congress achieving something is a harder test case than no message at all, since the senator may experience a related boost. What is more, every CCES respondent will have already answered dozens of questions about specific policy issues and Congress more broadly. Hence, it is unlikely that this placebo message will actually depress support for a member.

description of the achievement and the member's support for it, and then a quote describing the accomplishment's value to the state or nation. All quotes are real, albeit shortened at times to create greater parity across conditions and members. Table 3.1 provides an example of the experimental conditions.

Table 3.1: Experimental Conditions

Condition	**Text**
Control	In a recent press release, Congress announced the passage of legislation to recognize the commitment of civilians who unexpectedly pass away while in the service of the government. The legislation is expected to "authorize the presentation of a United States flag on behalf of Federal civilian employees who die of injuries in connection with their employment."
Policy	In a recent press release, Senator Nelson highlighted a vote for legislation to help returning veterans transition to civilian life. The legislation is expected to speed up the process by which veterans can obtain necessary occupational licenses. "When you come back from war, you shouldn't have to do battle with bureaucrats," said Senator Nelson. "This will remove some of the obstacles in our veteran' way and should make it easier for them to get licenses when they get home."
Pork	In a recent press release, Senator Nelson highlighted a vote for legislation to provide regional funding to struggling areas. The legislation is expected to stimulate job growth and local spending to help get the region's economy back on track. "Today's vote was a huge step toward making sure any fines against BP end up in the local communities harmed by the company's oil spill," said Senator Nelson. "This is something the Gulf Coast very badly needs."

Because the experiment used real projects, with real quotes by the member, conditions vary across states. The examples above were used for Florida residents.

For outcome measures, I used several items to tap the dimensions of representational performance. Following Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood, 2012, I assessed member effectiveness on multiple levels by including four measures. The items range from securing local "Projects," to the senator's ability to pass important national "Legislation." To round out the definition of representative effectiveness, I also included a question on the member's record of solving problems,"Casework," and a more general question on the senator's record in representing the constituent's interests, "Representation." The outcome measures were assessed on a seven-point scale ranging from "Very Ineffective" to "Very Effective."[6] In the subsequent analyses, I have rescaled these measures from zero to one hundred in order to clarify the substantive interpretation of these effects.

[6] For the exact language and presentation of these variables, see Table 3.8 in the Appendix.

Results

For a first look at the experimental results, Figures 3.5 and 3.6 display the group means for each of the four outcome measures. Contrary to the view that policy-based credit claims are ineffective, the results clearly suggest that members can generate electoral support by taking credit for broader legislative achievements. Subjects in the *Policy* condition evaluated the senator at higher rates than the *Control* group on three of the four measures. The *Pork* condition, by contrast, appears less effective. Exposure to a distributive credit claim appears to raise evaluations for two of the variables, but the magnitudes are smaller and of lower statistical significance.

Overall, the four variables exhibit strikingly similar patterns to one another.[7] How the different credit claims impacted the individual measures is informative nonetheless. Consider the first two items, Projects and Legislation. Both the *Policy* and *Pork* conditions produced a boost relative to the *Control*, although *Policy* was substantively larger and of higher significance. What is more, only the *Policy* appeal created a statistically significant increase with regard to the senator's ability to solve constituent problems. These results are robust across multiple specifications, and remain statistically significant after the p-values have been adjusted to correct for multiple testing (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).[8]

Digging deeper into these results, Table 3.2 examines how treatment varied across partisan subgroups. For ease of interpretation, the results are presented using an index of representative effectiveness. The score is essentially an average of the four items.[9] Subgroup analysis offers a closer look into how partisanship mediates the relationship between incumbents and voters. The main effects by treatment condition, while interesting, cannot speak to the question of *who* is doing the moving. If co-partisans and centrists are more receptive to policy-based claims, as the theoretical discussion of Figure 2.3 suggested, then we should expect the *Policy* treatment to be particularly influential for these groups.

Indeed, among independent voters and co-partisans, policy-based credit claims were more effective than distributive goods. When compared to the *Control* group, evaluations by Unaligned and Matched subjects in the *Policy* condition were 10% and 5% higher, respectively. It is important to note that distributive goods, while less effective generally, appear more effective when targeting out-party voters. Mismatched subjects in the *Pork* condition were 6% more supportive of their senator than the controls. This find-

[7] The measures do have different overall averages. Among the four items, respondents consistently rated their member lowest on Representation.

[8] Table 3.3 analyzes these results using a series of regression models. The core findings remain significant even with the inclusion of individual-level controls, state variables, and fixed effects.

[9] A factor analysis of the four variables suggests that consolidation is theoretically appropriate. More importantly, the results generally hold when using either the individual measures or general index. See Table 3.9 in the Appendix for the subgroup results for each of the outcome measures.

Figure 3.5: Projects and Legislation

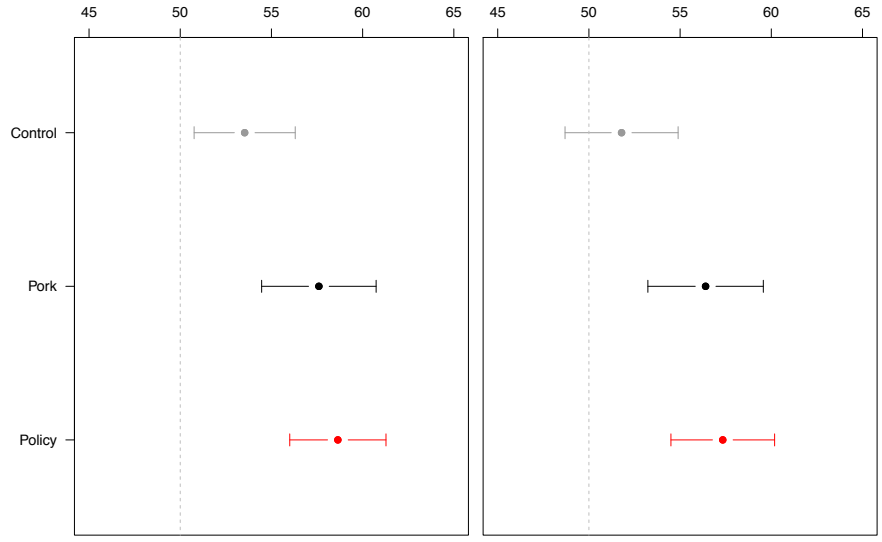
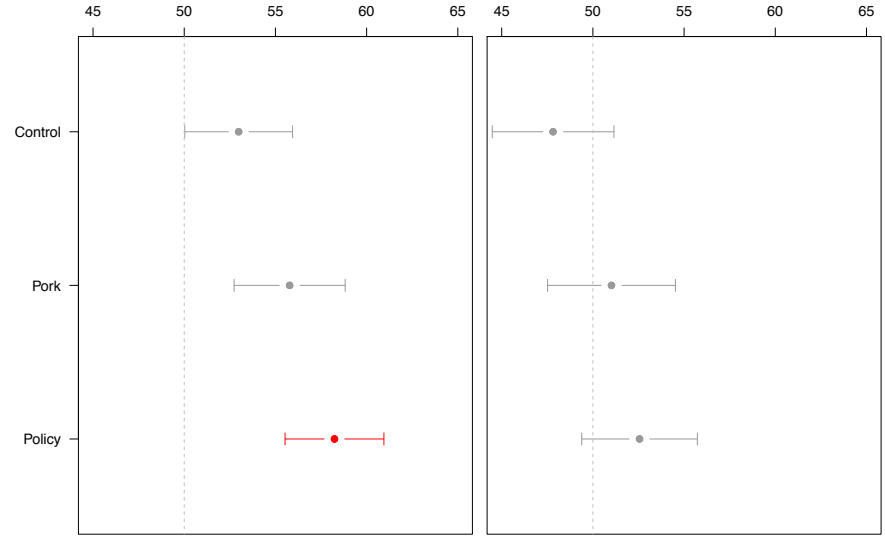


Figure 3.6: Casework and Representation



Effectiveness ratings are on a 7-point scale, with 4 as the midpoint. Points represent the mean level for each condition; the bars are 95% confidence intervals. Black points are statistically different from the *Control*, $p < .10$; red points, $p < .05$.

Table 3.2: Experimental Results - Subgroup Means

Condition	Mean	SE	N
Full Sample			
- Control	51.51	1.45	333
- Pork	55.20	1.54	294
- Policy	***56.60****	1.34	350
Mismatch			
- Control	37.26	2.24	123
- Pork	**43.20**†	2.36	114
- Policy	40.77	2.05	125
Unaligned			
- Control	44.09	3.38	43
- Pork	47.19	3.60	40
- Policy	**54.34**†	3.30	48
Match			
- Control	63.92	1.75	167
- Pork	67.26	1.93	140
- Policy	**68.39**†	1.54	177

Effectiveness ratings are scaled 0-100.
†Condition significant at $p < .10$; $^{*}p < .05$.

ing supports Grimmer's (2013) argument that officeholders will focus on their distributive accomplishments when facing disagreeable electorates.

Stepping away from these subgroup analyses, Table 3.3 brings everything together in a series of regression models of varying complexity. The dependent variable is the summary indicator. Much like the analysis of the mean differences, the first column shows the relationship between treatment condition and outcome. Building on this basic model, the second column introduces several respondent-level controls and institutional factors. The model includes traditional covariates such as party identification and gender, both of which have large effects on member evaluations. This specification also controls for political interest and knowledge, two important moderators of persuasion (Zaller, 1992). In addition to these individual factors, the second model includes topic fixed effects for the *Policy* condition and variables for state size and Senate cycle. Large state senators not only rely more heavily upon broader policy work, but also share a very different relationship with their constituents (Lee and Oppenheimer, 1999).[10] This relationship is further

[10] Instead of using a continuous measure of population, I have used a dichotomous grouping here. The question is not how population matters per se, but rather, do senators from very large states behave differ-

Table 3.3: Experimental Results - OLS Regression

	Main Effects	Full Model	State FE
(Intercept)	51.514 ***	36.844 ***	39.678 ***
	(1.454)	(5.535)	(7.602)
Treatment Conditions			
Pork	3.687 †	4.258 *	4.125 *
	(2.117)	(1.971)	(1.986)
Policy	5.081 *	4.322 *	4.268 *
	(1.980)	(1.807)	(1.850)
Respondent Characteristics			
Unaligned		7.398 **	8.280 **
		(2.577)	(2.623)
Matched		25.931 ***	26.261 ***
		(1.656)	(1.683)
Female		4.790 **	5.055 **
		(1.627)	(1.663)
Nonwhite		0.761	1.388
		(1.884)	(1.898)
Some College		-1.323	-1.259
		(1.774)	(1.845)
Age		0.100 †	0.100 †
		(0.054)	(0.057)
Interest		-0.822	-0.704
		(1.068)	(1.109)
Knowledge		-0.426	-0.239
		(1.080)	(1.087)
Employed		3.259 *	3.519 *
		(1.657)	(1.715)
Union		0.781	0.780
		(2.470)	(2.481)
Institutional Factors			
Large State		-2.896	
		(3.041)	
In-cycle		0.379	
		(2.392)	
Topic Fixed Effects		*****	
State Fixed Effects			*****
N	977	926	926
R^2	0.007	0.256	0.289
adj. R^2	0.005	0.234	0.239
Resid. sd	1.560	1.372	1.368

Robust standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

complicated by whether or not the senator is in-cycle, or up for reelection.[11] Despite these concerns, neither size nor Senate cycle seem to have an effect on an individual's support of their member. Interactive models and subgroup analysis using these two variables proved similarly inconclusive.

The third model leaves out these institutional variables in favor of state fixed effects. This captures a large degree of variance not explained in the basic model. The fixed effects are of particular relevance since respondents within the same state received identical messages, and share other unmeasured commonalities. What is more, given the significance of the incumbent-voter party match, these fixed effects soak up much of the noise inherent in using 50 different politicians, a third of which were presently running for reelection. Even with these controls, the treatment effects appear robust. In the end, irrespective of the model used, both pork and policy are effective at raising MC support. To the extent that some constituents prefer one good over another, this finding speaks to the diversity of representational strategies available to the member.

3.3 Discussion

Based on these individual-level results, what can we conclude about electoral strategies? The analysis of the likes data suggests that policy has become increasingly important to voters, and that it is particularly relevant to key electoral subgroups. In the experiment, distributive goods and policy achievements generally perform on par with one another, but the latter seems more effective overall. This point should not be overstated. While some of the effects are not statistically significant for opposing partisans, the trends are very similar. Indeed, some of the differences are just outside the bounds of conventional levels of statistical significance. That said, policy-based credit claims appear to be especially persuasive when it comes to co-partisans and independents, two groups that are necessary for reelection. Distributive credit claims, on the other hand, are more potent among opposing partisans.

In the end, the optimal strategy for officeholders will depend on the partisan composition of the electorate. Nonetheless, member strategies will likely tilt towards policy given its advantages among important electoral groups. That being said, this chapter has yet to engage with the kinds of policy claims that motivate voters. How does the ideological

ently, and do their voters respond in turn? Respondents are classified as being from a large state if they reside in California, Texas, New York, or Florida.

[11] There is good reason to believe that both voters and officeholders will behave differently here. From a member perspective, Shepsle et al. (2009) find clear electoral patterns in the earmarking behavior of senators. During an election, voters are exposed to huge amounts of information from challengers, interest groups, and the media. Moreover, with in-cycle senators running campaign ads as well, voters from these states are subject to pretreatment effects (Druckman and Leeper, 2012).

position of the policy come into play? In selecting which press releases to use, the experiment used generally neutral policies, but we have good reason believe that these issues are less effective among co-partisans. If activists and other loyal partisans are more interested in policy (Layman et al., 2010), then the appropriate claim is one that speaks to these partisan sensibilities. I take up this question in the next chapter.

3.4 Appendix

Table 3.4: ANES Summary Statistics

Sample	Size
Full ANES Cumulative File (1948-2008)	49,760
Cum. File w/ "Likes" Coded (1978-2000)	22,871
Respondents with Republican Incumbent	3,962
Respondents with Democratic Incumbent	5,682

Table 3.5: ANES Likes Data

	$Like_i = 1$	$Policy_i = 1$	$Pork_i = 1$
(Intercept)	-3.023 ***	-2.010 ***	-3.254 ***
	(0.154)	(0.303)	(0.636)
Age	0.027 ***	-0.019 ***	-0.011 †
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Gender	-0.166 ***	-0.128 *	-0.478 ***
	(0.036)	(0.064)	(0.133)
Eth: Black	-0.462 ***	-0.027	-0.352
	(0.057)	(0.111)	(0.250)
Eth: Asian	-0.560 ***	-0.327	0.900 *
	(0.153)	(0.332)	(0.444)
Eth: N. Amer.	0.074	0.359 *	-0.218
	(0.103)	(0.168)	(0.397)
Eth: Latino	-0.186 *	-0.120	0.289
	(0.078)	(0.153)	(0.278)
Ed: High School	0.312 ***	-0.144	-0.096
	(0.069)	(0.146)	(0.266)
Ed: Some College	0.521 ***	-0.173	-0.235
	(0.077)	(0.157)	(0.294)
Ed: College or Higher	0.715 ***	-0.021	-0.303
	(0.081)	(0.159)	(0.301)
PID: Str. Dem.	0.483 ***	0.048	0.211
	(0.066)	(0.129)	(0.246)
PID: Weak Dem.	0.245 ***	0.005	0.089
	(0.062)	(0.129)	(0.247)
PID: Lean Dem.	0.342 ***	-0.079	-0.534 †
	(0.068)	(0.138)	(0.297)
PID: Lean Rep.	0.385 ***	-0.024	0.022
	(0.070)	(0.138)	(0.261)
PID: Weak Rep.	0.179 **	-0.111	-0.389
	(0.066)	(0.136)	(0.279)
PID: Str. Rep.	0.290 ***	0.012	-0.612 *
	(0.073)	(0.134)	(0.286)
House: Suburb	-0.040	0.082	0.103
	(0.044)	(0.077)	(0.172)
House: Rural	-0.039	0.063	0.565 ***
	(0.046)	(0.082)	(0.169)
Income %: 17-33	0.137 *	0.044	-0.344
	(0.060)	(0.118)	(0.241)
Income %: 34-67	0.166 **	0.052	-0.120
	(0.055)	(0.108)	(0.214)
Income %: 68-95	0.181 **	-0.011	-0.053
	(0.060)	(0.114)	(0.229)
Income %: 96-100	-0.018	-0.121	-0.123
	(0.090)	(0.159)	(0.342)
Job Status: Disabled	0.245 *	0.053	0.233
	(0.103)	(0.190)	(0.343)
Job Status: Homemaker	0.102 †	0.155	-0.622 *
	(0.058)	(0.108)	(0.308)
Job Status: Laid off	0.025	0.053	-0.560
	(0.154)	(0.293)	(0.728)
Job Status: Retired	-0.115 †	0.197 †	0.163
	(0.065)	(0.111)	(0.224)
Job Status: Student	0.289 **	-0.000	0.135
	(0.107)	(0.192)	(0.397)
Job Status: Unemployed	-0.009	0.171	-0.027
	(0.087)	(0.166)	(0.358)
Political: Voted	0.790 ***	0.237 **	0.278
	(0.039)	(0.085)	(0.180)
Political: Follows Elections	0.394 ***	0.161 ***	0.142
	(0.026)	(0.049)	(0.100)
Political: Participation	0.313 ***	0.141 ***	0.039
	(0.022)	(0.027)	(0.058)
N	18316	9282	9282
AIC	21706.597	7701.226	2495.848
BIC	23019.606	8900.046	3694.668
$\log L$	-10685.298	-3682.613	-1079.924

Standard errors in parentheses. Models include year fixed effects.
† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3.6: CCES 2012 Experimental Sample

Variable	**Range**	**Mean**
Outcome Measures		
Projects	1-7	4.395
Legislation	1-7	4.310
Casework	1-7	4.342
Representation	1-7	4.029
Respondent Variables		
Age (Yrs.)	18-87	52.26
Gender (Female)	0-1	0.533
Race (Nonwhite)	0-1	0.253
Education (Some College)	0-1	0.722
Democrat	0-1	0.493
Employed	0-1	0.384
Union	0-1	0.141
Knowledge	0-2	1.212
Interest	1-4	3.322
Institutional Variables		
PID Match/Independent	0-1	0.593
Large State	0-1	0.278
In-cycle	0-1	0.387

Table 3.7: Experimental Issue Selection

In selecting which issues to use, I only included legislation that members took credit for on their websites. The decision by a member's staff to issue a press release expresses an expectation about the potential electoral relevance of a given act. Though reflective of reality, this decision rule inevitably introduces noise by increasing the number of unique claims. Fortunately, nearly every Democratic senator, and many Republicans, took credit for the 2012 Transportation Bill. This meant I was able to use more or less the same issue across the pork conditions. The policy conditions, however, are much more diverse, ranging from government transparency to reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act.

Topic	**# Senators**
Distributive Claims	
Transportation Spending	36
Regional Industry Support	6
Local Relief Spending	4
Military Spending	4
Policy Claims	
Health Policy/FDA	12
Domestic/Sexual Violence	11
Security/Defense/Veterans	10
Legal/Govt Reform	6
Agriculture	5
Public Safety	3
Infrastructure	3

Table 3.8: Experimental Question Wording and Response Options

	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Somewhat Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective
(Projects)							
Delivering projects necessary for my state	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(Legislation)							
Working to pass legislation that is important for the country	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(Casework)							
Responding to constituent requests or problems	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
(Representation)							
Representing my interests	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

After exposure to treatment, subjects were asked: "How effective is Senator [NAME] at ... ?" Item order was randomized, response options were not.

Table 3.9: Subgroup Results for Each Measure

Condition	N	Index	Projects	Legislation	Casework	Representation
Full Sample						
- Control	333	4.091 (0.087)	4.212 (0.085)	4.107 (0.095)	4.179 (0.090)	3.869 (0.102)
- Pork	294	4.312 (0.092)	**4.456 (0.096)**	**4.384 (0.097)**	4.347 (0.093)	4.061 (0.107)
- Policy	350	***4.396 (0.081)***	***4.519 (0.081)***	***4.440 (0.087)***	***4.494 (0.083)***	4.153 (0.097)
Mismatch						
- Control	123	3.236 (0.135)	3.455 (0.136)	3.177 (0.152)	3.444 (0.145)	2.847 (0.161)
- Pork	114	**3.592 (0.142)**	3.826 (0.157)	***3.647 (0.153)***	3.750 (0.151)	3.175 (0.167)
- Policy	125	3.446 (0.123)	3.760 (0.130)	3.460 (0.140)	3.600 (0.135)	2.960 (0.153)
Unaligned						
- Control	43	3.645 (0.203)	3.837 (0.208)	3.628 (0.235)	3.698 (0.214)	3.419 (0.236)
- Pork	40	3.831 (0.216)	4.100 (0.250)	3.975 (0.219)	3.825 (0.208)	3.425 (0.258)
- Policy	48	**4.260 (0.198)**	4.250 (0.212)	***4.396 (0.208)***	***4.458 (0.191)***	3.938 (0.252)
Match						
- Control	167	4.835 (0.105)	4.858 (0.103)	4.917 (0.108)	4.845 (0.113)	4.734 (0.120)
- Pork	140	5.036 (0.116)	5.071 (0.119)	5.106 (0.122)	4.986 (0.120)	4.964 (0.124)
- Policy	177	**5.103 (0.093)**	**5.124 (0.097)**	5.146 (0.100)	**5.128 (0.099)**	**5.045 (0.102)**

Effectiveness ratings are on a 1-7 scale. **Bolded** entries significant at $p < .10$; ***Bolded and italicized*** entries significant at $p < .05$. P-values corrected for multiple comparisons (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).

Chapter 4

Choosing Representatives

This chapter evaluates what voters want from a representative by studying how different *types* of legislative accomplishments affect candidate choice. First and foremost, do constituents prefer localized distributive goods, or are broader policy achievements desired? Second, assuming that voters gravitate towards one or the other, what drives this choice? Are these preferences for pork and policy fixed, or does the issue area and ideological position of the policy affect this decision?

Efforts to back out how these achievements affect vote choice, however, are complicated by the fact that elections typically favor the incumbent, in the general and primary alike. By exploiting the odd nature of the 2012 elections, I experimentally test these propositions in a more balanced fashion. In a series of experiments, I asked subjects to read a "news story" about a congressional race featuring two incumbents and then select the candidate that they prefer. To assess how voters perceive the tradeoff between allocation and policy, I framed the campaign as a choice between a candidate who runs on local distributive achievements versus one who focuses on their broader policy record.

Before getting into the results, I first outline the overall experimental design. Though sharing similar procedures, the two studies depart in important ways in order to test several distinct hypotheses. Ultimately, I find that policy candidates are chosen around 60% of the time, but that this preference is heavily moderated by the issue area and position of the policy. In general, partisans gravitate towards candidates who run on broad legislation when the policy is associated, either area or position, with the subject's party.

4.1 How Do Voters Choose Between Pork and Policy?

What voters want from their representative, either pork or policy, is an empirically difficult question to answer. By the end of their first term, members of Congress have some

combination of achievements, both local distributive goods and broad policy. Disentangling what aspect of a member's record is most important to constituents is a challenging task. This is further complicated by the incumbency advantage (Erikson, 1971; Mayhew, 1974b). If officeholders win in greater numbers, then the analytical choice set is inherently imbalanced. Consequently, designs that use observational data are incapable of determining whether the 'better' candidate won. I conducted a series of experiments in which subjects were asked to select between two officeholders running for the same congressional seat. This set-up controls for important factors that drive vote choice, like party, and creates a scenario in which voters must select between incumbents on the basis of their records alone. The overall study is broken into two experiments, one fielded by the Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) and a second as part of the Institute of Governmental Studies' (IGS) poll of California residents. Each of the experiments test a central hypothesis about the substantive content of the achievements, and a secondary hypothesis on whether the strength of the message makes a record more or less attractive. Before getting into the results of these experiments, and the hypotheses driving them, the next section discusses the overall design and procedures.

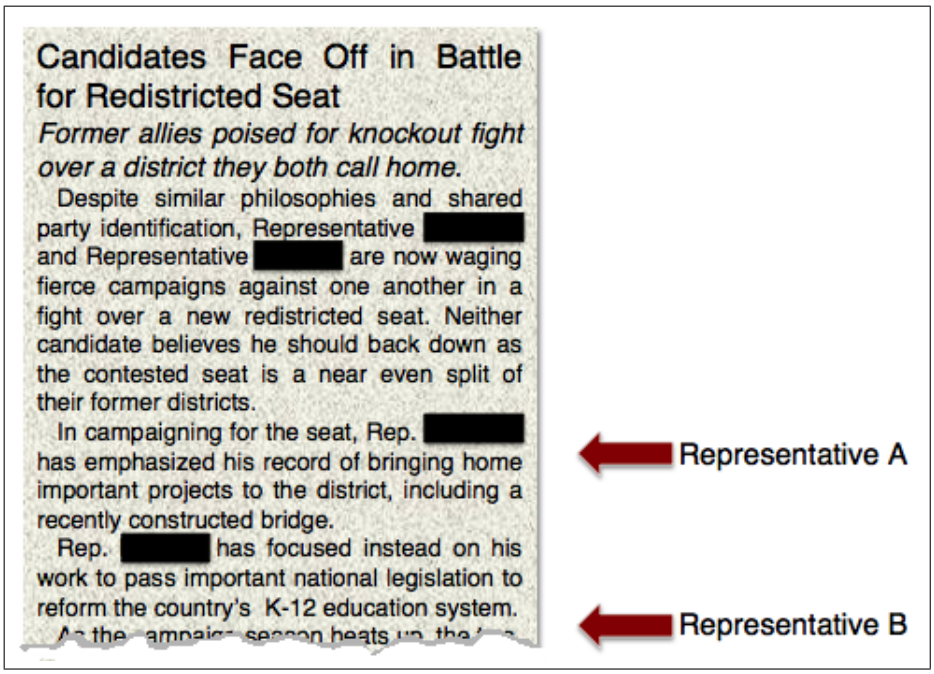
General Design

Subjects were randomly assigned to read one of several "news" stories about an intra-party fight over a redistricted seat. For an example of the exact wording and presentation, see Figure 4.1. Each vignette employed the same format, starting with a short discussion about the candidates' similar backgrounds. The candidates were identified as male officeholders from the same party. This introduction was designed to signal to voters that the two candidates were more or less ideologically exchangeable without identifying the party. From there, the article then briefly describes the substantive focus of the candidates' campaigns.[1] In each vignette, one candidate highlights a record of securing localized projects. His challenger focuses instead on a record of broader, national policy achievements. These ideal types are, of course, a simplification as real officeholders run on a diverse record of accomplishments. However, while no candidate focuses on pork or policy alone, many incumbents tend towards one end of the spectrum or the other (Grimmer, 2013a). The task is nonetheless informative as it provides insight into how voters reason between candidates on this basis.

To make the experiment more believable, the article mimics the look of an authentic news clipping. The tattered appearance is designed to suggest that the article continues and provides further details about the campaign. In other words, participants are led to

[1] Because a news article can be seen as conveying legitimacy to a campaign, I frame the information as a simple reporting of what the *candidate* has chosen to emphasize.

Figure 4.1: News Story - Education Condition



Subjects were shown this image, and then indicated their choice between the two representatives. The order of the candidates (pork, policy) was randomized. See Figures 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 in the Appendix for the exact wording of each condition.

believe that the race is more complicated than a contest between pork and policy, but must decide on this basis alone. What is more, the candidates are not described as hypothetical representatives, but rather two anonymous candidates whose names have been blacked out.

For the central outcome measure, subjects are asked to simply indicate which candidate they would select as their representative, $Y_i(Policy = 1)$.[2] Compared to approaches that require subjects to rate the candidate on some other metric, such as a feeling thermometer, this question more closely maps onto the quantity of interest: vote choice.

4.2 Study I: Issue Area

For a first cut at what constituents look for in a representative, Study I uses several different policies to examine whether issue area plays an important role in choosing which

[2] The second experiment included additional outcome measures. See Appendix Figures 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12.

candidate to support. In addition to evaluating domain effects, the study had a secondary goal to test whether criticism of the candidate diminishes his support. The experiment was fielded Spring 2013 as part of a larger internet survey of California residents. The experimental sample ($N = 1805$) consisted of registered voters recruited by Survey Sampling International (SSI).[3]

Hypotheses

What constitutes as a broad policy achievement is highly variable, both in terms of the issue's salience to voters as well as its perceived impact. Short of experimenting with every issue on the agenda, how do we make sense of which issues will resonate with voters? For this first study, I used different policy areas to examine whether voters gravitate toward issues that are often associated with the subject's party. Petrocik's (1996) work on issue ownership suggests that members of Congress highlight policies on which they possess an advantage. What is more, he finds that voters who care about these "owned" issues, especially co-partisans, are much more likely to vote for the corresponding candidate. Using a novel experimental framework, Goggin, Henderson, and Theodoridis (2015) find that voters do perceive specific issues as being tied to one party or the other, and that these associations shape candidate evaluations. Whether these connections are the product of "issue-based change" in party, or "party-based issue change" is an open question (Carsey and Layman, 2006). Nonetheless, we should expect voters to recognize that a given issue area is aligned with their party, and thus be particularly susceptible to policy accomplishments in that domain.

> ***H1: Issue Reputation.*** *Candidates running on a record of broad policy will be more popular when the* ***issue area*** *is favorably associated with the subject's party.*

In addition to examining how different issue areas factor in, Study I considers whether these effects can be moderated by challenges to the candidate's record. In a study of framing effects, Druckman (2004) finds that subjects are less susceptible to a specific issue frame when exposed to counter-framing. Similarly, Grimmer, Westwood, and Messing (2015) find that voters are less likely to reward their member of Congress for distributive goods after reading criticism of government spending. How might this logic apply to the choice between two candidates for office? Does a challenge neutralize or moderate the benefits of credit claiming? If some records are easily rebutted, then this has implications for specific electoral strategies.

[3] For summary statistics of the SSI sample, and the Knowledge Networks sample used in Study II, see Appendix Table 4.7.

H2: Challenging the Claim. *Candidates who challenge the records of their opposition will be more popular, all else being equal.*

Conditions

Study I uses five conditions (see Table 4.1) that closely resemble the layout and wording from Figure 4.1. In all five conditions, the candidate running on local distributive goods highlights a bridge project. The key difference is on the policy side. In the first condition, *Education*, the policy candidate highlights his work on reforming the K-12 system. This vague and neutral position was designed to prime neither Democratic nor Republican issue areas. The second, *Violence*, addressed the candidate's work on violence against women legislation; this condition is meant to read Democratic. To round out these different policies, the third condition, *Immigration*, discusses the candidate's efforts to improve border security - a Republican sounding policy. While these latter two conditions are designed to illicit partisan reactions, it should be noted that both parties publicly support all three issues, at least in the vague terms in which they are presented.

Table 4.1: Study I - Experimental Conditions

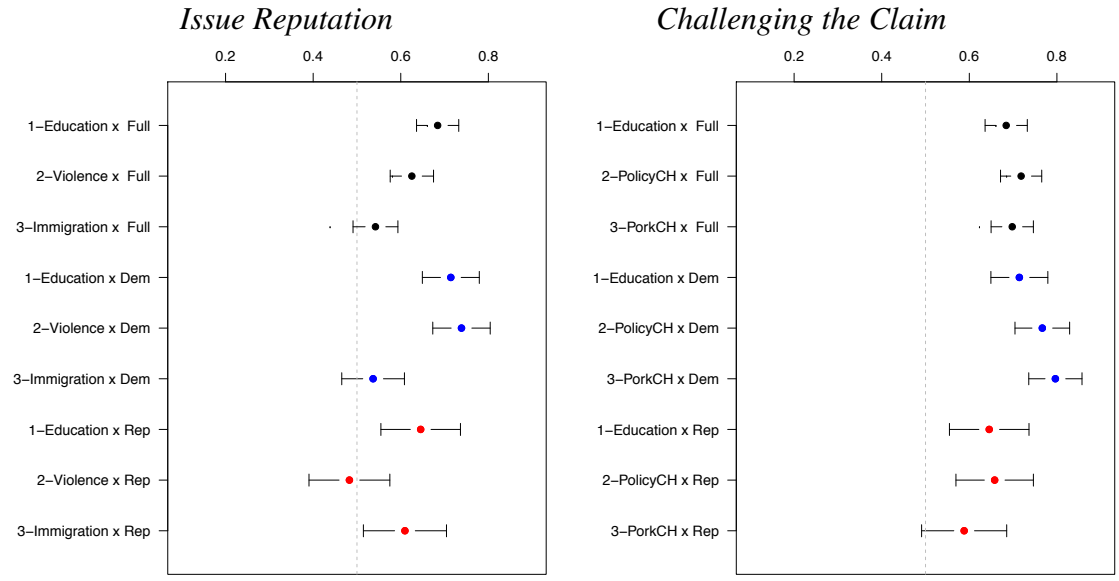
Condition	**Policy Candidate**	**Pork Candidate**
Education	"reform the country's K-12 education system"	"recently constructed bridge"
Violence	"protect women against physical abuse"	"recently constructed bridge"
Immigration	"advance immigration reform in the area of border security"	"recently constructed bridge"
PolicyCH	"being little more than 'wasteful spending projects' ...reform the country's K-12 education system"	"recently constructed bridge"
PorkCH	"reform the country's K-12 education system"	"lacking 'credible evidence that he helped at all' ...recently constructed bridge"

Lastly, to assess whether an attack moderates these effects, a fourth condition, *PolicyCH*, uses the same setup as the *Education* condition, but includes an additional line in which the policy candidate challenges his opponent's accomplishments as wasteful spending. Similarly, in a fifth condition, *PorkCH*, the pork candidate attacks the policy record for lacking credibility.

Results

For a first look at how voters respond to different records, the first panel in Figure 4.2 shows how subjects behaved when choosing between a pork candidate and the different policy candidates (*Education*, *Violence*, and *Immigration*). Looking at the full sample, subjects clearly gravitated towards the policy achievements. Indeed, respondents preferred the policy candidate to the pork candidate in over 60% of all cases. The results, though interesting, are even more striking when broken down by the subjects' party identification.

Figure 4.2: Study I - Overall Effects



Points represent the percent that prefer the policy candidate in each condition. Results presented for the full sample, as well as by the subject's party identification. The bars are 95% confidence intervals.

While the policy candidate generally outperforms his pork rival, differences across the conditions begin to emerge once party is taken into consideration. Democratic respondents in the *Education* and *Violence* conditions were highly supportive of the policy candidate, selecting him more than 70% of the time (see Table 4.2). The *Immigration* candidate, though chosen around half of the time, was far less popular among Democrats (-17%). Like the Democratic subjects, Republicans preferred the *Education* candidate around 60% of the time. When it comes to the other conditions, however, the Republican trends were reversed. Republicans in the *Violence* condition were less likely to choose the policy candidate (-16%), but preferred the *Immigration* candidate on par with his *Education* counterpart. Altogether, these results comport well with *H1: Issue Reputation*. Respondents

were more likely to select the policy candidate when the subject's party shared a positive association with the issue area. These differences were particularly striking when comparing the conditions at odds. Democrats were significantly more likely to select the *Violence* candidate than the *Immigration* one, while the reverse holds true for the Republicans.

Table 4.2: Study I - Mean Effects

Condition	Full Sample	Democrats	Republicans
Education	68.4	71.4	64.5
Violence	62.5 (-5.9)	73.9 (+2.5)	48.3 (-16.2)*
Immigration	54.2 (-14.2)**	53.7 (-17.7)**	61.0 (-3.5)
PolicyCH	71.8 (+3.4)	76.7 (+5.3)	65.8 (+1.3)
PorkCH	69.8 (+1.4)	79.7 (+8.3)	58.8 (-5.7)

Higher numbers indicate a greater propensity to select the policy candidate. Differences between the *Education* condition are in parentheses. *Condition significant at $p < .05$; **$p < .01$. P-values corrected for multiple testing (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).

Voters clearly respond to candidates who run on a record of broad policy, but how stable are these views? Put differently, if subjects are exposed to statements that are critical of a candidate's record, do we see a shift in support as predicted by *H2: Challenging the Claim*? To evaluate this claim, the second panel in Figure 4.2 presents how the inclusion of a challenge influences voter preferences, as compared to the *Education* baseline. Despite some movement, we see very little difference across the three conditions, and none that are statistically significant.

Before moving on, Table 4.3 analyzes these experimental data using several regression models. The regression analysis provides a look at the robustness of the treatment effect, and offers greater insight into how respondent characteristics interact with these findings. The first model (Main Effects) presents results from a regression of candidate preference, $Y_i(Policy = 1)$, on treatment condition Tr_i. The second model (Full Sample) includes several individual-level, control variables.[4] Given the binary dependent variable, I used logistic regression with robust standard errors clustered by congressional district.[5]

Looking at the first two models, the difference between *Immigration* and *Education*, the omitted or reference condition, remains highly significant throughout. The *Violence* condition drops out with the addition of the control variables, but comes back into play in

[4] More formally, $Y_i(Policy = 1) \sim \alpha_i + \beta_1(Tr_i) + \beta_2(IndivVars_i) + \varepsilon_i$

[5] Study I was conducted exclusively in California, yet, as the country's largest state there are huge differences across congressional districts. Clustered SEs respect this unobserved geographic heterogeneity, which is particularly important for representational preferences over policy or distributive goods (Clemens, Crespin, and Finocchiaro, 2011). These models are also robust to using district fixed effects.

Table 4.3: Study I - Logit Results

	Main Effects	Full Sample	Democrats	Republicans
(Intercept)	0.769 ***	0.587 †	0.802	0.596
	(0.102)	(0.335)	(0.591)	(0.636)
Violence	-0.255 †	-0.197	0.241	-0.631 †
	(0.145)	(0.174)	(0.258)	(0.327)
Immigration	-0.610 ***	-0.591 ***	-0.799 ***	-0.108
	(0.120)	(0.158)	(0.219)	(0.316)
PolicyCH	0.163	0.175	0.178	0.218
	(0.154)	(0.162)	(0.258)	(0.279)
PorkCH	0.074	0.145	0.610 **	-0.345
	(0.166)	(0.191)	(0.229)	(0.321)
Age		-0.008 *	-0.011 *	-0.002
		(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Gender		0.399 **	0.556 **	0.132
		(0.122)	(0.196)	(0.190)
Nonwhite		0.248	0.131	0.441
		(0.172)	(0.239)	(0.339)
Some College		0.139	0.269	0.191
		(0.158)	(0.202)	(0.319)
Democrat		0.401 *		
		(0.159)		
Ideology		-0.004	-0.002	0.017
		(0.047)	(0.071)	(0.091)
Employed		-0.020	0.122	-0.353 †
		(0.126)	(0.171)	(0.190)
N	1794	1478	768	456
AIC	2295.570	1846.051	891.939	614.915
BIC	2405.414	2100.376	1096.266	796.305
$\log L$	-1127.785	-875.025	-401.970	-263.458

Robust standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

the subgroup analysis. The Full Sample model also sheds light on which groups are more likely to select a policy candidate. This gets at the bigger question of whether pork or policy is preferred more generally. The results suggest that younger people, women, and Democrats are more likely to select the policy candidate.

The third (Democrats) and fourth (Republicans) models employ the same specification as the Full Sample, but divide the sample by the subjects' party. As with the main treat-

ment effect, the partisan results remain substantively and statistically significant.[6] From this more fine-grained analysis, it is apparent that party is the underlying factor behind the main treatment results. Consistent with *H1: Issue Reputation*, voters appear to gravitate towards issues that their parties are associated with or, at the very least, away from those issues in which the party is less active. The Democratic subgroup analysis produced surprising results for *H2: Challenging the Claim*. Democrats in the *PorkCH* condition were *more likely* to choose the policy candidate than those in the *Education* baseline. If a challenge lowers support, as the hypothesis predicted, then the percent of subjects selecting the policy candidate should decrease. While difficult to make sense of these results, it may be the case that subjects interpreted the criticism as an unfair attack. Hence, this negativity turned voters off from the candidate issuing the challenge.

4.3 Study II: Issue Position

The previous study demonstrates that different issue areas produce distinct results, particularly when they are aligned with the subject's party. These findings also imply that voters prefer representatives who champion more partisan policies. The second experiment builds on this idea while testing two additional hypotheses. First, holding the issue area constant, how does the ideological position of the policy accomplishment shape voter evaluations? Second, how does the candidate's effort level moderate these effects? Study II was an internet survey fielded Spring 2013 by Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS). The TESS study uses a nationally representative sample ($N = 2026$) supplied by GfK Knowledge Networks.

Hypotheses

Like the previous experiment, Study II explores whether subjects prefer candidates who run on pork or policy. However, the first study used centrist policies that are supported by both parties. This decision runs counter to recent thinking that policy appeals are targeted at the member's core supporters, and that these voters are often more polarized on policy (Layman and Carsey, 2002). Hence, we should expect that the appeal of policy depends on whether the position is consistent with the subject's party. In other words, holding issue area constant, how does the ideological positioning of the policy determine voter preferences between distributive goods and policy achievements?

[6] For a more substantive interpretation of what these effects mean for an individual's odds of selecting the policy candidate, see Figure 4.8 in the Appendix.

> ***H3: Position Reputation.*** *Candidates running on a record of broad policy will be more popular when the policy position is ideologically consistent with the subject's party.*

Following on *H2*'s mixed results from Study I, there is still a question of the stability of these representational preferences. If challenges do not diminish support, then are positive statements unable to increase support? Effort levels in Congress are highly uneven (Hall, 1996), but it is unclear whether the public rewards committee work. Additional effort not only provides a general valence boost, but it also adds credibility to the member's claim of accomplishment.[7] In either case, these statements of additional effort should produce greater support among subjects.

> ***H4: Bolstering the Claim.*** *Candidates who claim to have exerted additional effort in committee will be more popular, all else being equal.*

Conditions

In addition to creating new policy conditions (see Table 4.4), Study II also modifies the pork condition. Instead of championing a transportation project, the pork candidate highlights a hospital project. This change serves two purposes. First, by changing the project from a bridge to a hospital, this change serves to control for the policy area. Rather than testing different policy domains, both candidates highlight achievements related to health care. Second, this is a more conservative test of whether voters prefer policy over pork. Subjects may actually like distributive goods more than Study I suggested, but find transportation projects less compelling than other forms of local spending.

For the policy conditions, Study II uses several issues that were common during the 112th Congress, such as a medical device reform used in the *Neutral* condition. In the second and third conditions, the policy candidate takes credit for legislation that more closely resembles issues from the parties' respective platforms. For the *Democratic* leaning record, the candidate discusses legislation to expand health coverage for the uninsured. The *Republican* leaning message instead highlights the member's efforts to lower costs through individual responsibility. In addition to policy positions, Study II includes two conditions to test whether subjects are swayed by a candidate's claim to have exerted effort on behalf of medical devices, *PolicyHE*, or the hospital project, *PorkHE*.

[7] There are also reasons to think that additional effort will produce differential effects by the achievement. Members of Congress can and readily do claim credit for distributive goods, but broader policy appeals are often rarer and harder to make (Arnold, 1990). Consequently, a statement of committee work may benefit policy candidates more by making their claims more credible.

Table 4.4: Study II - Experimental Conditions

Condition	**Policy Candidate**	**Pork Candidate**
Neutral	"speed up the approval process for new medical devices"	"recently constructed hospital"
Democratic	"expand healthcare coverage to uninsured Americans"	"recently constructed hospital"
Republican	"lower healthcare costs by promoting individual responsibility"	"recently constructed hospital"
PolicyHE	"speed up the approval process for new medical devices, an issue the member fought for in committee"	"recently constructed hospital"
PorkHE	"speed up the approval process for new medical devices"	"recently constructed hospital, an issue the member fought for in committee"

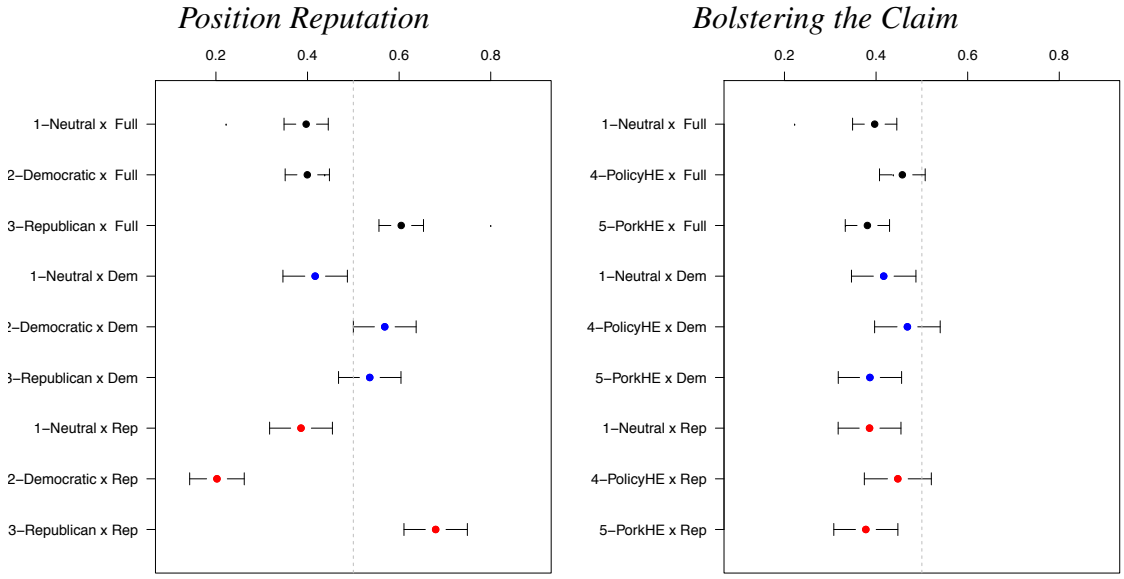
Results

Compared to the first experiment, subjects in Study II were generally less favorable towards the policy candidate. The first panel in Figure 4.3 presents how the subjects behaved in the three policy conditions (*Neutral*, *Democratic*, and *Republican*). Altogether, less than half of the subjects selected the policy candidate (45%), well below the rate for Study I participants (65%). Because both the sample and conditions are different, it is impossible to definitively identify the cause of this difference.[8] Nonetheless, this decrease is likely associated with changes to the vignette, such as using a more attractive distributive project (i.e. local hospital).

While the pork change certainly matters, it is clear that much of this drop is explained by heterogeneous responses to different policy conditions. The policy candidate performs much better in conditions in which the legislation is consistent with the subjects' party platform. When presented with a choice between a local hospital and a policy position that matched their PID, subjects selected the policy candidate around 60% of the time (see Table 4.5). This result largely follows the prediction that voters respond to policies of a more partisan nature, *H3: Position Reputation*. These results, however, are not so cut and dry. Republicans, predictably, hated the *Democratic* policy candidate, selecting him only 20% of the time. The Democratic respondents, by contrast, were far less ideologically dogmatic. Democrats selected the *Republican* policy candidate on par with the *Democratic*

[8] Recall that Study I used a sample of California residents, whereas Study II used a nationally representative sample.

Figure 4.3: Study II - Overall Effects



Points represent the percent that prefer the policy candidate in each condition. Results are presented for the full sample, as well as respondent PID. Bars are 95% CI.

representative, and significantly more than the *Neutral* candidate. This odd result is likely due to the fact that the *Republican* condition addressed lowering costs, which has a more broad appeal. Alternatively, this asymmetry may speak to the finding that left-leaning voters are more susceptible to conservative arguments (Feldman and Zaller, 1992).

Table 4.5: Study II - Mean Effects

Condition	**Full Sample**	**Democrats**	**Republicans**
Neutral	39.7	41.7	38.6
Democratic	39.9 (+0.2)	56.9 (+15.2)**	20.2 (-18.4)**
Republican	60.5 (+20.8)***	53.6 (+11.9)*	68.0 (+29.4)***
PolicyHE	45.7 (+6.0)	46.8 (+5.1)	44.8 (+6.2)
PorkHE	38.1 (-1.6)	38.7 (-3.0)	37.8 (-0.8)

Higher numbers indicate a greater propensity to select the policy candidate. Differences between the *Neutral* condition are in parentheses. *Condition significant at $p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$. P-values corrected for multiple testing (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995).

Again, we find that the substance of the policy matters, but how stable are these find-

ings? The previous experiment suggested that criticism has little impact, but does this imply that members are incapable of strengthening the claim? Following *H4: Bolstering the Claim*, the second panel of Figure 4.3 examines whether greater effort by the member increases his popularity. For the most part, the high effort conditions generate no significant findings.[9] We see modest evidence that the policy candidate experiences a boost among Republicans in the *PolicyHE* condition, but this is the only situation where effort seems to help. That said, if any record should experience a bump, it would be broad policy. National legislation is hard to take credit for, but additional effort can add credibility to the record.

To further unpack these trends, Table 4.6 presents the results from several logistic regression models. Once again, the table begins with a straightforward regression of candidate preference, $Y_i(Policy = 1)$, on experimental condition, Tr_i. Column two includes additional covariates, and the final two models present the subgroup results for Democratic and Republican respondents, respectively.[10] Altogether, the regression results in the first two columns corroborate the findings from Figure 4.3.

The last two models offer insight into how individual-level variables interact with treatment. Several of the findings, especially on the Republican-side, contrast with the previous experiment. In a result consistent with Study I, column four suggests that employed Republicans were generally less supportive of policy.[11] Republicans from urban areas, a variable not included in Study I, appear more supportive of policy. These results suggest that internal heterogeneity within the Republican Party can impact representational preferences. Voters from the same party may view issues in different ways depending on one's particular financial or geographic concerns. We also find that Republican women were less likely to support the policy candidate, whereas Study I found that Democratic women were pro-policy. In addition to obvious differences, the contrasting results may be attributed to the distinctive policy areas. In Study I, two of the three issue areas (education and violence against women) are often identified as important to women. This finding suggests that the benefits of a particular policy record are conditional on who receives that message. Specific policies may trend in a partisan direction, but they also interact with subject characteristics.

[9] Though largely ineffective at influencing candidate choice, these effort claims can shape other views. Respondents in the *PolicyHE* condition were more likely to identify the policy candidate as "harder working." See Appendix Figure 4.10.

[10] All models include survey weights, created by TESS, with standard errors clustered by state.

[11] For more on how these coefficients affect an individual's odds of selecting the policy candidate, see Figure 4.9 in the Appendix.

Table 4.6: Study II - Logit Results

	Main Effects	Full Sample	Democrats	Republicans
(Intercept)	-0.428 **	-0.940 **	-0.916 †	-0.924
	(0.124)	(0.324)	(0.485)	(0.569)
Democratic	0.122	0.108	0.626 **	-1.035 ***
	(0.164)	(0.167)	(0.231)	(0.289)
Republican	0.835 ***	0.826 ***	0.570*	1.084 ***
	(0.153)	(0.155)	(0.241)	(0.251)
PolicyHE	0.220	0.203	0.046	0.350
	(0.195)	(0.195)	(0.261)	(0.290)
PorkHE	-0.086	-0.097	0.022	-0.214
	(0.189)	(0.188)	(0.220)	(0.302)
Age		0.001	0.004	-0.000
		(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Gender		-0.041	0.148	-0.305 †
		(0.115)	(0.146)	(0.169)
Nonwhite		0.095	0.252	-0.223
		(0.114)	(0.182)	(0.261)
Some College		0.041	0.191	-0.097
		(0.129)	(0.180)	(0.151)
Democrat		0.090		
		(0.092)		
Ideology		0.037	-0.000	0.157
		(0.045)	(0.075)	(0.093)
Employed		-0.136	-0.067	-0.345 *
		(0.117)	(0.200)	(0.157)
Metro		0.373 †	0.081	0.623 *
		(0.199)	(0.312)	(0.271)
N	1961	1961	989	921
AIC	2571.087	2569.939	1314.469	1156.601
BIC	2609.723	2670.394	1407.196	1248.378
$\log L$	-1265.543	-1232.970	-609.234	-530.301

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. Models include survey weights.
† significant at $p < .10$; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

4.4 Discussion

This chapter employed an innovative experimental design to test whether constituents prefer a representative with a record of local distributive achievements or broad national legislation. The results suggest that constituents are often motivated more by policy, but this

finding depends on whether the policy record is consistent with the brand and positioning of the subject's party. If partisanship is integral to one's social identity (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002), then we should not be surprised that a policy's association with the party is enough to move evaluations. More concretely, the experiments demonstrate that both the specific issue area and its ideological position are important factors when selecting between candidates. The fact that subjects seemingly read party into these policies, despite the omission of party, further supports the claim that voters gravitate towards issues that have a positive association with their party. Yet, with this boost in support comes an electoral penalty. Policy records of an ideological nature can drastically drive down support of opposing partisans. In the first study, Democrats and Republicans alike were less likely to select the policy candidate when the issue area was not aligned with their party's reputation. Similarly, Republican subjects in the second study were significantly opposed to the *Democratic* policy candidate, choosing the pork candidate 80% of the time.

The experiments also addressed questions regarding the stability of these representational preferences. Are these views liable to change when subjects are exposed to statements that impugn or compliment the candidate? The effects of a challenge, as Study I examined, are at best ineffective, and at worst counterproductive. Likewise, Study II finds that additional mentions of the incumbent's efforts in committee played little role in boosting support one way or the other. In short, preferences over policy and pork are not easily influenced by additional claims. Compared to changing the record, criticism and effort appear to have little impact.

In regards to what these results mean for representation, the picture is both reassuring and distressing. In terms of democratic competence, voters seem fairly adept at identifying the issues and positions aligned with their party. However, given the current state of polarized politics, this finding is potentially problematic. If a winning strategy when highlighting policy achievements consists of 'playing to the base,' then collective representation and the outputs of Congress will suffer in turn.

But do campaign strategies actually follow this trend? Are members talking about policy more? To help answer these questions, I collected a new data set on the advertising strategies of congressional candidates. In Part III, I examine these data and conduct several empirical tests on the advertising proclivities of officeholders. Ultimately, I find that policy is not only influential among voters, but that candidates appear to recognize this by spending much of their finite time and money trumpeting their larger policy accomplishments.

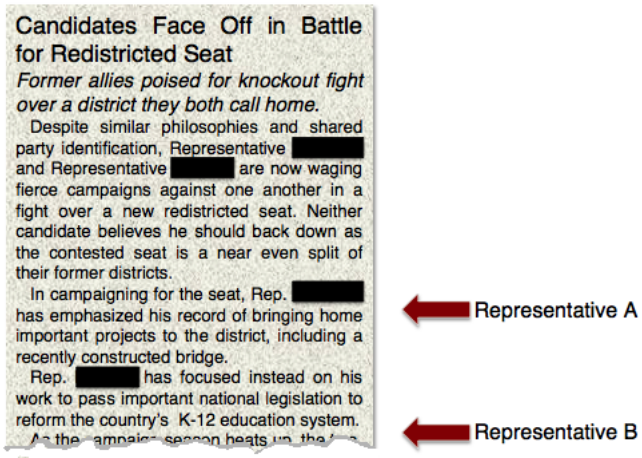
4.5 Appendix

Table 4.7: Experimental Samples

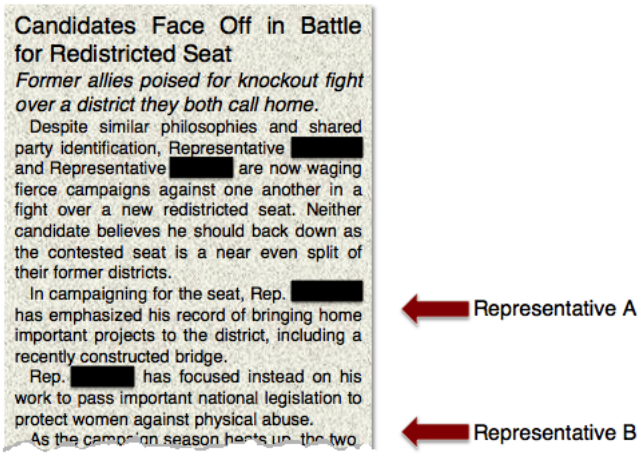
Variable	Range	Study I Mean	Study II Mean
Selected Policy Candidate	0-1	0.65	0.45
Age (Yrs.)	18-96	46.9	49.7
Gender (Female)	0-1	0.56	0.50
Race (Nonwhite)	0-1	0.24	0.25
Education (Some College)	0-1	0.81	0.63
Democrat	0-1	0.50	0.50
Ideology	1-7	4.12	3.79
Employed	0-1	0.51	0.56
Metro (Urban)	0-1	N/A	0.84

Figure 4.4: Study I - Issue Area Conditions

Education Condition



Violence Condition



Immigration Condition

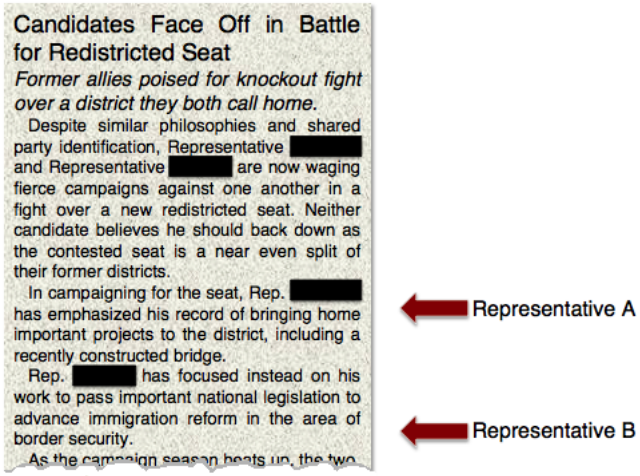
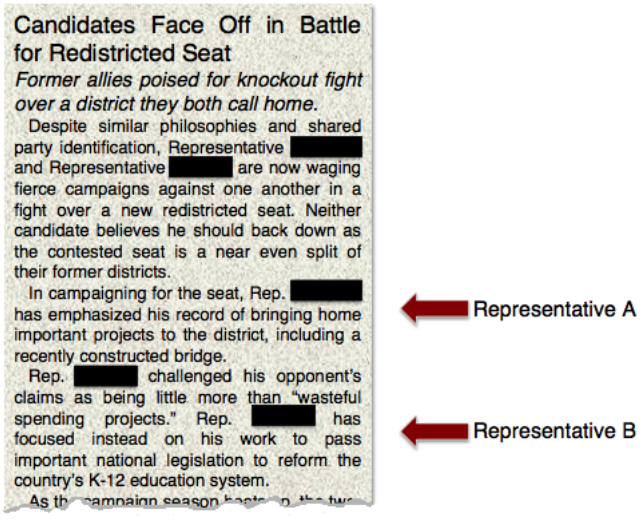


Figure 4.5: Study I - Challenge Conditions

PolicyCH Condition



PorkCH Condition

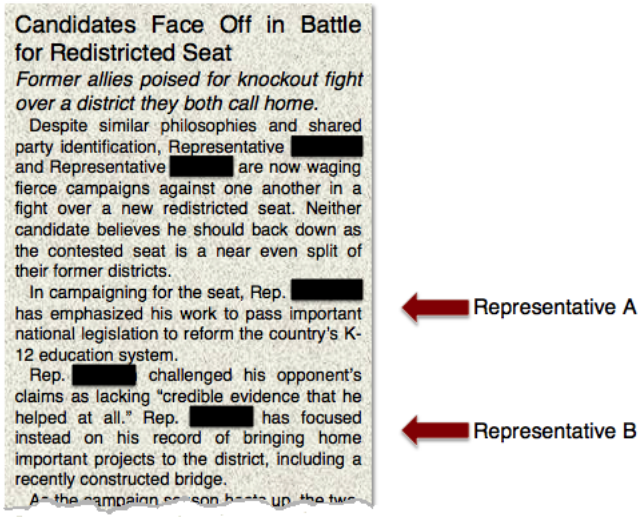
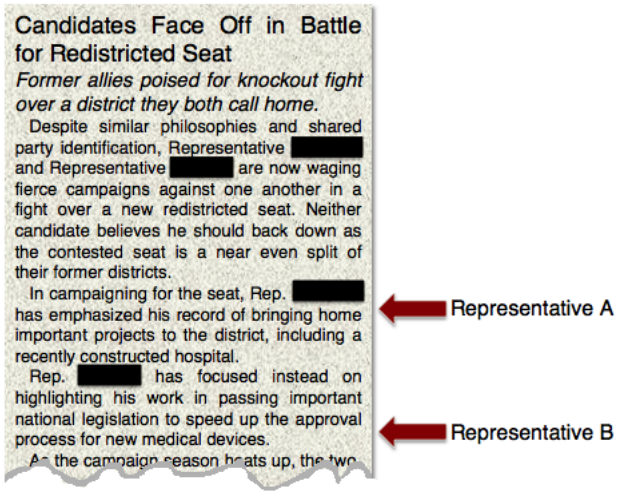
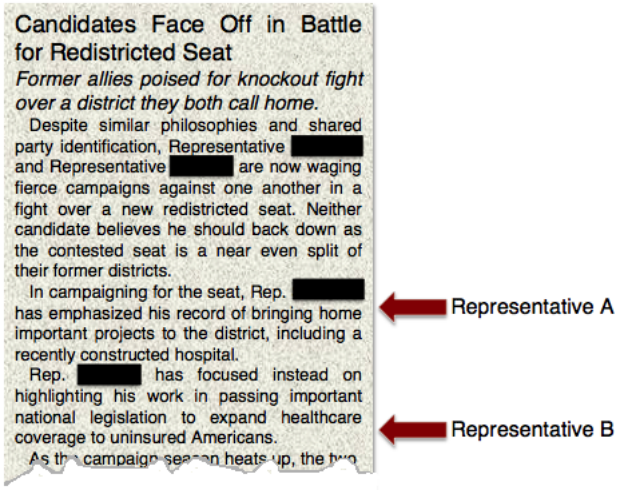


Figure 4.6: Study II - Issue Position Conditions

Neutral Condition



Democratic Condition



Republican Condition

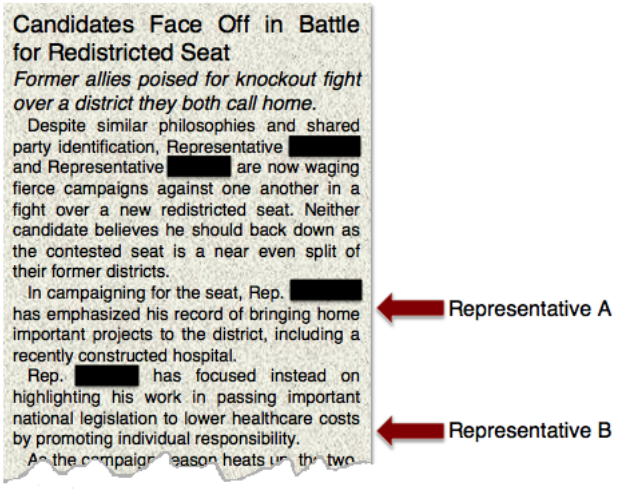
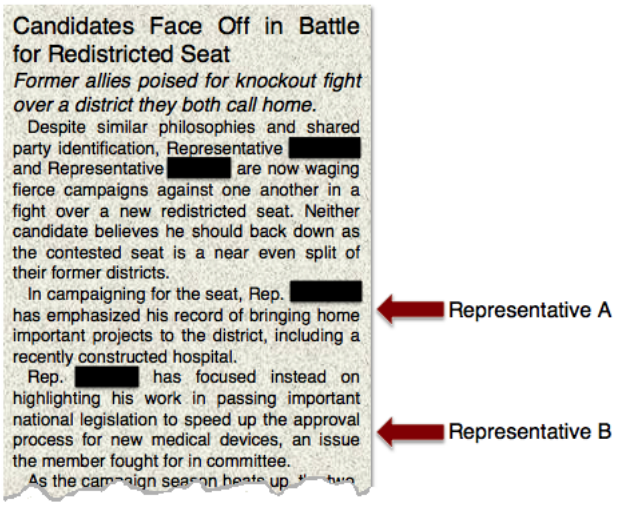


Figure 4.7: Study II - Effort Conditions

PolicyHE Condition



PorkHE Condition

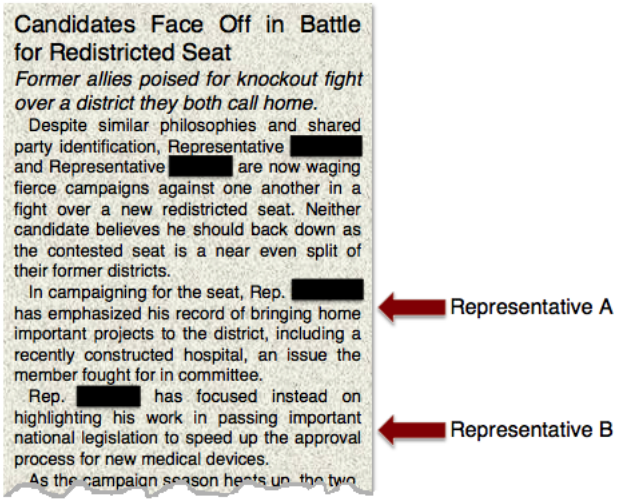
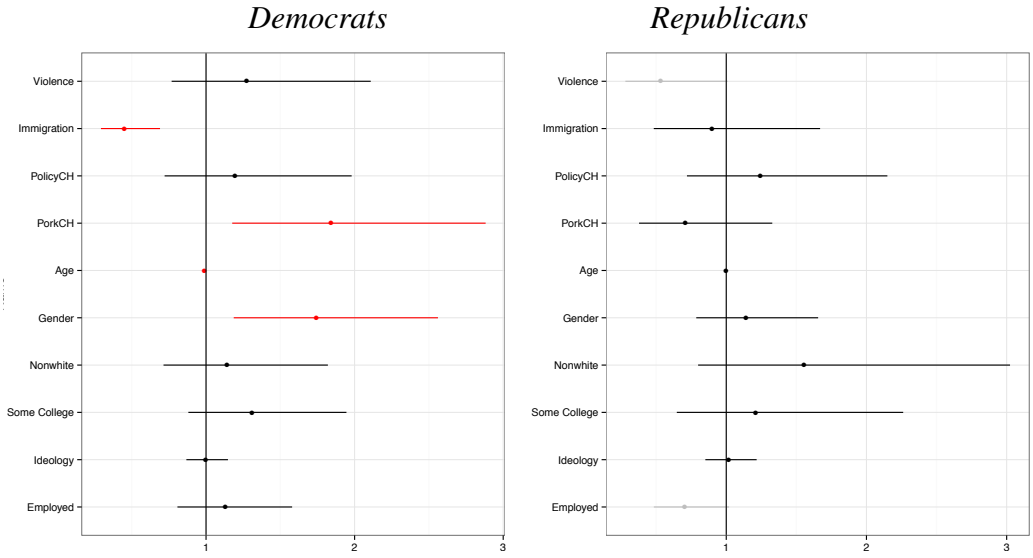
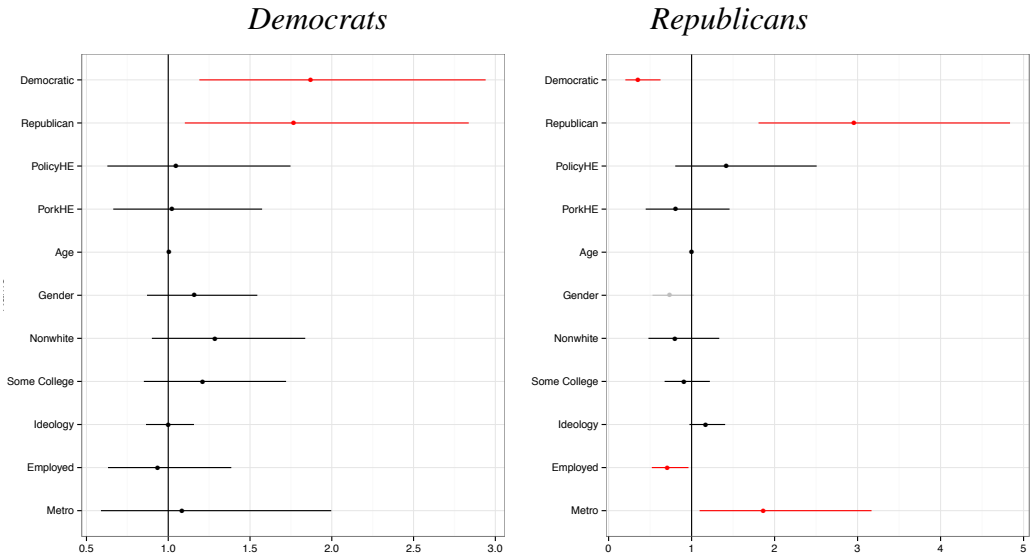


Figure 4.8: Study I - Logit Odds Ratios



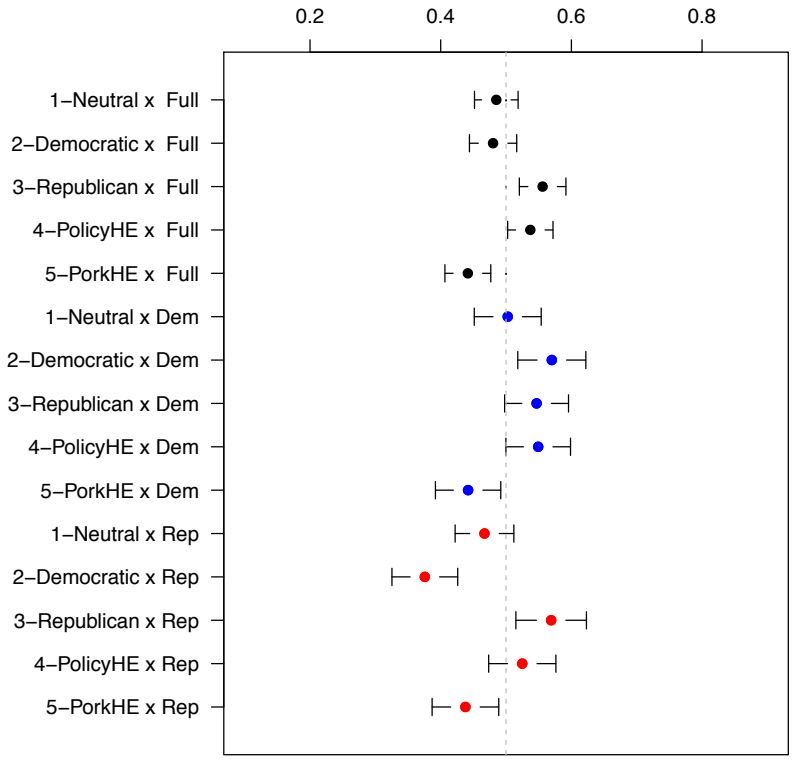
Points indicate the conditional odds of selecting the policy candidate. Variables in red are statistically significant ($p < .05$). Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 4.9: Study II - Logit Odds Ratios



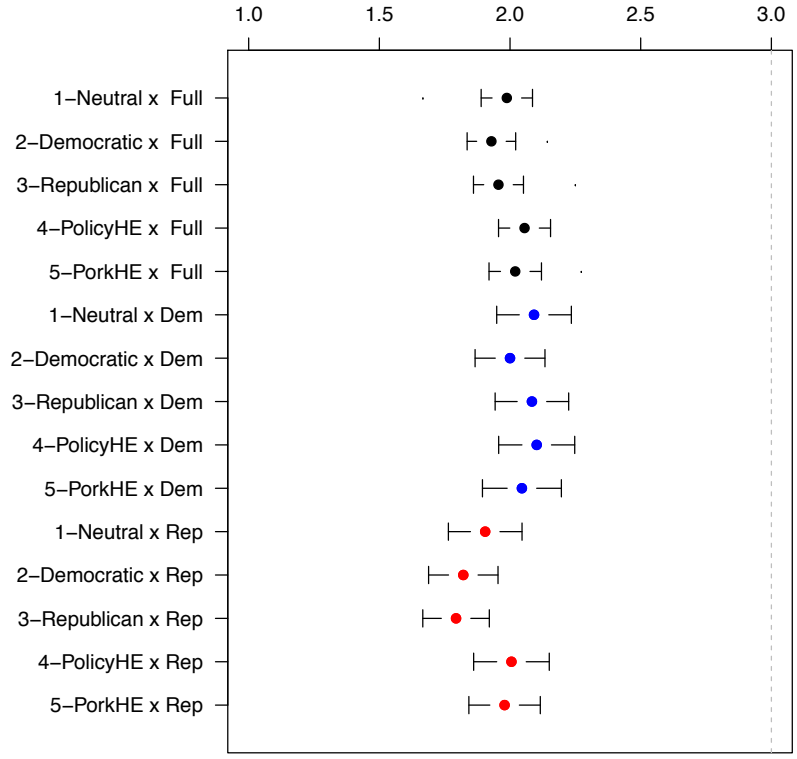
Points indicate the conditional odds of selecting the policy candidate. Variables in red are statistically significant ($p < .05$). Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 4.10: Study II - Harder Working



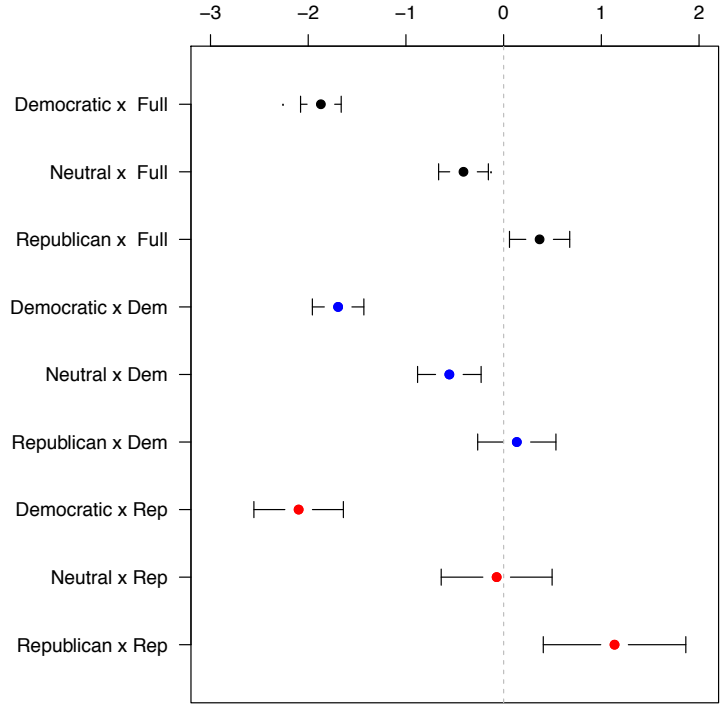
In addition to candidate preference, the TESS experiment included a second outcome measure that asked subjects to identify which candidate, if either, they believe works harder in Congress. The results are scaled such that numbers closer to 1 indicate the policy candidate, points closer to 0 indicate a pork candidate, and those around 0.5 indicate an answer of neither. The *PolicyHE* condition is statistically different from the *Neutral* baseline among the full sample, and each of the partisan subgroups.

Figure 4.11: Study II - Approval of Congress



The TESS experiment also included a general question on the sample's view of Congress. The response options run from strongly disapprove (1) to strongly approve (7).

Figure 4.12: Study II (Mturk Pilot) - Ideological Distance



Before fielding Study II on TESS, an earlier pilot study was conducted using Amazon's Mechanical Turk. The substantive results on the outcome measure (candidate preference) were nearly identical to the TESS study. The pilot also included a task in which respondents were asked to rate the two candidates' ideologies on a 7-point scale. The figure plots the mean difference in the rating between the policy and pork candidates (i.e. Policy - Pork) for each condition and subgroup. Negative scores indicate that the policy candidate was viewed as being more liberal, positive scores indicate that the policy candidate was seen as more conservative.

PART III: THE MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 5

Advertising the Candidate's Record

The previous two chapters provided evidence that constituents claim to like policy more and that experimental subjects respond positively to candidates who highlight their policy achievements. Do these findings predict member behavior in the real world? More specifically, do members of Congress take credit for these broader policy achievements? Part III tackles this question by shifting the lens from mass opinion to elite behavior. Rather than examine the preferences of voters, the next two chapters evaluate the electoral connection from the perspective of officeholders and candidates.

I begin this chapter by presenting a new data set on campaign advertising. The data offer insight into not only what candidates say during an election, but also where and why. Complementing the previous findings, the following analysis demonstrates that policy appeals are extremely common. Consistent with the theoretical predictions in Chapter 2, I also show that candidates tend to prioritize their broader policy accomplishments when running in politically competitive races.

5.1 Advertising Data

Scope of the Data

To tackle this question of member behavior, a team of researchers, led by Stephen Goggin and Travis Johnston, coded all political advertisements aired during the 2008 congressional elections.[1] Using the storyboards provided by the Wisconsin Advertising Project (WiscAds), the coders examined each advertisement for any mention, verbal or visual, of

[1] Eventually the data set will include ads from the 2004 elections as well. The 2004 ads have been coded, but require significant cleaning and pre-processing.

the candidate's past accomplishments. These observations build on the several hundred variables already recorded by WiscAds.

The complete ads data set includes nearly every advertisement aired *by candidates* during the 2008 cycle. There are two exceptions. First, this project is interested in the representational strategies of officeholders, not interest groups and parties. Therefore, we excluded from the data set any advertisement sponsored by someone other than the candidate. The content of these ads are outside of the direct control of candidates and are not a reliable measure of how members wish to portray themselves, let alone how officeholders choose to allocate their resources. Second, besides this theoretically-driven exclusion, a small number of ads were omitted because WiscAds has failed to include the corresponding storyboard within their data set. Despite these omissions, the final data set approximates the population of candidate ads from 2008, and thus provides a fairly comprehensive picture of campaign strategies.

Altogether, the data set includes more than 650,000 airings across 228 individual races.[2] Yet, as Table 5.1 shows, the number of unique ads is much smaller ($N = 1959$). Most ads were run hundreds, sometimes thousands of times. The number airings were evenly split across the House and Senate, but this parity is more of a reflection of the large number of House candidates ($N = 404$) and very few Senate candidates ($N = 70$). However, on average, House candidates ran far fewer ads than their Senate counterparts. Senate campaigns are better funded, and their ad buys reflect this fact. It is important to keep the lopsided nature of these data in mind when moving to the regression analysis, particularly as we decide how to construct the models.

Table 5.1: Advertising Data Set

Variable	**# Total**	**# House**	**# Senate**
Airings	654,347	305,486	348,861
Unique Ads	1959	1381	578
Races	228	197	31
Candidates	474	404	70
Markets	195	167	139

[2] By race, I mean the overall competition for a specific seat. This number does not count the number primary races that may have preceded the general election.

Coding the Ads

Coders were instructed to identify only those achievements that occurred while the candidate served as an elected official.[3] To warrant a positive identification of a claim, the member's appeal must make reference to a concrete object with the implication that it was successfully accomplished. In other words, neither symbolic position taking nor statements in support of a local industry were coded as a credit claim; ads needed to explicitly reference or imply that something was achieved. In addition to whether the advertisement mentions the candidate's record, the coding instrument also included items relating to the strength of the message. In particular, coders marked whether the ad was specific or vague, and if it mentioned any specific actions that the candidate took on the issue's behalf, e.g. cosponsorship, work in committee, etc.[4]

The most important item, besides existence of a credit claim, was the *type* of achievement mentioned. This was no easy task as members are frequently quite terse in their describing achievements. The reverse is also true: many candidates bundle several credit claims into a single advertisement. For ads with multiple achievements, coders were instructed to identify each credit claim individually. In terms of claim type, distributive (pork) and policy-based claims (policy) were the primary categories of interest, but the data set also includes whether the advertisement mentioned other elements of the candidate's record, such as casework or obstructionism. For more on these coding definitions, See Table 5.2.

Benefits Over Other Data

Overall, these data provide an in-depth look into how candidates strategically represent their records to voters. Researchers have long studied how candidates claim credit, from Fenno's (1978) classic "soak and poke" study of homestyles to Grimmer's (2013) recent innovations using press releases. While these other approaches have their strengths, they also have drawbacks.

Qualitative analyses of specific individuals are highly informative about those cases, but this comes at the cost of the sample size. Case studies have offered in-depth accounts of how members of Congress decide to vote (Kingdon, 1973) and the manner in which they present themselves to different audiences (Fenno, 1978). Unfortunately, this level of detail means that a massive amount of time is required for even a small number of cases. This, in turn, leads to questions of generalizability.

[3] Every advertisement was coded at least twice. In cases of disagreement, a third "expert" coder would break the tie.

[4] I have yet to explore these other features, but intend to incorporate strength of message into future steps of this project.

Table 5.2: Coding Definitions

Pork	To classify a credit claim as being pork-related, the member should be taking credit for something that is designed to go to a specific, narrow group. For the most part, this will be the MC's constituents, i.e. voters in the district or state. Alternatively, the recipient could be a special interest that supports the member, e.g. a local automotive company, rural farmers from their state, etc. Additionally, to be considered *pork*, the item for which the member takes credit should be some sort of more narrow project or good. For instance, you should not classify an expansive education or health bill as pork, **unless** the member also includes a tangible discussion of how the bill helps local voters. In this case, you would probably be classifying the bill as "Mix: both policy and pork."
Policy	For something to be coded as purely policy, the issue must be a broad legislative act that cannot be construed as being targeted at a clear constituency or group. While legislation on veterans or child poverty may be directed at certain individuals, they would still count as a broad policy assuming that the bill is not targeting a specific regional entity.
Mix	Many advertisements are inherently about a broad policy achievement, but the benefits are often framed around their localized effects. The "Mix" category accounts for these cases in which the specific achievement cannot be classified as either pork or policy exclusively.
Casework	Whenever a member tries to solve a problem for a specific electoral supporter (e.g. voter or group in their district), they are said to have performed casework. The classic example here is getting a social security check that was lost in the mail resent to a senior living in the member's district. Casework can also include porkish types of things like helping a small business clear some sort of bureaucratic hurdle, such as acquiring licenses for a new building.
Obstruction	In today's polarized environment, many MCs find it beneficial to take credit for blocking some bill or action. Obstruction of the other side's "radical" agenda can be a powerful selling point to a member's ardent partisan followers. Here, the member might take credit for being the pivotal vote against the act, either in committee or on the floor.
Other	Candidates for office frequently claim credit for actions that fall outside of these more traditional achievements. This is particularly true for those former officeholders who held executive positions or other non-legislative roles. As elected officials, they nonetheless produced a record of accomplishments on behalf of their constituents. This "other" category also includes a number of advertisements in which the candidate takes credit for concrete legislative actions that did not pass, such as authoring key pieces of legislation. Lastly, this coding is also used for not easily classified actions, such as pursuing a specific investigation or the like.

Larger, quantitative analyses of press releases and public speeches promise a much more comprehensive picture, but are far less specific and raise questions about what these data mean to political. By tracing how press releases are quoted by local papers, Grimmer attempts to validate the use of press release data. Based on this approach, we have reason to believe that some well-informed voters may be exposed to these claims, but what does a press release mean for understanding the priorities of officeholders? Congressional staffers spend time writing press releases, but in the grand scheme of things, the resources expended are extremely small.

Compared to press releases, which are relatively costless to produce and send out, television ads constitute a significant portion of a campaign's strategic attention and overall budget. Political advertising is a central tool that candidates use to shape their image, and serves as an important conduit between candidates and voters. By examining how candidates allocate their budget, in terms of air time and spending, the subsequent observational analyses ask the question: what explains a candidate's decision to claim credit for distributive goods or policy accomplishments?

5.2 What Explains Credit Claiming?

Before studying why representatives utilize different electoral strategies, the following section explores credit claiming more generally. Electoral strategies are not one size fits all, but subject to both geographical and institutional peculiarities. I begin by considering whether distributive goods and broad policy is correlated with geography, and then examine which candidates highlight pork and policy.

Where is Pork and Policy Highlighted?

Candidates from different regions face unique geographical demands and deploy tactics accordingly. Recent work on distributive spending suggests that geography plays an important role in pork barrel politics (Clemens, Crespin, and Finocchiaro, 2011; Crespin and Finocchiaro, 2013).[5] Furthermore, state size has an impact on electoral strategies (Lee and Oppenheimer, 1999).

To evaluate how region factors in, the following maps analyze credit claiming by media market. Figure 5.1 depicts the percent of airings by media market with a distributive credit

[5] Clemens, Crespin, and Finocchiaro (2011), using a spatially weighted regression, find that the causes and effects of distributive politics are not universal, but rather distinctive across different regions. Building on these results, Crespin and Finocchiaro (2013) argues that geography has a major influence over pork-barrel politics, both in the amount a district receives and in how ideology and local demand affect allocation decisions.

claim, Figure 5.2 shows the percent with a policy claim.[6] The points are weighted by size, and are plotted atop a map of county-level vote share from the 2008 presidential elections.

Highlighting one's record, as the maps suggest, is common throughout the country. It appears disproportionately so in states east of the Mississippi, but this may have more to do with the number of media markets. On the whole, policy is generally more prevalent across the country, evident in both the greater number of points and the sizes of those points. Local partisanship, however, appears to have little effect on credit claiming - both types are common in Democratic and Republican regions alike. That said, it is entirely possible that these aggregate plots are obscuring important candidate-level heterogeneity. The next section unpacks these data by candidate subgroups.

Which Candidates Take Credit for Pork and Policy?

Table 5.3 displays the average number of airings, by candidate, that included either a pork or policy claim.[7] Contrary to the view that officeholders avoid taking credit for policy, a cursory examination of candidate behavior suggests that policy appeals are at least as frequent as distributive credit claims.

Table 5.3: Average Airings with a Policy or Pork Claim

	Policy	**Pork**	**N**
Party			
- Democrats	260.4	175.4	242
- Republicans	183.5	127.4	232
Marginal			
- Yes	379.4	146.3	156
- No	145.9	154.7	318
Chamber			
- House	83.1	59.8	404
- Senate	1028.6	683.5	70
Incumbent			
- Yes	394.9	260.1	183
- No	114.5	83.9	291

Candidates of all types tend to devote more airtime to their policy achievements. Policy is more common among Democrats, Republicans, candidates in marginal districts, House

[6] For a map of credit claiming in general, see Figure 5.4 in the Appendix.

[7] Table 5.5 in the Appendix presents these same data, but broken down by group. Aside from aggregate trends, this allows for a look into how airings divided across electoral cycle, i.e. primaries vs general elections.

Figure 5.1: Percent of Airings with a Distributive Credit Claim, by Media Market

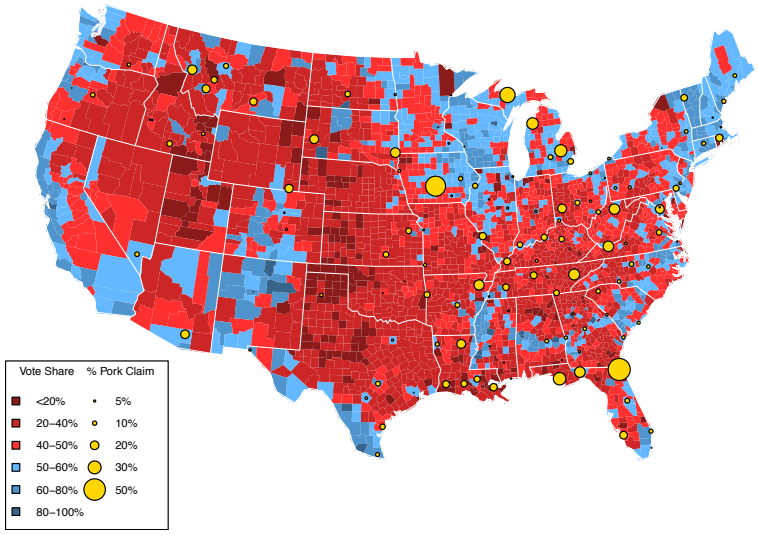
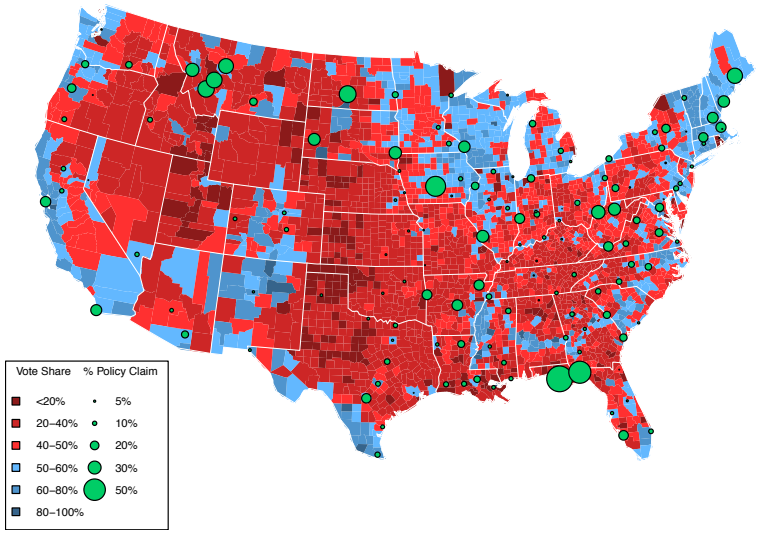


Figure 5.2: Percent of Airings with a Policy-Based Credit Claim, by Media Market



candidates, Senate candidates, incumbents, and even challengers.[8] Ironically, the lone exception where policy airings are smaller, on average, is the non-marginal or safe category. The apparently diminished role of policy here is likely offset by an increase in position taking by weak challengers targeting safe incumbents. Though far from conclusive, this first analysis casts doubt on the claim that candidates avoid policy in fear of alienating voters.

5.3 Why Do Candidates Prioritize Policy?

Policy appears more common among most subgroups, but do these results withstand further scrutiny? To extend on these preliminary findings, Table 5.4 presents a series of multivariate regressions. Regression analysis permits a more thorough exploration of the factors that predict candidate strategies.

Empirical Strategy

In the first four models, the dependent variable is the proportion of airings with a policy or pork claim, by candidate i.[9] For these first analyses, policy and pork are studied individually in order to identify the personal characteristics or electoral factors that motivate different representational strategies. More formally,

$$\left(\frac{\#PolicyAirings_i}{\#AllAirings_i}\right) \sim \alpha_i + \beta_1 CandVars_i + \beta_2 RaceVars_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{5.1}$$

$$\left(\frac{\#PorkAirings_i}{\#AllAirings_i}\right) \sim \alpha_i + \beta_1 CandVars_i + \beta_2 RaceVars_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{5.2}$$

The candidate variables include party and whether the individual is an incumbent. To explore how electoral context relates, I include covariates on local partisanship, racial and gender composition, and economic indicators such as poverty and median income. I used two variables to capture partisanship: *Partisan Voter Index (PVI)* and PVI^2. PVI is a measure of partisan extremity used by the Cook's Political Report and others. The variable is an average of the district or state's 2004 and 2008 presidential vote share, minus the nationwide average. Values greater than zero indicate that area is more Republican than average, while negative values indicate that the seat leans Democratic. The squared term,

[8] Many of these differences are quite large, but very few are statistically significant. This is largely due to the number of candidates who claim credit for neither pork nor policy.

[9] These models use the airings measure instead of dollars spent because the latter can introduce additional measurement error. That said, the results are nearly identical when using spending. Table 5.6 in the Appendix presents these same models with spending as the outcome measure.

PVI^2, captures whether the dependent variable is increasing or decreasing as partisanship increases.

In addition to studying all candidates (Models 1 and 2), I conducted a separate analysis of incumbents (Models 3 and 4) to examine whether the "electoral connection" is indeed motivating member behavior. Finally, for Model 5, I replaced the single-type dependent variable with a measure of the ratio between policy and pork, $\left(\frac{\#Policy}{\#Policy+\#Pork}\right)$. This specification permits a more direct test of how officeholders allocate their resources between pork and policy. Unfortunately, this also restricts the sample to only those candidates who engage in credit claiming.[10] All models use ordinary least squares regression (OLS) with robust standard errors.[11]

Results

Looking at the policy strategies of the entire sample (Model 1), we find that Senate candidates, Democrats, and incumbents were more likely to allocate airtime to policy achievements. Distributive airings (Model 2) are also positively correlated with incumbency and being a Democrat, but appears unrelated to the chamber. These findings are not entirely surprising. Senators are expected to engage in big policy disputes and often campaign accordingly (Lee and Oppenheimer, 1999). Distributive goods, by contrast, are relatively less helpful to senators who represent large constituencies. The positive correlation with incumbency also makes sense given that current officeholders have larger advertising budgets and more accomplishments to highlight.[12] Why Democratic candidates run more policy ads is unclear, but the correlation with distributive airings is well-founded. Existing research finds that Democrats are more likely to benefit and, in turn, channel distributive goods to their districts (Alvarez and Saving, 1997; Sellers, 1997; Lazarus and Reilly, 2010).[13]

These general trends are informative, but we have yet to answer the larger question of how electoral pressures shape member behavior. If members of Congress adapt to

[10] Model 5's restricted sample lowers the overall power and, more importantly, raises additional questions of whose behavior are we analyzing.

[11] The OLS models permit easy interpretation, but the findings hold under other specifications as well. Most importantly, because the number of airings and amount spent are clearly correlated with candidate quality, these results were also replicated using alternative specifications that control for the total number of airings. The substantive findings hold when using the logged number of airings or count-based DVs and a quasi-poisson model.

[12] Challengers claim credit for distributive goods and policy achievements as well. Many challengers, particularly those vying for the Senate, have lower office experience in which to highlight.

[13] Since *Partisan Voter Index (PVI)* is centered at zero (national average), any move to the left (Democratic) or right (Republican) indicates that the seat is relatively more partisan. The the negative relationship with *PVI* suggests that pork airings were more common in Democratic areas.

Table 5.4: Candidate Advertising Strategies

	Models 1-2		**Models 3-4**		**Model 5**
	# *Policy*	# *Pork*	# *Policy*	# *Pork*	$\frac{\#Policy}{\#Policy+\#Pork}$
(Intercept)	-2.0507	0.5962	-1.5728	2.0767	-6.7253
	(2.2269)	(2.1723)	(4.2827)	(4.1624)	(6.1970)
Incumbent	0.1688 ***	0.1249 ***			0.0280
	(0.0256)	(0.0234)			(0.0712)
Democrat	0.0811 ***	0.0377 *	0.2001 ***	0.0448	0.1107
	(0.0227)	(0.0183)	(0.0572)	(0.0465)	(0.0779)
Senate Race	0.0461 †	0.0101	0.0401	0.0006	-0.0374
	(0.0246)	(0.0200)	(0.0581)	(0.0407)	(0.0767)
Partisan Voter Index (PVI)	-0.0006	-0.0025 *	0.0019	-0.0048	0.0067
	(0.0011)	(0.0012)	(0.0030)	(0.0030)	(0.0040)
PVI^2	-0.0002 **	0.0002 *	-0.0003 *	0.0002	-0.0008 ***
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
% Nonwhite	-0.0013	-0.0024 †	-0.0026	-0.0055 *	0.0040
	(0.0012)	(0.0012)	(0.0023)	(0.0022)	(0.0046)
% Female	0.0045	-0.0011	0.0168	-0.0054	0.0259
	(0.0142)	(0.0144)	(0.0288)	(0.0314)	(0.0476)
% Poverty	0.0082	0.0034	0.0071	0.0053	0.0136
	(0.0084)	(0.0086)	(0.0152)	(0.0155)	(0.0276)
Median Income (log)	0.1584	-0.0484	0.0722	-0.1485	0.5261
	(0.1665)	(0.1529)	(0.3130)	(0.2793)	(0.4733)
N	474	474	183	183	157
R^2	0.1520	0.1074	0.1219	0.0806	0.1105
adj. R^2	0.1356	0.0900	0.0815	0.0383	0.0561
Resid. sd	0.2278	0.2189	0.3045	0.2966	0.4232

Robust standard errors in parentheses. For Models 1-2, the errors are clustered by district or state.
† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

constituency preferences, then we should expect different tactics from candidates representing politically extreme seats versus those running for marginal or centrist seats. In other words, how does the partisan distribution of the electorate drive candidate strategies? Do candidates from evenly balanced districts allocate more airtime towards their distributive achievements, or do they talk about their policy records in an effort to mobilize co-partisans and centrists? To assess these dynamics, PVI^2 captures the relationship of increasing partisanship on advertising tendencies. In the first model, PVI^2 has a nega-

tive effect on policy airings, meaning candidates are *more likely* to talk about their policy accomplishments in races where the electorate is balanced between Democrats and Republicans. The positive relationship in Model 2 suggests the opposite: candidates are *less likely* to talk about distributive goods in evenly balanced districts. The results run counter to the argument that moderates favor pork over policy; candidates tend to prefer policy when running for competitive seats. These partisanship findings, or at least the policy result, are true for incumbents as well (see Models 3 and 4).[14]

To take this question of candidate strategy a step further, Model 5 uses a dependent variable that examines the ratio between policy and pork airings. The only statistically significant result here is the measure on partisan extremity, PVI^2, and once again the relationship is negative. In other words, as the district or state becomes more partisan (i.e. competitive), candidates are less likely to allocate more of their advertising budget towards policy. Figure 5.3 provides a graphical illustration of this dynamic. In centrist districts ($PVI \rightarrow 0$), the number of airings devoted to policy is at its highest point, and decreases as districts become more biased towards one party or the other.[15]

5.4 Discussion

Members of Congress, the prevailing logic contends (Evans, 2011), routinely claim responsibility for local projects, but rarely take credit for helping to pass expansive bills. Particularistic goods provide officeholders with concrete evidence of the member's efforts in Congress. Yet, credit claiming, as this chapter has shown, goes beyond distributive goods. In the 2008 elections, candidates spent more of their campaign advertising budgets highlighting their larger policy accomplishments. The results further suggest that the emphasis on policy is true among a surprising subgroup: candidates in competitive areas.

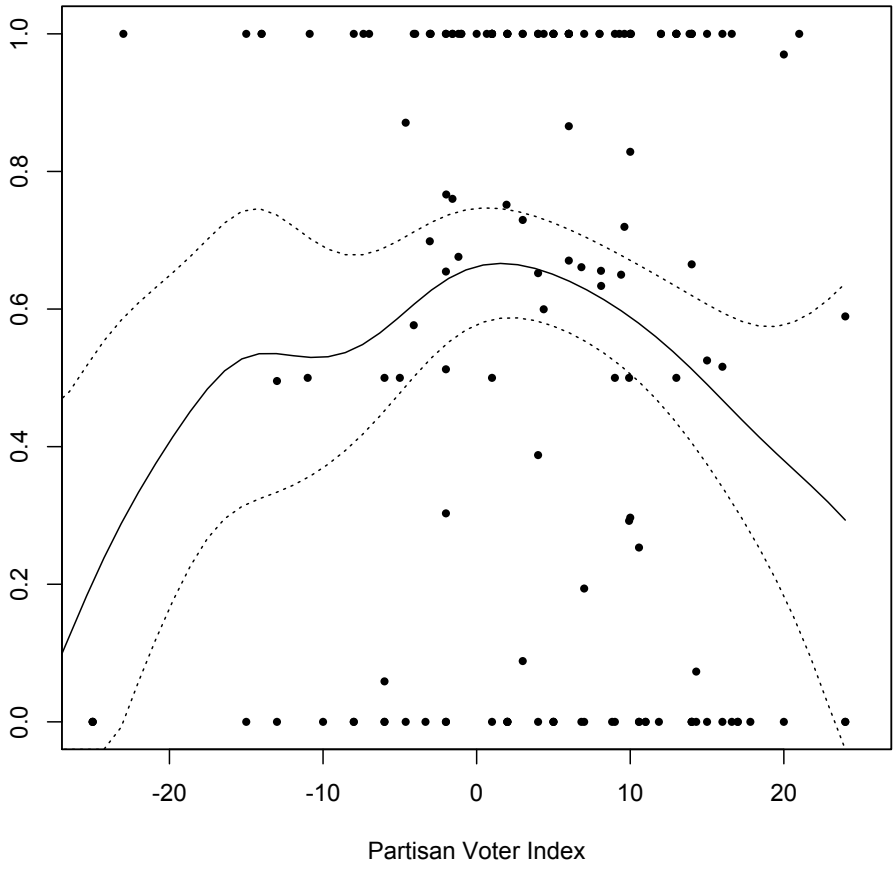
This finding runs counter to the work of Grimmer (2013a) and others who argue that officeholders representing moderate constituencies will avoid talking about policy. However, given the current partisan environment, is it a surprise that candidates would look to take credit for policy? Policy appeals, as earlier studies of voter preferences have suggested, are especially motivating to co-partisans and those most likely to turn out. Moreover, by strategically representing these policies in a more moderate light (Henderson, 2013), officeholders are capable of reaching centrist voters as well.

In the end, these analyses strongly suggest that candidates emphasize policy more than existing works typically assume. That said, we must keep the limitations of this finding in mind. The candidate sample in this study is by no means a random. However, if what we

[14] The correlation between PVI^2 and #Pork is statistically insignificant, but this has more to do with the smaller sample and larger standard errors.

[15] This trend holds when divided by candidate party as well. See Figure 5.5 in the Appendix.

Figure 5.3: Allocating Between Policy and Pork



The figure plots the ratio of candidate allocations between policy and pork, $\left(\frac{\#policy}{\#policy+\#pork}\right)$, against the partisanship of the district or state (PVI).

care about is understanding why candidates strategically prioritize policy over pork, then this analysis is informative nonetheless. Despite concerns of generalizability, it seems clear that candidates and incumbents alike exhibit little fear of talking about policy in competitive races.

5.5 Appendix

Table 5.5: Percent of Airings with Policy or Pork Claim, by Group

	Policy	**Pork**	**N**
Party			
- Democrats	0.194	0.131	324453
- Republicans	0.129	0.090	329894
Marginal			
- Yes	0.213	0.082	277593
- No	0.123	0.131	376754
Chamber			
- House	0.110	0.079	305486
- Senate	0.206	0.137	348861
Cycle			
- Primary	0.162	0.132	137029
- General	0.161	0.104	517318

Table 5.6: Candidate Advertising Strategies - Spending

	All Candidates		Incumbents	
	Policy	*Pork*	*Policy*	*Pork*
(Intercept)	-1.9796	0.6721	-2.1075	1.1737
	(1.7670)	(1.6337)	(3.4609)	(3.3964)
Senate Race	0.0534 *	0.0172	0.0626	0.0248
	(0.0261)	(0.0180)	(0.0619)	(0.0410)
Incumbent	0.1463 ***	0.0979 ***		
	(0.0224)	(0.0202)		
Democrat	0.0713 ***	0.0223	0.1971 ***	0.0262
	(0.0197)	(0.0148)	(0.0500)	(0.0365)
PVI	0.0006	-0.0015	0.0046 †	-0.0028
	(0.0009)	(0.0010)	(0.0026)	(0.0027)
PVI^2	-0.0001 **	0.0002 **	-0.0002 †	0.0003 †
	(0.0000)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0002)
Nonwhite	-0.0004	-0.0016	0.0000	-0.0035 †
	(0.0010)	(0.0010)	(0.0021)	(0.0019)
Female	0.0087	0.0010	0.0272	0.0030
	(0.0119)	(0.0126)	(0.0231)	(0.0281)
Poverty	0.0047	0.0001	0.0013	0.0011
	(0.0060)	(0.0061)	(0.0113)	(0.0120)
Median Income (log)	0.1320	-0.0654	0.0672	-0.1111
	(0.1329)	(0.1087)	(0.2623)	(0.2181)
N	474	474	183	183
R^2	0.1499	0.0966	0.1085	0.0549
adj. R^2	0.1335	0.0791	0.0676	0.0114
Resid. sd	0.1958	0.1868	0.2723	0.2649

Clustered standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 5.4: Percent of Airings with a Credit Claim, by Media Market

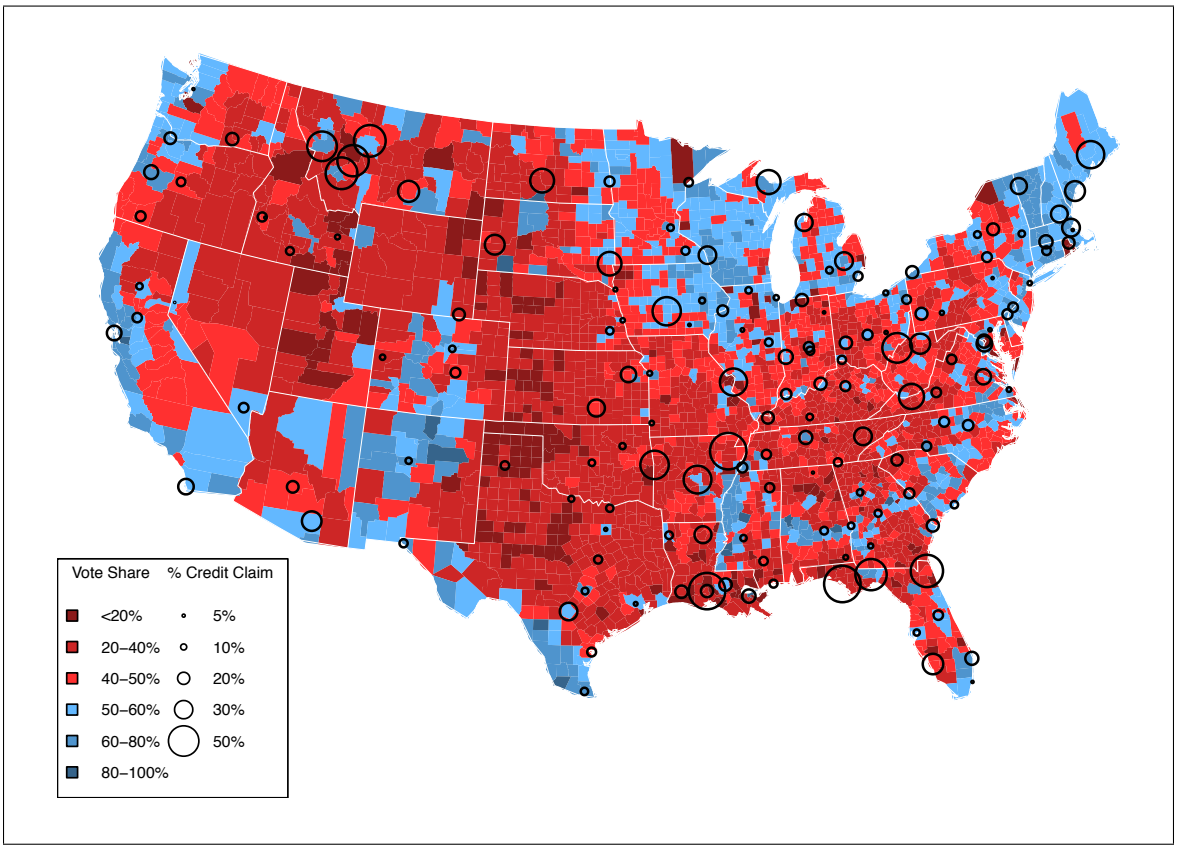
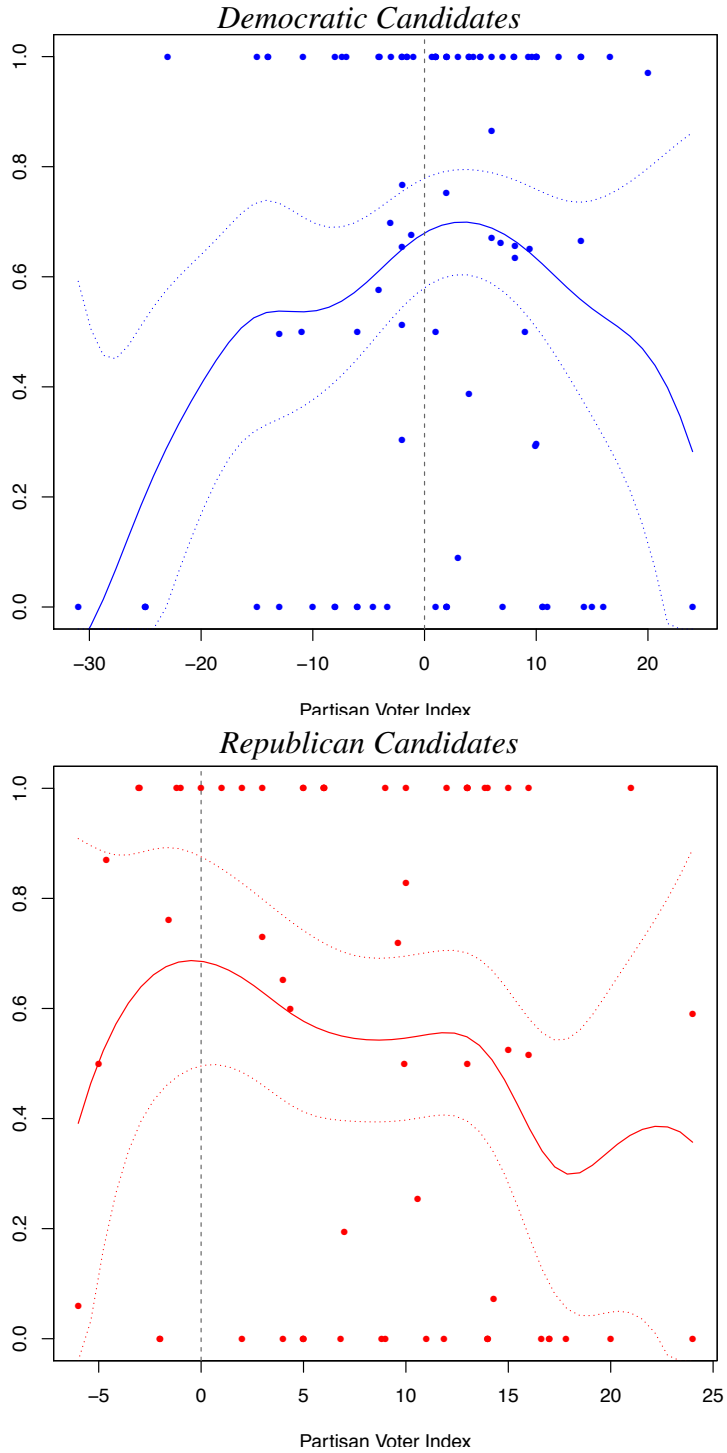


Figure 5.5: Allocating Between Policy and Pork, by Party



These figures depict how the partisanship of the district or state motivates candidates to allocate airtime between policy and pork $\left(\frac{\#Policy}{\#Policy+\#Pork}\right)$.

Chapter 6

Assessing Officeholder Strategies

In the previous chapter, I provide compelling evidence that members of Congress claim credit for more than particularistic goods. Incumbents and candidates alike use campaign advertisements to highlight their policy accomplishments. But do these broader policy appeals generate similar benefits at the ballot box? Furthermore, do these advertising strategies have any consequences for how representatives behave in office? This final empirical chapter engages these questions in an effort to understand the real-world implications of congressional advertising.

6.1 What is the Impact on the Ballot Box?

Earlier analyses suggest that policy-based claims are particularly influential among centrists and co-partisans, but do these experimental results extend to the ballot box? To answer this question I merged the advertising data with the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). Using this combined data set, we can evaluate how different representational strategies influence voters. Rather than looking for state-wide or district correlations, this identification strategy leverages a rich source of individual-level data, as well as unique information on the candidate's advertising buys within the respondent's media market.

Empirical Strategy

As part of its post-election wave, the CCES asks respondents to identify who they voted for in a number of races. Vote choice is a very conservative measure, particularly when compared to a feeling thermometer or other evaluative item. Nonetheless, if the question is whether highlighting one's record generates a real-world effect, then vote choice is the

most appropriate variable. For easy interpretation, the outcome measure is coded to reflect a vote for the Democratic candidate, $Y_i = 1$.

$$Pr(DemVote_i = 1) \sim logit^{-1}(\alpha + \beta_1 RespChar_i + \beta_2 Spending_j + \varepsilon_i) \quad (6.1)$$

Since these are races pitting two candidates against one another, the models include advertising variables for both the Democratic and Republican candidates. In addition to money spent on highlighting their records, I also include variables to capture the amount spent on *Negative* advertising, as well as any *Other* ads that discussed the candidate's positive traits and other valence attributes.[1] Lastly, the models employ a host of controls, including data on respondent demographics and several other covariates that can affect vote choice.

Though seemingly straightforward, modeling the effects of member strategies at the individual-level warrants caution, particularly when we know that the units are not independent and identically distributed. Given the nested nature of the data, a multilevel model is more appropriate here for several reasons (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). A multilevel approach takes into consideration the fact that voters, i, in a given state or media market, j, are similar in many regards. Hence, to regress individual voting decisions on spending would ignore the fact that voters within the same state are not independent observations. A traditional linear model also fails to appreciate the multiple levels in which these variables are measured. Consequently, the normal OLS assumption that error terms are uncorrelated does not hold. What is more, a multilevel approach offers substantive benefits as well. By explicitly building in the nested relationship of these voters, a multilevel model can provide greater insight into how these variables interact with one another across levels.

Results

For a first look at the relationship between representational strategies and vote choice, Table 6.1 displays the results from two hierarchical logit models. Both include the same variables, but they differ with respect to the second level unit. In the first model, the respondents are grouped by state, the level at which the race the is being contested.[2] Looking at Model 1, we see that several media market variables are statistically significant and, for the most part, in the expected direction. An increase in the Democrat's spending on *Pork*, *Policy*, *Mix*, and *Other* positive ads corresponds with an increase, albeit very small, in the probability that the respondent voted for the Democratic candidate. *Negative* spending by the Democrat, however, appears to dampen Democratic support. While clearly not the intention of the candidate, this finding is consistent with existing work that argues that

[1] All spending variables are logged.

[2] For a similar treatment, see Fridkin and Kenney, 2011.

Table 6.1: Advertising Effects - Multilevel Models

	Model 1 - State	Model 2 - Market
(Intercept)	-0.83034	-0.66737
	(0.59214)	(0.62624)
Respondent Characteristics		
Party ID	0.97657 ***	0.98552 ***
	(0.01889)	(0.02000)
Race	-0.71252 ***	-0.74614 ***
	(0.09877)	(0.10398)
Gender	0.15145 *	0.11684
	(0.07003)	(0.07352)
Some College	0.18144 *	0.17840 *
	(0.07547)	(0.07352)
Age	-0.00856 ***	-0.00842 ***
	(0.00234)	(0.00245)
Income (Log)	-0.09848 †	-0.09057
	(0.05253)	(0.05524)
TV News	0.08716	0.09387
	(0.08938)	(0.09374)
Political Interest	-0.00290	-0.04466
	(0.06812)	(0.07169)
Employed	-0.13976 †	-0.16592 *
	(0.07383)	(0.07744)
Union Member	0.10610	0.05914
	(0.07980)	(0.08390)
Political Activism	0.04391 †	0.04837 †
	(0.02375)	(0.02496)
Political Donation ($)	0.00009 †	0.00009
	(0.00006)	(0.00006)
Project Recall	-0.07313	-0.10578
	(0.08745)	(0.09187)
Economic Views	-0.81838 ***	-0.80214 ***
	(0.05212)	(0.05470)
Spending in Media Market		
$ Dem. Pork	0.02228 *	0.02287 *
	(0.009615)	(0.01094)
$ Dem. Policy	0.02440 **	0.02371 *
	(0.008287)	(0.00977)
$ Dem. Mix	0.02770 **	0.02852 **
	(0.009060)	(0.01011)
$ Dem. Negative	-0.04927 ***	-0.04209 ***
	(0.01049)	(0.01257)
$ Dem. Other	0.02640 **	0.01483
	(0.00996)	(0.01216)
$ Rep. Pork	-0.00253	-0.00430
	(0.01538)	(0.01257)
$ Rep. Policy	-0.01236	-0.01101
	(0.01033)	(0.01607)
$ Rep. Mix	-0.02929 *	-0.02879 †
	(0.01525)	(0.01707)
$ Rep. Negative	0.02457 *	0.02735 *
	(0.01133)	(0.01252)
$ Rep. Other	-0.04757 ***	-0.05701 ***
	(0.00941)	(0.01112)
N, Groups	10298, 33 States	9438, 169 DMAs
AIC	6208.2	5649.4
BIC	6396.4	5835.4
$\log L$	-3078.1	-2798.7

Standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

negative advertising is unhelpful, and potentially detrimental to the candidate (Lau et al., 1999; Theilmann and Wilhite, 1998). Put simply, if Democratic candidates resort to negative advertising because they are trailing, then a negative correlation with vote choice makes sense.

On the Republican end, we see some evidence that more spending detracts from a respondent's propensity to vote Democratic, but these relationships are less robust. Interestingly, only *Mix* and *Other* advertising buys appear to swing respondents back towards the Republican candidate. Because of independents and third party candidates, the choice to vote against the Democrat does not inherently mean that the respondent voted for the Republican. When the outcome measure is recoded to reflect a Republican ballot, the Democratic results mostly remain, aside from spending on *Pork*. The Republican measures, however, do not perform any better under such a specification.

In Model 2, respondents are grouped by designated media area (DMA), the same level at which the spending variables are measured. This specification is preferable for two reasons. To illustrate why, consider the case of two California markets: the San Francisco Bay Area, and Fresno-Visalia. First, voters in these markets are very different. The SF Bay Area is fairly large, has numerous urban centers, and is very Democratic. Fresno is the largest city in the Central Valley, but is still much smaller, less urban than rural, and far more Republican. In studying these groups by media market, this model does a better job of respecting these differences. Second, Senate candidates are highly strategic when choosing how to allocate resources in different places. The decision to highlight a piece of the member's record may differ according to whether the market is liberal San Francisco or conservative Fresno. Consequently, different markets in the same state often receive very different "treatment," and thus the model should reflect these calculated decisions.

The results of Model 2, while attenuated, are very similar to the previous model. The efficacy of *Other* spending appears less stable, but the key variables on the member's record remain robust. That said, these effects are all very small.[3] Without reading too much into these results, Democrats seem to benefit equally from highlighting various pieces of their records, both distributive and broad policy. Among Republicans, the consistent finding with regards to *Other* spending suggests that GOP candidates do better when campaigning on traits and valence issues, rather than their records. In the end, while the effect sizes are small, the very fact that we pick up any results at all is quite surprising given the stability of vote choice.

[3] To better illustrate the modest effect of these variables, Figure 6.2 in the Appendix depicts the odds ratios of voting for the Democratic candidate.

6.2 What Does Advertising Say About Legislative Behavior?

Advertising appears influential over voting, but do these ads track with what legislators actually do in office? Candidates regularly exaggerate their achievements in office and use advertising to appear more moderate (Henderson, 2013). On the other hand, existing research suggests that there is real value in studying what members talk about. Tracking press releases, Grimmer (2013b) shows that what members claim credit for gets picked up by local newspapers. Sulkin's (2011) work further suggests that political advertising is more than just cheap talk. By examining what officeholders say and do, Sulkin shows that the types of policies members emphasize in office are correlated with the ads they run.

To appreciate whether credit claims are relevant to what members do in office, I merged the ads data with variables from Volden and Wiseman's (2014) Legislative Effectiveness Project.[4] When combined, these data help answer the question: does political advertising teach us anything about legislative behavior?

Data

In order to speak to legislative behavior, we must supplement the advertising data with information on what officeholders achieve in office. As part of their study of what makes an effective legislator, Volden and Wiseman (2014) compiled data on both the productivity of members of Congress and their individual characteristics.

The output variables address the number of bills introduced by the member that have reached different stages of the legislative process, e.g. number introduced, reported out of committee, passed chamber, became law, etc. In addition to the number of bills, Volden and Wiseman categorize the legislation into three groups: commemorative, substantive, and substantive and significant. The researchers then added up the number of each type that reached a specific step in the legislative process. From there, they then generated an overall legislative effectiveness score (LES). The scores are calculated for individual members and normalized such that the average legislator for each congress receives a 1.[5]

[4] For more on these data, see `http://www.thelawmakers.org`

[5] These scores represent an important step in efforts to measure "effectiveness," but they are not without problems. First off, the manner in which bill introductions are traced back to individual members does not allow for shared credit, even in cases in which an omnibus bill is passed. Consequently, in the bill is amended, either in committee or on the floor, the original sponsor retains credit in the data set, but the amenders do not. If effectiveness is defined as an officeholder's ability to enact their program, then a successful amendment is just as important. The authors argue that this does not impact the overall substantive effects (Volden and Wiseman, 2014, p. 22), but this remains an important limitation. Second, the scores are themselves a product of weighting, both in terms of bill type and how far the bill reached in the legislative process. This again

In addition to measuring productivity, the legislative effectiveness data includes several variables on the officeholders themselves. These variables range from core demographics to partisan factors and institutional experience, such as the number of years in Congress or whether the member chairs a committee.

Who Runs Political Advertisements?

Before assessing whether advertising correlates with time in office, we must first examine who is running ads. If effective legislators are successful at putting off challengers, then they have no reason to air campaign advertisements. If this selection process means that the most productive legislators are not in the ads data set, then subsequent analyses would be pointless.

To verify that this is not the case, Table 6.2 presents the results from a regression of whether a candidate ran political ads, $Y_i = 1$, on the full set of variables that Volden and Wiseman (2014) use to predict legislative effectiveness.[6]

$$\begin{aligned} Pr(RanAds_i = 1) \sim logit^{-1}(&\alpha_i + \beta_1 LES_i + \beta_2 Seniority_i + \beta_3 InstitExp_i \\ &+ \beta_4 Demog_i + \beta_5 Voteshare_i + \varepsilon_i) \end{aligned} \tag{6.2}$$

In short, the model includes variables relating to seniority, legislative experience, institutional power, partisan factors, racial and gender demographics, and vote share. Lastly, since the present analysis is about examining selection bias, I also include the legislative effectiveness score. Normally, the LES is on the left-hand side of the equation, but by including it as explanatory variable, we can evaluate whether more effective lawmakers avoid having to run campaign advertisements.

The first thing, and arguably most important, to note when looking at Table 6.2 is the lack of a correlation between legislative effectiveness and those who ran ads. In other words, it does not appear that incumbents who aired campaign advertisements are particularly more or less effective in office. That is not say, however, that officeholders in the ads data set are entirely representative of legislators in general. The negative correlations with race and delegation size suggest that black officeholders and representatives from larger states are less likely be in the data set. What explains these findings is not entirely clear, but the answer may have to do with the fact that these variables are correlated with a seat being less competitive.[7] Likewise, the final two variables of consequence are those explicitly focused on the electoral vulnerability of the member: vote share. As an officeholder's

generates some concern as to what these scores actually mean.

[6] For more on how these variables are collected and codes, see Volden and Wiseman (2014) Chapter 2.

[7] The relationship with black incumbents is unsurprising given racial gerrymandering and the general sorting of voters, but the state size result is less obvious. It may be driven by the fact that the country's largest states (e.g. CA, TX) witness relatively fewer competitive races.

Table 6.2: Advertising and Effectiveness - Logit Results

	$RanAds = 1$
(Intercept)	14.080 ***
	(3.230)
Leg. Effect. Score	0.099
	(0.127)
Seniority	-0.049
	(0.037)
State Leg.	0.443
	(0.421)
State Leg. x Prof.	-0.875
	(1.308)
Majority Party	0.449
	(0.776)
Chair	-0.495
	(0.882)
Sub Chair	-0.182
	(0.385)
Power	-0.410
	(0.286)
Dist. from Median	0.881
	(0.839)
Female	0.034
	(0.346)
Black	-1.238 †
	(0.673)
Latino	0.378
	(0.558)
Deleg. Size	-0.025 *
	(0.010)
Vote%	-0.377 ***
	(0.092)
Vote%^{2}	0.002 ***
	(0.001)
N	427
AIC	481.004
BIC	740.639
$\log L$	-176.502

Standard errors in parentheses

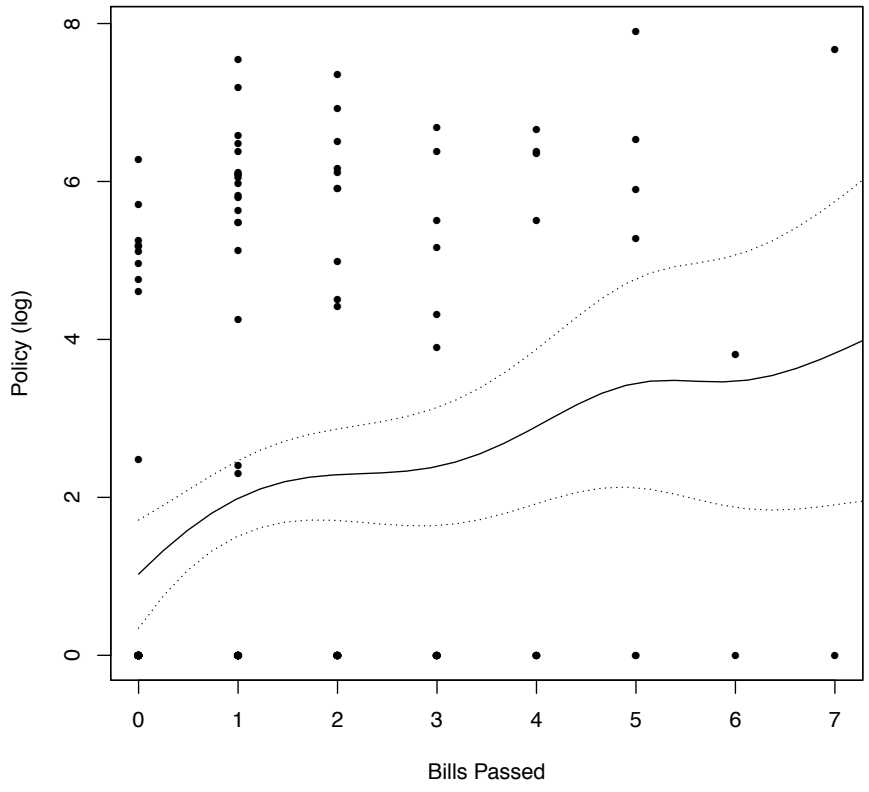
† signif. at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

margin of victory from the last race increases, the likelihood of running advertisements, unsurprisingly, drops.

What Do Effective Legislators Talk About?

The previous chapter demonstrated that candidates, especially in competitive districts, prioritize policy-based credit claims. Moreover, earlier evidence on voter preferences suggests that constituents gravitate towards candidates who run on policy. But are these candidates better representatives in office? In other words, do different credit claiming strategies correlate with legislative productivity? Preliminary evidence suggests that candidates who talk more about policy are indeed more productive. As Figure 6.1 shows, there is a positive relationship between the logged number of policy airings and the number of bills passed. But, does this trend hold beyond the bivariate case?[8]

Figure 6.1: Policy Airings and Legislative Productivity



[8] See Figure 6.3 for a plot of the relationship between policy airings and legislative effectiveness scores.

To evaluate these questions more thoroughly, the following analyses examine whether officeholder words correspond with their actions. Table 6.3 presents a several regressions of legislative productivity on a host of member-level variables.

$$\begin{aligned} \#Bills_i \sim \alpha_i + \beta_1 Seniority_i + \beta_2 InstitPwr_i + \beta_3 Demog_i \\ + \beta_4 Voteshare_i + \beta_5 Airings_i + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned} \tag{6.3}$$

Each of the models employ the same set of explanatory variables, but different outcome variables. For the independent variables, I again include all factors used in Volden and Wiseman's (2014) study of legislative effectiveness. In addition, the following models include three variables on the member's advertising strategies: the logged number of policy airings, pork airings, and all airings.[9] As for the outcome measure, the first model uses the total number of bills *Introduced*. The second and third models use bills *Passed* and the number signed into *Law*, respectively. In the fourth and final model, I use the *legislative effectiveness score*.

Looking at the results, most of the explanatory variables are not statistically significant. What is more, no variable is correlated with all four outcome measures. The positive relationships with seniority and chairing a committee corroborate Volden and Wiseman's argument that institutional experience is associated with productivity. As is their finding that women tend to be better legislators. Turning to the advertising variables, we find that policy appears to correlate with productivity, but pork does not. An increase in policy airings is positively associated with both the number of laws passed and the legislative effectiveness score. This finding suggests that candidates who talk about their policy experience are indeed more likely to be effective at getting legislation through Congress. The number of bill introductions, a commonly used measure of effort, is not correlated with policy, but is associated with the total number of airings. This finding is likely driven by candidates who face a difficult reelection, and thus flood the airways with advertisements. Likewise, in anticipation of this race, they are more likely to introduce numerous bills that do not not go anywhere.

6.3 Discussion

Political advertisements are a central concern to congressional campaigns, but their real-world effects are hotly debated. This chapter suggests that there is value in studying can-

[9] This last variable, total number of airings, is particularly important for ensuring that a correlation with the pork and policy variables is not driven by a larger advertising budget. Better legislators may have larger budgets, meaning that a correlation with the number airings would be more likely. This issue was avoided in earlier analyses by using proportions instead of counts.

Table 6.3: Explaining Legislative Effectiveness - OLS Results

	#Intro.	*#Passed*	*#Laws*	*LES*
(Intercept)	-16.103	-3.621	-2.827	-2.897 †
	(27.824)	(4.635)	(1.926)	(1.685)
Seniority	0.835 †	0.070	0.027	0.066 *
	(0.441)	(0.078)	(0.029)	(0.029)
State Leg.	-0.733	-0.026	0.195	-0.058
	(3.342)	(0.467)	(0.243)	(0.190)
State Leg. x Prof.	6.314	0.391	-0.144	0.594
	(13.261)	(1.689)	(0.818)	(0.706)
Majority Party	9.379	0.706	0.168	0.428
	(11.219)	(0.733)	(0.360)	(0.289)
Chair	9.536	5.887 **	0.824	3.204 ***
	(8.619)	(1.889)	(0.693)	(0.580)
Sub Chair	0.542	0.058	0.591 †	0.293
	(3.954)	(0.651)	(0.309)	(0.258)
Power	-5.415 †	-0.422	0.165	-0.225
	(2.841)	(0.411)	(0.206)	(0.161)
Dist. from Median	9.408	-0.696	-0.199	-0.060
	(13.267)	(0.706)	(0.352)	(0.284)
Female	0.629	0.530	0.169	0.213 †
	(1.775)	(0.406)	(0.225)	(0.124)
Black	-6.917 †	-0.872	0.082	-0.235
	(3.524)	(1.341)	(0.716)	(0.570)
Latino	-6.112	-0.694	0.122	-0.349
	(4.282)	(1.078)	(0.736)	(0.415)
Deleg. Size	-0.016	0.005	0.000	0.001
	(0.069)	(0.017)	(0.007)	(0.005)
Vote%	0.236	0.109	0.097 †	0.078 †
	(0.703)	(0.131)	(0.053)	(0.046)
Vote%^{2}	-0.002	-0.001	-0.001 *	-0.001 †
	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Policy Airings (log)	0.034	0.085	0.053 †	0.039 †
	(0.362)	(0.055)	(0.030)	(0.023)
Pork Airings (log)	0.004	0.013	0.007	0.017
	(0.395)	(0.062)	(0.031)	(0.024)
Total Airings (log)	1.807 *	0.159	0.002	0.067
	(0.867)	(0.129)	(0.065)	(0.058)
N	149	149	149	149
R^2	0.190	0.406	0.220	0.585
adj. R^2	0.084	0.329	0.119	0.531
Resid. sd	10.694	1.679	0.838	0.633

Robust standard errors in parentheses

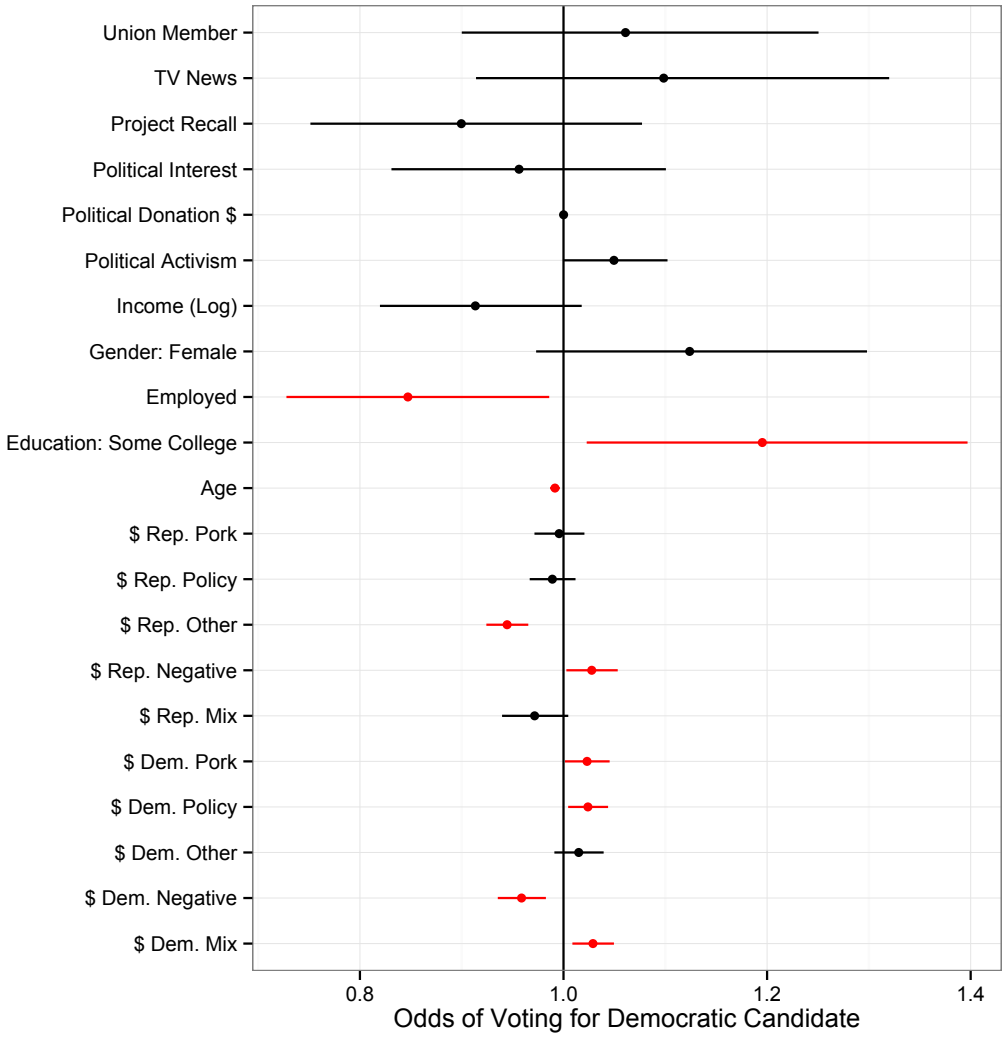
† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

didate advertising, particularly for questions of democratic accountability. We found evidence that advertising can influence vote choice, and that effective legislators tend to utilize different ad strategies.

Based on the analysis of *who* engages in advertising, we know that candidates who choose to run ads are not entirely representative. Then again, maintaining such a view would be wholly unrealistic from the start. Safe incumbents have no reason to spend money on campaign advertising and, hence, are not part of the data set. We did, however, verify that the data are not biased towards ineffective legislators, which would have made drawing larger inferences more problematic.

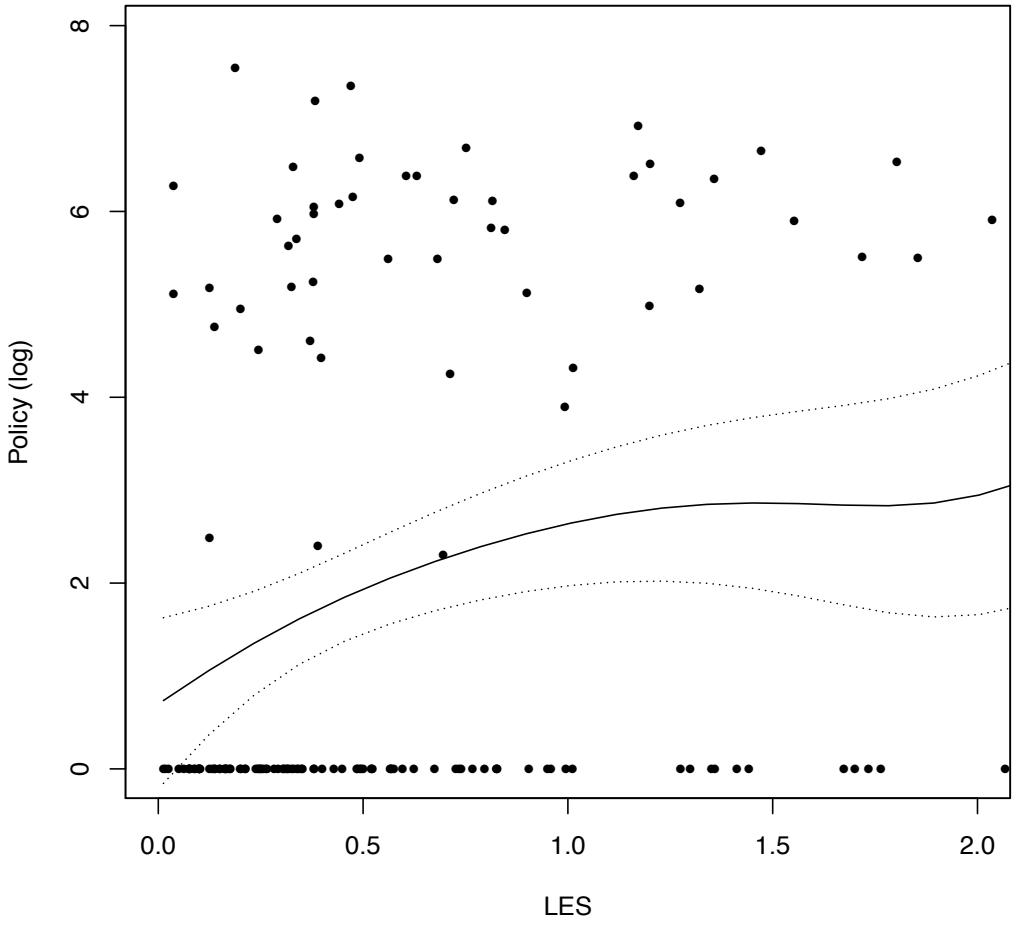
6.4 Appendix

Figure 6.2: Odds Ratios for Model 2



This figure plots the logged odds ratios (from Model 2) of voting for a Democratic candidate. The red dots represent covariates that are statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < .05$).

Figure 6.3: Policy Airings and Legislative Effectiveness Score



This figures plots the relationship between the number of policy airings (logged) and legislative effectiveness scores.

PART IV: CONCLUSION

Chapter 7

Implications for Studies of Representation

In his seminal work on Congress, David Mayhew (1974) begins with the assumption that members of Congress are driven, above all else, by reelection. Mayhew's model provides a concise framework for understanding how electoral incentives drive elite strategies. By casting MCs as "single-minded reelection seekers," the legislator becomes a highly purposeful actor whose behavior reflects an instrumental desire to secure electoral support. How the rational member goes about ensuring reelection is the key question, and its answer has important implications for individual and collective representation alike.

Early work on the electoral connection argued that a record of narrow distributive accomplishments is essential to winning reelection. Broader policy achievements, by contrast, were believed to be either too difficult to take credit for, or liable to alienate moderate voters. This dissertation challenges the notion that member strategies and voter responses continue to operate along these lines. Representation, I contend, is driven less by a motivation to allocate, and more from an incentive to run on policy.

Big policy questions are the central issues animating partisan activists and interest groups (Bawn et al., 2012). Moreover, as policy takes center stage in modern political debates (Hacker and Pierson, 2014), voters similarly come to think of campaigns as a choice between two clear policy directions. This development complicates traditional electoral strategies that tend toward distributive credit claiming and policy moderation. With greater numbers of the voting public committed to one party or the other, appealing to the partisan base is central to modern campaign strategy. What is more, policy is not as costly as others have claimed (Grimmer, 2013a). I find that co-partisans and unaligned voters alike respond positively to policy-centric strategies.

This mixed-method project offers a more thorough examination of how different legislative records influence constituent perceptions, and how members tailor their electoral

strategies accordingly. Together, these diverse approaches provide a better understanding of representational behavior both in the Beltway and "back in the district" (Fenno, 1978). Using existing data and a series of survey experiments, I explored what works and what does not work at mobilizing electoral support. The findings confirm what existing studies on distributive politics often argue: distributive appeals generate electoral benefits for members of Congress. However, the experiments add the important caveat that policy-based credit claiming works too, and that policy records are potentially more effective among co-partisans and centrists.

Bringing officeholders back into the discussion, I evaluated elite behavior to observe how politicians manage the tradeoffs between distributive goods and policy work. Using a new data set on congressional advertising strategies, the study provides a unique look into *what* members of Congress take credit for during a campaign. Moreover, by combining data on individual-level responses and legislative effectiveness, I examined the electoral and representational implications of these strategies. In the end, by layering these different studies atop one another, I make the case that policy appeals can generate a real advantage over a record of distributive accomplishments.

Moving forward it is important to continue testing the limits of the experimental findings. The results suggest that credit claiming works, but also calls for further refinement of the experimental manipulation and engagement with the question of how voters perceive the tradeoffs between distributive goods and policy achievements. To add richness to the question of over-time stability, subsequent work should investigate the duration of these effects. Rather than priming respondents of a credit claim and then immediately asking for the respondent's view, panel methods afford researchers an opportunity to study whether these appeals exhibit any lasting effects in the days to follow (Chong and Druckman, 2010; Mitchell, 2012).

Future research should continue to explore representational strategies from the perspective of officeholders. At this point, our knowledge of how politicians see the tradeoff between distributive goods and policy work is very incomplete. What motivates a single minded reelection seeker to work on national policy issues? This project's observational design has focused on one area, congressional advertising, but the analysis of legislative behavior goes far beyond the campaign trail. To that end, we must find alternative ways and venues to measure how MCs spend their time and energy. One area of interest is committee participation. Members not only perform much of their formal and informal work in committee, but also retain significant control over how they invest their time (Hall, 1996). Given that members frequently sit on both policy and constituency committees (Fenno, 1973), how does the rational member divide her time? Are more resources devoted to one committee over the other? In a related vein, scholars should continue to evaluate the degree to which credit claiming correlates with legislative productivity (Volden and Wiseman, 2014). Studies of political advertising are important, but we must also examine

whether ads and other forms of communication relate to what members actually achieve in office (Sulkin, 2011).

More than mere academic inquiries, these questions have real import for collective representation and democratic politics. The single-minded reelection seeker's decision to work on particularistic goods, Mayhew (1974a) observed, is individually rational but collectively damaging when aggregated across the chamber. Instead of addressing important national issues, members of Congress look for opportunities to credit claim. This phenomena continues today, but is it the whole story? Distributive credit claiming is considered to be essential to reelection because, as Tip O'Neill was fond of declaring, "all politics is local." The question is, are particularistic goods the central issue animating local politics? With campaigns increasingly consumed by larger policy debates, research on representation and the electoral connection must pay greater attention to the growing importance of policy-based appeals.

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