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# The Determinants of Americans' Attitudes of Representation

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*Washington University in St. Louis*

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The Determinants of Americans' Attitudes of Representation  
by  
Patrick D. Tucker

A dissertation presented to  
The Graduate School  
of Washington University in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Patrick D. Tucker, Washington University May 2017

To my parents, David and Mary Ellen

# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Determinants of Americans' Attitudes of Representation

by

Patrick D. Tucker

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

Washington University in St. Louis, 2017

This dissertation evaluates how citizens approach the representational relationship in a polarized world. How, if at all, do citizens' perceptions of their legislators change when party identification dominates the political landscape? The answer from this study may be surprising to casual observers of American politics. First, I find that Americans' views of their legislators are dynamic. Using original, nationally representative panel data, I find that perceptions of legislators move a significant amount on both a non-policy and policy dimension. Second, these levels of affect and congruence are systematically responsive to perceptions of legislators' public efforts and home styles. Even in a time of clear partisan cleavages, legislators can change their reputations through their home styles. Third, I find that evaluations on both a policy and non-policy dimension have strong, significant effects on the public's overall approval of the legislator. Although differences on policy at the elite level are quite stark, legislators can still make connections with constituents on a non-policy dimension that will build their support. This phenomenon is not limited to copartisans, but rather extends to independents and members of the opposite party. I extend these findings to examine differences between the public's views of senators and House members. I find that structural forces lead Americans to view their two sets of federal legislators in different ways.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The health of democratic government hinges on the relationship between elected representatives and the citizenry. Normatively “good” representatives are those who are responsive to their constituency’s demands (Pitkin 1967). Responsiveness is evaluated often as a function of the ability of legislators or legislatures to transform the preferences of their constituents into representative policies (Miller and Stokes 1963, Ansolabehere, Snyder Jr., and Stewart III 2001, Gerber and Lewis 2004, Bafumi and Herron 2010, Ansolabehere and Jones 2010, Powell 2004). To be sure, many models of electoral politics theorize that the candidate’s ability to converge with the voter’s ideal preferences will lead to office for the elite (Downs 1957, Calvert 1985). Plainly, Americans and political scientists studying the concept of representation often approach the relationship between legislators and elites through the prism of ideology and policy.

At the same time, there are strong reasons to view this approach to representative government as incomplete. Although Congress is the legislative arm of the policy process, its members’ relationships to their constituents are hardly limited to an ideological dimension. The Constitution provides no guidelines for the duties that accompany federal office; legislators’ obligations lack clarity (Grant and Rudolph 2004). Operating from the assumption that legislators’ behavior is motivated by reelection, previous research has given much attention to the various activities in which members of Congress engage. Namely, legislators operate

on and are evaluated by three dimensions in addition to policy representation (Eulau and Karps 1977, Harden 2016): they secure particularistic benefits for their districts (Mayhew 1974, Fiorina 1989, Lazarus 2009, Grimmer 2013ab); they assist their constituents when dealing with the federal government (Johannes and McAdams 1981, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, Fiorina 1989, Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012); and they provide a symbolic form of representation that captures the citizen's trust (Fenno 1978, Bianco 1994, Parker and Goodman 2009, Griffin and Flavin 2011, Sulkin, Testa, and Usry 2015). By successfully engaging in these many tactics, incumbents (and to a similar extent, challengers) make a connection with their constituents to secure election.

Perhaps the scholar most strongly associated with non-policy representation and responsiveness is Richard Fenno. In his book *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (1978), he stresses that legislators must create a strong a non-policy reputation among their constituents. The ways in which legislators present themselves in their district, allocate resources to assist constituents, and explain their behavior in Washington comprise what is termed the "home style." This home style is used by the representative to manipulate the constituent's information. A successful home style, which produces a favorable reputation on non-policy bases of evaluation, conditions constituents' responses to legislators' policy activities and improves the probability of positive overall evaluations. Thus to fully capture the democratic nature of representation it is essential to examine how individuals perceive and employ legislators policy and non-policy attributes.

The literature identifies representation as a multidimensional concept, but political realities challenge this conclusion. Among members of Congress and the mass public, party identification explains behavior exceptionally well. Concurrent sorting along an ideological dimension would seem to imply that policy representation plays a more important role. This rise in salience may be at the expense of non-policy representation's value at both the elite and constituent level. Previous research on citizen approaches to representation

often limits itself to the ideological dimension (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart III 2001, Ansolabehere and Jones 2010, Jessee 2009, 2012) or limits itself to the ability of legislators to bring home particularistic benefits (Parker and Goodman 2009, Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2012, Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2015). Nonetheless, citizens report that non-policy, non-ideological spheres of representation are of great importance (Krasno 1994, Grant and Rudolph 2004, Harden 2016, Lapinski et al. 2016).

## 1.1 Polarization and Representation

Although representation is a multifaceted concept, there is reason to believe that the importance of a non-policy dimension has waned within the past decades. Earlier seminal works regarding non-policy behaviors and their electoral benefits were written in an era of relatively weak parties, frequent split-ticket voting, and less polarized parties in Congress and the electorate (Mayhew 1974, Eulau and Karps 1977, Fenno 1978, Fiorina 1989). Ideological battles did not dominate politics. With weak and less ideologically defined parties, members possessed a fair amount of leeway to create reputations distinct from those of their party (Aldrich 47-48 2011, Woon and Pope 2008). Voters also displayed weaker connections between partisan identification and ideological constraint (Campbell et al. 1960, Miller and Stokes 1963, Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979). In a less polarized environment, legislators could create brands separate from the party and ideology. In turn, voters appeared to value policy and partisan benefits much less. This combination resulted in a context in which non-policy attributes and reputations could create a strong foundation for representational relationships.

The current state of American politics may not allow such non-policy reputations to matter all that much. First, at the elite level, there is little doubt regarding the division of the parties. Partisan polarization within both chambers has reached very high levels (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006, Poole and Rosenthal 2007). Voters are more often provided with

ideologically extreme candidates in general elections (Brady, Han, and Pope 2007). The long period of intense competition for control of Congress appears to have undermined serious legislating in favor of message politics and scoring political points against the opposition (Lee 2016). With the distance between the constituent's ideal point and that of a prospective legislator increasing, the individual may discount non-policy representation a great deal. In part, home styles are intended to provide the legislator with "leeway." If legislators are successful on a non-policy representation dimension, constituents will accept some policy differences. Yet, if the constituent or the legislator move too far apart in a policy space, the ability of home style to make up the leeway difference decreases. Additionally, in a system with polarized parties and ideologically homogeneity, even if a voter supports and ideological moderate in her own district, that legislator will still be attached a party that is more extreme, thus possibly moving the status quo further away from her own preference (Cox and McCubbins 1993, Bafumi and Herron 2010).

These developments have intensified partisan and ideological cues received by the electorate and may have shifted the bases of evaluating members of Congress from personal attributes to policy considerations. Within presidential and congressional elections, party identification is a stronger predictor of vote choice (Bartels 2000). Furthermore, the incumbency advantage, to which a member's home style was considered a necessary foundation, has weakened in past years in favor of partisan heuristics (Jacobson 2015). Additionally, Americans exhibit more extreme ideological preferences than they did fifty years ago (Abramowitz 2010). These views tend to be not only distinct from those on the opposite side of the policy spectrum, but also a good deal more constrained (Lee, Moretti, and Butler 2004, Jewitt and Goren 2016). Finally, with the phenomenon of sorting between partisans on an ideological dimension, it may be the case that voters will split their tickets less often and receive less utility from a non-aligned representative (Levendusky 2009, Jacobson 2009).



The current political environment may appear conducive to theories of home style, but legislators still engage in many non-policy activities (Parker and Goodman 2009) and they make public efforts to let their constituents know about such activities (Grimmer 2013ab). Even in a polarized world, legislators do not simply serve as strict roll call delegates that are simply a mechanism to achieve the ideological median of their districts. Since these home styles still exist, it is necessary to understand their importance to voters in a polarized world. Clearer analysis of how voters approach representation from a multidimensional perspective makes it possible to understand representation in current American politics more fully.

## **1.2 A Tale of Two Legislators**

Before moving further, consider two prominent examples of the importance of home styles in a polarized Congress. Though anecdotal, the evidence suggests that even the most powerful members of the legislature may either benefit or suffer based upon their non-policy reputations. Additionally, they may be able to change those reputations, for better or worse, regardless of their status in Washington.

### **1.2.1 Collin Peterson (MN-7, D)**

Collin Peterson is somewhat of a rarity in modern American politics. Peterson, a Democrat, currently represents Minnesota's 7th congressional district. The district possesses many of the features that should make it amenable to Republican representation. First, it encompasses a largely rural population, stretching over an area that is larger than eleven U.S. states. Second, in each presidential election since 2000, Peterson's constituents have voted for the Republican candidate. In fact, during the 2016 election, Donald Trump outpaced Hillary Clinton by a thirty percentage point margin. Only eleven other Democratic House members were able to win their seats in districts carried by Trump. Trump's margin of

victory in Peterson’s district was nearly double that of the next closest of these Democratic seats. Third, Peterson’s district tilts to the right of the ideological spectrum. According to measures employed by Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2013), Peterson’s district was the 341st most liberal in a rank ordering of the aggregated policy preferences of American citizens.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Peterson’s roll call behavior left him ranked 191st in a left-right ordering of DW-NOMINATE in the 112th Congress (Poole and Rosenthal 2007).

Although he appears to be out of step with his conservative leaning district, Peterson has maintained his seat in Congress since 1991. The incumbent’s ability to be an attentive, rather than a purely ideologically congruent, legislator is often cited as a reason for his success in the conservative area. Using his own single engine plane, Peterson spends most weekends flying from town to town in the vast rural district. In this way, he is able to meet with as many constituents as possible.<sup>2</sup> Such public efforts to interact with constituents have left a strong impression. As the local newspaper, *The McCleod County Chronicle* notes, Peterson is “an entourage of one . . . He doesn’t need any press secretary and public relations assistant. Dressed in a suit coat and blue jeans, Peterson comes off as the neighbor next door, out for a chat over a cup of coffee.”<sup>3</sup> Rather than appear as a Washington insider, Peterson’s communication strategy gives the impression that he is “one of” Western Minnesota’s own people who understands them. Even if he does not always align with them ideologically, the voters have a positive impression that he “cares” about them. It would appear that Peterson’s strategy is successful in that he outpaced Hillary Clinton by nearly thirty five percentage points to return to Washington for a thirteenth term.

---

<sup>1</sup>These districts reflect the 2003-2013 congressional district boundaries.

<sup>2</sup>Peterson makes note of this in his official Congressional biography, as well as placing a prominent photo of himself with the plane on his official House website: <http://collinpeterson.house.gov/>

<sup>3</sup>*The McCleod County Chronicle*, 3/26/14

## 1.2.2 Eric Cantor (VA-7, R)

Eric Cantor is also a rarity in American politics, but for reasons distinct from those of Collin Peterson. Cantor, a Republican, represented the 7th district of Virginia from 2001-2014. The 7th district lies in central Virginia, stretching from the suburbs of Richmond to the outskirts of Shenandoah National Park. On the whole the district is predominantly white and has voted for a Republican presidential candidate in every election since 1968. Ideologically, Cantor fit the district well. Of the 242 Republicans who served in the House at any time during the 112th Congress, Cantor was 151st in the rank ordering of DW-NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 2007). Additionally, the Congressman reached high levels of power, achieving the status of House Majority Leader following the Republican victories in 2010. Although he held an important seat and appeared to match the preferences of his district, Cantor lost a primary to an insurgent candidate in the 2014 primaries.

Some attributed Cantor's unexpected loss to his willingness to compromise on immigration reform.<sup>4</sup> Others posited that Cantor's Jewish faith in a heavily evangelical environment could have cost him votes.<sup>5</sup> A third narrative regarding the powerful member of Congress was also put forth regarding Cantor's interactions with his district. Many in the district considered him to be out of touch with the constituents and more of an insulated D.C. insider. As *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins wrote: "Cantor's not the most charismatic guy in the universe . . . his constituents sensed that he was spending election morning in a D.C. Starbucks, at what *The Washington Post* described as a "monthly meeting with large donors and lobbyists."<sup>6</sup> More directly, political commentator and Cantor constituent Sean Trende noted, "I have yet to read anything suggesting that Cantor had a good home style. His staff is consistently described as aloof, and his constituent service is lacking . . . I never

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/cantor-casualty-immigration-reform-n128006>

<sup>5</sup><https://newrepublic.com/article/118102/did-eric-cantor-lose-gop-primary-because-hes-jewish>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/12/opinion/gail-collins-putting-a-cap-on-cantor.html>

once saw Cantor, not at county fairs, not at school board meetings, and not in the parades that would sometimes march past our house.”<sup>7</sup> Even though he represented people within a short drive from Washington D.C., Cantor was seen as being inattentive and out of touch. As such, he suffered by losing the support of constituents.

The purpose of this dissertation is to build on these examples of successful and unsuccessful home styles and approach the representational relationship from the individual level. If the polarized and partisan environment of American politics is truly overwhelming, these stories are either misidentified anecdotes or aberrations in congressional relations. However, if empirical evidence exists that the mass public changes its evaluations of legislators, relating to both policy and non-policy dimensions, based on perceptions of public effort, it is essential to reaffirm the concept of representation as a multidimensional concept, even in an ideological and polarized world.

Figure 1.1 provides a simplified model of the representational relationship. A legislator engages in a certain behavior that she thinks will help her achieve her goals. These behaviors lie on both the policy and non-policy dimensions. Once the legislator engages in such behavior, the citizen forms a perception of what the legislator is doing. The citizen then uses the perceptions to evaluate the legislator on two separate dimensions: the policy and non-policy. That is, the citizen draws conclusions of how they stand in relation to the legislator based upon perceptions created by the legislator’s behavior. In a way, the citizen evaluates the political elite based upon her perceptions of the representative’s activity, not necessarily the elected official’s actual efforts. Finally, the citizen employs both sets of representational dimensional evaluations to come to an overall evaluation of the legislator.

Previous studies emphasize the first piece of the simplified model. Most commonly, the study of representation focuses on legislators’ roll call behavior and the reactions from citizens updating their beliefs about the legislator (Gerber and Lewis 2004, Carson et al. 2010).

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2014/06/11>

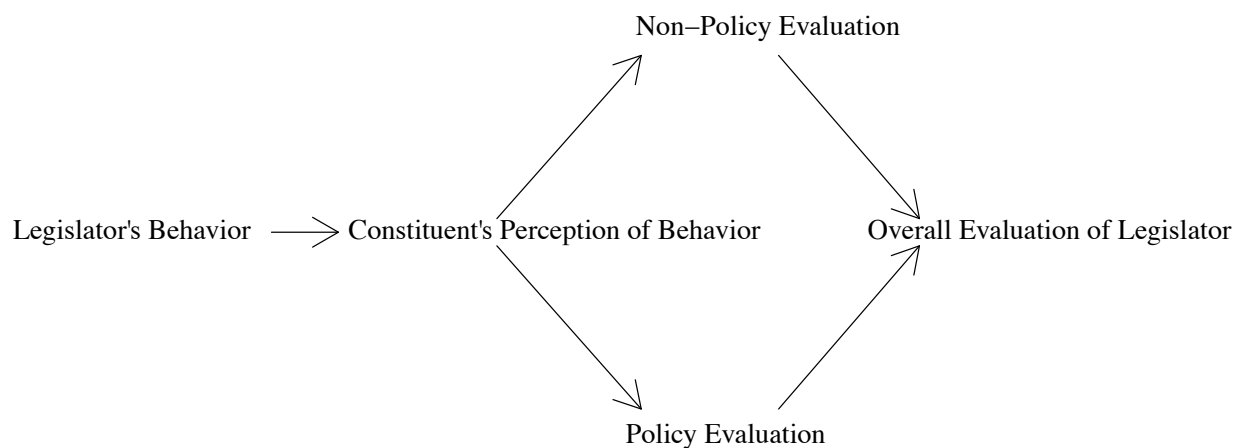


Figure 1.1: The Representational Relationship

While this study will provide focus to both policy and non-policy perceptions, it is admittedly not the first to study non-policy behaviors (see Fenno 1978, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987). Still, as Grimmer notes (2013a, 13-16) the ways in which the citizens and legislators interact and learn about each other are understudied. While he provides strong research predicting what types of home styles legislators employ, to address the representational relationship more completely, it is necessary to analyze how citizens react to legislators' behavior. Within this dissertation, the focus will be on the latter part of the model. I present new evidence suggesting that citizens' perceptions of elite behavior influence how they think about their representatives on both a policy and non-policy dimension. Even in a polarized America, both of these evaluations matter with respect to overall evaluations. The plan of the dissertation follows.

### 1.3 The Importance of Non-Policy Representation

To begin the study of representation from the perspective of the constituent, it is essential to begin by identifying the different elements of representation. Federal legislators perform multiple duties that can be categorized in to four spheres: policy, particularistic, service,

and symbolic. It is assumed that legislators want to retain their seat in Congress. This objective is attained by building support with constituents in their districts. With respect to policy, constituent demands may be ambiguous, heterogeneous, or disparate from those of the incumbent. As a result, legislators have to engage their constituency in a variety of ways to maintain their positions. To reach constituents, legislators create an image through their “home styles,” their behaviors within the district. These home styles entail manipulating information in myriad ways so that the constituent will associate the legislator with the dimension of representation that is most favorable for reelection. Although there is ample support to confirm that modern American members of Congress employ these strategies in hopes of winning support from the constituency, their importance in the modern American political arena may be suspect.

Building on the works of Richard Fenno, I discuss how legislators’ home styles are first used to build the sense of trust with their constituency. Trust is the key prerequisite for the representational relationship. Successful legislators cultivate trust by convincing constituents they possess three key traits: qualification, identification, and empathy. Qualification refers to the legislator’s ability to fulfill the responsibilities of the office. Members of Congress often convey this characteristic by promoting themselves as experts on an issue or process. Identification addresses the ability to understand what the district needs and how its people think. The legislator cannot portray herself as a Washington insider detached from the day to day happenings of the home district. She must make a point in her home style to convey that she is “one of the people.” Finally, empathy relates to the sense of caring that the legislator has for the problems her constituents have. Not only must she have an idea of what is needed, but she must also present herself as being motivated to make a difference.

What is less clear is how constituents react to legislators’ activities. American politics are polarized and it is certainly possible the citizens view their legislators through a partisan lens. As the parties move further apart, legislators’ policy positions become magnified. As

citizens become more aware of the preferences of elites that may not align with their own, they could hesitate to provide trust. It may be the case that the non-policy traits that legislators hope to amplify through their home styles are not relevant in a divided political world. The ability to provide a voice for local residents or assist in dealing with the federal government may simply be viewed as a replacement level skill. Instead, with policy outcomes amplified and valued at higher levels, citizens could discount the non-policy dimension. This dimension may even be immutable due to partisan biases

Additionally, it may be the case that different types of constituents desire different types of representation. One key way in which we may see heterogeneity in the responses to legislators' home styles is with respect to attentiveness to politics. Those who follow politics more closely will most likely have more fixed perceptions of their representatives. This arteriosclerosis has the potential to result in a weaker effect for the legislator. Alternatively, those individuals who are less prone to follow the partisan rancor of politics may be more receptive to traditional home styles. As a result, they may be more likely to react favorably to legislators' public efforts in the district.

To test these hypotheses, I collect data regarding the interactions citizens report having with their members of Congress. I measure perceptions of home style in three key ways. First, I collect data regarding the *frequency* with which an individual hears about their member of Congress. Second, I measure the *level* of contact. I assume that the closer one comes into contact with the legislator, the more likely information is to be manipulated in the elite's favor. Third, I collect data regarding the *content* of the communication from the legislator. I code two types of non-policy information that should be favorable to the legislator's non-policy reputation: personal background information and service to the district's constituents.

These perceptions of effort variables should be significantly related to a non-policy evaluation (NPE). The NPE is collected first by asking survey subjects to evaluate the legislator on a theoretically motivated six-item battery that captures the qualities outlined by Fenno

(qualification, identification, and empathy). Once this data is collected, I derive first dimension scores from a factor analysis to create a measure of the citizen's NPE. By regressing the NPE onto the perceptions of home style variables, I am able to test the importance of legislator effort for a citizen's extra-ideological attitudes towards their representatives. I also include an interaction with a political interest variable that identifies any heterogeneity in the mechanism.

I am also interested in how much importance the NPE has in a polarized world. To determine the relationship the variable has on overall evaluations of legislators, I regress a five-point approval measure on the NPE. To evaluate its place in a polarized environment, I also include a measure of policy congruence, as well as control for the relative partisanship between the elite and the individual.

The findings of this analysis provide strong support for traditional theories of representation. I find that citizens' perceptions of their legislators' behavior within the district have great influence over the NPE. That is, home styles matter in forming non-policy goodwill. While valence characteristics are often assumed to be fixed in empirical models, I find evidence that legislators can do a great deal to manipulate their NPE. These effects also vary a great deal by individual. In particular, for less attentive individuals, the effect of home style is estimated to be significantly stronger. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I find overwhelming evidence that these non-policy beliefs about legislators play a large role in the overall evaluations. These results hold, even when controlling for party and ideological congruence.

Within a polarized environment such as our own, these results are important. They do not question findings which posit ideological divergence, nor do they contradict partisan biases. What they do determine, is that policy and party are not the only relevant characteristics within the representational relationship. Legislators' non-policy behaviors matter a great deal in how they are perceived. In turn, these personalistic qualities can win them support



with ideological opponents. Poor attentiveness and service to the district can also weaken their support with partisan and ideological allies.

## 1.4 The Importance of Policy Representation

At the same time, it is important to evaluate how policy congruence applies to the representational relationship in the polarized world. Foundational models of democracy predict that citizens will maximize their utility by supporting those candidates who are closest to their ideal point on a left-right ideological or policy dimension (Black 1958, Downs 1957, Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook 1970). This approach is appealing and simple. Voters support those individuals who will transform their preferences into policy outcomes. Legislators win support by presenting themselves as close to the median ideal point within their district. Simple as it may be, the models encounter some empirical and theoretical obstacles. Traditionally, the American voter was perceived to have a weak conception of his own policy views and those of elites (Campbell et al. 1960, Miller and Stokes 1963, Converse 1964). Even in more recent American politics, the ability of most Americans to comprehend political information is called into question (Zaller 1992, Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

Nonetheless, evidence suggests that the mass public relies upon policy preferences and ideology in their electoral behaviors. Trends in electoral outcomes tend to respond to changes in the overall public mood (Erickson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002). As the country becomes more liberal, it elects more Democratic legislators. At the individual level, evidence suggests these results hold. Studies find that when controlling for party, one's own policy opinions tend to influence the overall evaluation of the elite (Jessee 2009, 2010, Ansolabehere and Jones 2010, Highton 2012). That is, how well an elite represents the constituents' own views seems to matter a great deal in the representational relationship. Aggregate outcomes also provide evidence to this relationship. Those officials who stray from their district's ideal

point encounter electoral punishment in November (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002, Carson et al. 2010).

A great deal may be known regarding how policy influences the ways in which constituents approach their representatives, but less is understood regarding how Americans develop their relational views of policy. Ideological placement is not always easily identifiable for elites, much less the mass public. As a result, it may be the case that perceptions of policy congruence are dynamic and malleable by the behavior of the legislator. One way in which citizens move their perceptions of their legislators' policy preferences is in response to their home styles.

Legislators will frequently engage in policy-based home styles. There are many reasons for which representatives take and promote their positions. First, they provide roll call vote explanations because they feel their policy positions will bolster their support with the constituency. Second, they may be tasked with elaborating their motivations from inquisitive or angry constituents who demand answers for seemingly controversial decisions. Third, they explain their Washington behavior because it provides a sense of authority with a less informed electorate. Competency is a necessary condition for the legislator to win trust. By providing an authoritative explanation on an issue, a legislator provides a sense of legitimacy for herself on policy matters.

Constituents who do not have access to information may lend a great deal of deference to their representatives when they hear their positions explained in a favorable manner. When legislators speak about policy, it may impart to the constituent a sense of expertise. This expertise will in turn lead the citizen to believe the legislator's position is acceptable. At the same time, the citizen may simply encounter other positive elements of the legislator's home style and extract value. By witnessing an effective presentation of self on a non-policy dimension, the constituent may form beliefs about the elite's policy preferences in relation to their own. Such an argument may be controversial. Approaches to representation in a polar-

ized world are typically concerned about the reverse relationship: citizens being ideologically aligned with elites and projecting positive feelings. It may be the case that such behavior occurs, but I argue that the reverse is certainly possible. Developing positive perceptions of a legislator's public effort can lead to perceptions of policy congruence improving.

To test the relationship between perceptions of effort and policy congruence, I measure citizens' perceptions regarding their legislator's congruence with their own policy preferences. This measure is calculated on a five-point scale. The explanatory variables used to predict perceptions of congruence are held over from the previous chapter's analysis; I am interested in determining if traditional perceptions of effort on a non-policy dimension are systematically related to perceptions on a policy dimension. I also include a variable measuring the incidence of policy related information being made available to the constituent. In this way, it is possible to determine if policy home styles are related to perceptions of policy congruence. Finally, I examine if these perceptions of policy congruence are related to the overall approval of the incumbent legislator.

The results of this analysis are somewhat surprising. First, I find that the relationship to the traditional home style variables is positively related to perceptions of policy congruence. Constituents react positively to their legislators public efforts by believing their preferences are more closely aligned. Second, I find that the relationship between the policy related information and policy congruence is positive, but somewhat imprecise. To further flesh out this finding, I provide evidence suggesting that dynamic views of congruence are related less to persuasion and more to a form of projection. The types of information regarding legislators policy preferences could be positive or negative. In turn, citizens' policy preferences change very little. It would appear that citizens' perceptions of legislator's positions change and not their own preferences.

Finally, I find that these beliefs regarding policy congruence play a major role in the overall evaluations of the legislators. These results hold for copartisans as well as those

who do not share allegiance with the incumbent. Within a polarized world, such a finding is important. Partisanship may serve as a heuristic in the representational relationship, but the member's ability to convince the constituent of preference alignment still matters. This ability transcends partisan label, as those who may be ideologically separated from the legislator may improve their perceived policy congruence and subsequently improve their overall evaluation of the representative.

## **1.5 Contextual Representation: The House-Senate Difference**

While policy and non-policy representation influence attitudes of elites, context may develop differences in how the public approaches their federal legislators. Bicameralism is one key way in which context of representation leads to different perceptions. Americans have two sets of members of Congress: House members and senators. While both perform the same duties of lawmaking, their responsibilities to their constituents are both marked by multidimensionality. Both sets are accountable for their roll call votes, responsible for securing appropriations, assist constituents in dealing with the federal government, and provide a symbolic sense of representation.

Still, key structural differences exist between the two sets. First, on average, senators represent larger land areas. To connect to enough constituents to build a coalition for electoral support, these legislators rely upon different types of media. Mass media such as television and radio are employed more often by senators to reach a wider audience. Economic pressures on media firms also lead to providing greater coverage to the senator: the senator represents more people. As a result, news about her will be attractive to a wider audience for the firm. Second, senators are also less accessible than House members.

Increasing the number of constituents decreases the probability that a senator will be able to respond to casework requests in a timely manner.

I argue that economic and structural differences put upon firms lead to differences in the types of media and content of coverage with which citizens hear about their senators and House members. These differences in turn lead to disparities in how the senator is viewed by the public. I find that citizens are more likely to hear about their senators through television and radio. At the same time, House members are more likely to reach their constituents through legislator controlled media such as the mail, telephone, and public events. In this way, House members maintain much greater control over their public image while reaching fewer total constituents. Senators, on the other hand, must trade control for exposure.

With differences in control come differences in the types of material constituents associate with the legislators. Senators, who are more dependent on third party sources, tend to be more associated with policy representation, such as the votes they make, the bills they introduce, and the projects they are able to secure for the state. House members are more likely to be associated with casework and background information than their colleagues in the upper chamber. The consequences of these differences in the types of coverage and content are substantive. I find that constituents are more likely to know the party of their senator than they are their House member. Somewhat surprisingly, I also find that they are more likely to know the voting behavior of their House member.

I also find that these consequences influence how citizens contact their members of Congress. I argue that constituents behave in a rational manner by prioritizing types of legislator for the type of representation they demand. I find that when citizens are in need of casework assistance or information regarding federal government programs, they are more likely to seek out a House member. Conversely, when citizens would like to influence the policy process by advocating their own preference, they are more likely to reach out to a senator. Finally, I find that while the representational relationship model holds for senators,

the effects of policy congruence are of a much stronger magnitude. I interpret this finding as support that structural differences influence how citizens view the representational duties of their different types of federal legislators.

## 1.6 The Importance of the Research Design

Within the cross-section, studies of representation may encounter difficulties. The polarized environment of American politics presents a problem when evaluating the importance of policy and non-policy elements of representation. If voters have moved further apart within the ideological spectrum and at the same time sorted more appropriately between the two parties, their evaluations of the elites of those parties may be affected. That is, constituents may judge their legislators by using partisanship as a reliable heuristic (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010, Roberts and Smith 2013, Jacobson 2015). Such a phenomenon possesses endogeneity obstacles. If voters place high levels of value onto their partisanship and ideology, they may simply project their partisanship onto all elements of the representational relationship. Perceptions of non-policy and policy representation will be affected through a partisan screen (Bartels 2002). As a result, cross-sectional results may simply find that citizens like the personal traits of those with whom they agree.

In a similar manner, the true effects of the home style phenomenon may be influenced by the polarized world. Presentation of self tactics are intended to reach constituents who do not necessarily align with the ideology of the legislator. Yet, for these efforts to have the intended effect, the legislator must come into contact with the ideologically disparate constituent. Should partisans seek out only those whom they like or to whom they have a pre-existing attachment, the effects of home style may be exaggerated. For example, consider a politically active citizen who likes her member of Congress. Since she has a favorable view of the legislator, she may seek her out more frequently. Likewise, consider an individual who

does not like her member of Congress. Not wanting to come into contact with conflicting points of view or a character she finds repellant, she may not seek out the legislator and she will hardly make an effort to find positive information regarding representation. In this way, cross-sectional analysis would exaggerate home style's importance to the representational relationship.

Observational studies of home style and its effects on the perceptions of constituents also tend to rely on data gathered during election studies (Parker and Goodman 2009, Sulkin, Testa, and Usry 2015, Grimmer 2013a). By limiting studies of representation to election cycles, the importance of party and ideology may be overstated; citizens tend to "return home" near election time and express more partisan attitudes (Gelman and King 1993). Representation exists outside of polling places. To fully understand the importance of policy and non-policy representation, it is important to examine the representational relationship in a more "normal" period. Nationally representative data are difficult to acquire and studies should not be discounted for temporal dependencies. Nonetheless, long-term analysis of representation would be ideal.

Researchers have attempted to resolve many of these problems by using experimental data (Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012, Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2012, Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2015, Harden 2016, Broockman and Butler 2017). Within these studies, researchers either manipulate information provided to a legislator from a constituent or material from a legislator to a constituent. To be sure, the advances in experimental political science have provided enormous contributions and insights into the discipline's understanding of representation. The exogenous value of these projects is clear. By controlling the interactions between the two sets of actors, it is possible to identify causality within the representation phenomenon.

At the same time, room for improving the external validity exists. First, lab experiments may undervalue the importance of charisma and personality characteristics of legislators.

Second, representatives' reputations take a long time to cultivate. Even though their formation is disseminated over time consuming intervals, the relationships are not fixed. Many experimental studies of citizens' relationships to their legislators may overlook these dynamic nuances. Finally, when analysts observe citizens' relationships with their legislators, it is necessary to remember that they are doing so *in media res*. Experimental studies, particularly those that occur within the lab, may fail to capture the pre-existing bonds and impressions that already exist. Without observational information regarding the citizen's perceptions of the legislator, it may prove difficult to identify how these relationships can change over time.

This study attempts to overcome these potential problems of cross-sectional and experimental data using original, nationally representative observational panel data. With a large panel survey, it is possible to capture citizens views of their legislators across a multitude of settings. In this instance, different settings refer to time and place. Resource limitations may restrict representation analyses to a few legislators and their districts. By using a nationally representative sample, I am able to observe greater heterogeneity in perceptions of behavior. Additionally, the panel structure allows for researchers to capture views of representation that are not isolated to the campaign trail. I am able to draw data from more "day-to-day" scenarios. Observational data such as these also allow for researchers to measure affect towards elites that is neither simulated nor removed from the "real world." In this way, it is possible to address how Americans feel about their representatives personal and policy characteristics.

To address the problem of endogeneity that plague many observational studies, I have chosen to exploit the panel structure of the data by focusing on the change in, rather than the level of, key variables. In this way, it is possible to infer if *changes* in perceptions of legislator behavior are systematically related to *changes* in evaluations of the legislators on policy and non-policy dimensions. Subsequently, it possible to determine how changes in both dimensions of representation relate to citizens' overall approval of the elite. Examining



change weakens the endogenous and selection bias issues that are associated with observational studies of representation. These differences across time also provide an insight into how reputations may improve or recede in the eyes of the individual.

Online panel surveys were used to collect the data for this project. Surveys regarding citizens' interactions with their legislators may pose problems of over-reporting (Vavreck 2007). Misreporting or social desirability motivations could lead to citizens providing incorrect information. I argue that the panel structure of this data set addresses this problem in one key way. Although it may be the case that citizens overreport with respect to the level of information they receive about their legislators, the incentive to overreport the change in contact and information is less clear. Similarly, the connection between over-reporting change and changes in beliefs about the political elite are even less clear. At the same time, I employ a sensitivity analysis for time series data to ensure that potential confounders to self-reported contact do not compromise the findings (Blackwell 2014).

Data for this project are taken from the American Panel Survey (TAPS). TAPS is a nationally-representative panel survey that conducts an online poll of roughly 1,700 adult respondents monthly. The survey was started in December of 2011 by Knowledge Networks (now GfK Knowledge Networks) for the Weidenbaum Center at Washington University. To achieve as nationally representative a sample as possible, those individuals who do not have internet access were provided such by the researchers collecting the data. The bulk of the panel data for this project were collected beginning in the summer of 2013 and concluding in the fall of 2014. Those variables collected at different intervals are noted when used.

## **1.7 Concluding Remarks**

Congressional representation remains a dynamic field. At the end of this dissertation I briefly discuss possible ways forward in further addressing the ways relationships between citizens

and elites change over time. First, more attention must be paid to how constituents perceive relationships from the legislator's freshman term. By examining what drives change from the origin to the terminus, researchers can more better understand citizen reactions to their legislators' efforts. Second, I propose studying change in legislator non-policy behavior. Most studies of legislator behavior in the home style process are either cross-sectional or experimental. Attention to long-term observational data of non-policy activities may prove insightful.

## Chapter 2

# Legislator Effort and Non-Policy Representation

If members of Congress care about reelection, it serves their interests to be aware of the variety of expectations held by their constituents. A legislator might not be able to persuade a constituent to accept his position on a given policy, but he may be able to change the relationship to terms of evaluation that are favorable. That is, representatives present themselves to constituents in a strategic manner so that voters value non-policy aspects of representation in equal or greater amounts than policy representation. Fenno (1978) identifies this presentation of self as “home style.” Representatives build support in their districts through the cultivation of trust by stressing their qualifications, empathy, and identification with the electorate, rather than focusing on ideological or policy-based appeals. If trust is built successfully, voters may provide the legislator a certain amount of leeway in roll call voting, so long as that sense of trust is not violated (Bianco 1994).

The major research question of this chapter is: Does home style matter, even in an era of sharply polarized, partisan politics? Do constituents’ perceptions and evaluations of legislators’ non-policy qualities influence their evaluations of the legislator on a non-policy dimension? If so, do these evaluations influence the citizen’s overall evaluation of their legislator? While much recent literature has focused on Fenno’s conception of home style in legislator behavior (Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012, Grimmer 2013ab, Broockman and

Butler 2017), few have examined constituents' role in the process. Using original national survey data, I model how citizens respond to their legislators' home styles. By asking individuals about the frequency, level, and content of their communications with elected officials, I investigate the ways in which home style and the information constituents receive from and about their representatives influence their view of legislators, finding that changes in perceived legislator effort and the non-policy evaluation have significant effects on the constituent's view of the legislator.

## 2.1 Creating Non-Policy Relationships

Representation is a multifaceted concept. Constituent-legislator relations are much more than simply the translation of policy preferences into roll call behavior. Often, representatives' district obligations include casework, securing federal appropriations, and creating a reputation of trust with the constituency (Eulau and Karps 1977, Harden 2013, Harden 2016). Great heterogeneity exists in what voters believe to be the most important of these duties (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, Krasno 1994, Grant and Rudolph 2004). Still, the incentive exists for the legislator to focus on non-ideological goods and traits when interacting with the district. As the maxim holds, "Americans love their member of Congress, but hate Congress" (Fenno 1974). One of the prevailing explanations for this phenomenon is that the member of Congress is often evaluated on non-policy grounds, but Congress is judged by its policy output and its procedural malfunction. Whereas the individual can rely on personal connections, the institution is ultimately associated with its policies that have the capability to alienate major portions of the constituency (Parker and Davidson 1979). Furthermore, the individual member can reduce culpability by pushing blame to other members of the legislature (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995).

Candidates with an ideological advantage can increase their support with the voters by cultivating their non-policy image in the district (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2000, Groseclose 2001, Adams and Merrill 2005). By maintaining both a valence and ideological advantage over their opponents, they become “difficult or impossible to defeat” (Stone and Simas 2010, 373). As a candidate’s quality outside of policy increases, the importance of policy preferences has been found to decrease with respect to vote choice (Buttice and Stone 2012).

### 2.1.1 Home Styles

Perhaps the scholar most strongly associated with non-policy representation and responsiveness is Richard Fenno. In his book, *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (1978), Fenno describes how representatives develop a “home style” to cultivate support among their constituencies. Drawing on the work of sociologist Erving Goffman (1959), Fenno notes that members must put themselves in the immediate presence of others and manipulate the “presentation of self” to control the response of voters to leave the most desired impression. In addition to creating an environment of support from the constituents, members also seek to foster a sense of legitimacy. Fenno stresses that without these two elements, “there is no political relationship” (54). These efforts foster trust and confidence among the constituency that contributes to acquiring support.

Members cultivate trust through their home styles. Fenno identifies three key characteristics members of Congress attempt to display in their trust-making strategy. First, is qualification. Whether it be with words or actions, candidates and incumbents need to demonstrate to the constituents that they possess the credentials necessary to serve. If legitimacy is to be attained, the electorate must believe the member is fit for the job. Such an attribute is most important for the non-incumbent or the most junior member. As Fenno, notes for these individuals, qualification is “*the* threshold impression” upon which they are

judged (57). Should a member prove herself unqualified, she has no hope of gaining the district's trust. Hence, members will go to great lengths to provide a biographical narrative expounding upon previous experience and responsibilities held in the public or private sector.

The second attribute required for trust is identification. Identifying with constituents sends the message that "I am one of you. I am like you." Voters will more likely trust someone who is like themselves; hence positive evaluations can be drawn based on such connections. The identification strategy plays out along many different dimensions. For example, it may be simply based upon geography; one establishes trust by hailing from the same district and knowing its rich history (see Fenno 2013 and the discussion of Barber Conable). Identification also may be based upon more tangible and observable traits, such as race or religion.

Finally, trust is cultivated by empathy. To gain trust, the member must convey to her district that she understands their problems and cares deeply about helping. In this way voters will believe the legislator is tending to their best interests in Washington. They will not be seen as just numbers in the bureaucratic paper shuffle. Rather, they have someone in the legislature who knows and cares greatly about the issues facing the district. As a result, they can trust their representative.

*Qualification, Identification, Empathy → Trust → Vote*

From Fenno and the subsequent literature on constituent-legislator interactions, I identify three important elements of the home style process that would influence how the citizen perceives the legislator: the frequency with which the constituent comes into contact with the legislator, the level of contact, and the content of information. Previous research suggests that, all else equal, the more one encounters their member of Congress, the more likely they will develop a favorable view (Sinclair 1990) and be aware of their activities (Grimmer 2013a).

As a result, the more one encounters their legislator, the more positive their evaluations should be. Those constituents who encounter representatives that devote more time to home style are likely to increase their evaluation of the member with respect to non-policy elements of representation (Parker and Goodman 2009).

Furthermore, the level at which one encounters their legislator should influence the ways in which the citizen perceives representation. To reach constituents as directly as possible, legislators engage in various tactics. First, legislators will allocate their staff and personal resources to either help those in need of casework or to discuss policy issues. Second, incumbents engage in strong messaging practices to alert the public of their reputations and accomplishments. This process can take place in multiple ways. Common forms involve the congressional franking system, town hall telephone calls, press releases, floor speeches, mass media advertisements and interviews, and, more recently, social media and internet communications (Grimmer 2013ab, Adler, Gent, and Overmeyer 1998, Lawless 2012). While less common with the average constituent, personal contact is still highly valued by legislators. It is here where the member can present herself both verbally and contextually. The member who travels home often, makes public appearances, and personally meets with constituents improves her relationship of trust. In general, closer, more personal contact should allow for greater manipulation of the legislator's image. As a result, the type of contact should be related to the ability to craft a reputation among the constituency.

Finally, the content of information should influence the legislator's evaluation on a non-policy dimension. Legislators often highlight their engagement in service to their district independent of policy considerations. Fenno labels this behavior "servicing the district" by providing help to individuals, groups, and localities in coping with the federal government (101). Since service and symbolic attachment are less controversial and have wider appeal, legislators promote their ability to help constituents and note their personal roots in a district (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012). When one considers

the highly polarized nature of the political landscape, the personal vote cultivated by casework or one's personal background stands as strong non-policy means to reach those who are on the opposite side of the aisle, or at least not as ideologically extreme as the primary constituency (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005). In this way, those on Capitol Hill need not sacrifice their partisan reputations or their image of loyalty in the House in order to work towards re-election.

### **2.1.2 Home Style in a Polarized Era**

At the heart of home style is creating a re-election constituency independent of partisanship. The personal vote that results from the actions of representatives is based on the “extrapolitical aspects of representation” (Fenno 1978, 242. Mayhew 1974, 26). Home style, may act as a substitute or neutralizer of partisanship in evaluations. For example, when controlling for parochialism, evidence exists that the effect of partisanship on senator approval is minimal (Binder, Maltzman, and Lawrence 1998). Home state reputations based on personal characteristics may trump partisan and ideological considerations (Fenno 1996).

Recent literature on the polarization of the American public at the district and state level may suggest that the traditional depiction of home style is dated. Since the electoral and partisan realignment of the South, congressional districts now represent larger concentrations of copartisans (Levendusky, Pope, and Jackman 2008, McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006, Abramowitz 2010). This re-organization of ideologies and affiliations leads to a conditional approach to home style: members from more polarized districts will present themselves as strong position-takers towards the ideological extremes (Grimmer 2013ab). Fenno himself suggests that Southern realignment's effect on home style is the promotion of position taking when interacting with constituents (2000).

The consequences of polarization may extend to the effectiveness of legislators' home styles. Redistricting produced more ideologically homogeneous and extreme districts (Car-



son et al. 2007).<sup>1</sup> With less ambiguity and variance with respect to the constituency's preferences, legislators may be able to build winning relationships with voters by emphasizing policy and ideology more than personal traits. Subsequently, they will focus on their positions and voters will come to demand such messages.

Polarization in the nomination process may also influence the ways in which legislators connect to their constituents. Prior to the 1970s, party professionals exerted much of the influence in choosing general election candidates. In the four decades since, party activists and ideologues have gained a greater say in the nomination process (Layman and Carsey 2002, Fiorina 2006). As primary elections became a more common method of candidate selection, more moderate candidates were "weeded out" before the general election (Brady, Han, and Pope 2007).<sup>2</sup> A more influential primary electorate also increases the demand on the legislator to build a reputation that will deter challenges from ideological extremities. More extreme partisans place greater importance on policy representation at the expense of service and symbolic representation (Grant and Rudolph 2004, Lapinski et al. 2016). For this reason, incumbents will not only feel pressure to vote less moderately, but they will also devote greater resources to promoting their policy making decisions.

Nationalization of elections in a polarized era may also devalue the role of home style. As legislators become more ideologically cohesive and distinct, the powers of the party leadership systems becomes more powerful (Aldrich and Rohde 1997, 2000, 2005). A more powerful leadership system ensures that those moderate party members who do exist will be coerced into voting with the party more frequently than desired. The effect of such a strong partisan system is distinct party brands. Voters, interpreting ideologically distinct parties, will identify partisanship as a more salient factor in the decision making calculus. They think

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<sup>1</sup>Although redistricting may have influenced House polarization levels, it does not explain Senate polarization. Additionally, the relationship between longterm polarization trends and gerrymandering is not so clear (Theriault 2006).

<sup>2</sup>This causal mechanism is also disputed (Hirano et al. 2010)

less about their legislator as “one of their own” and more as a representative of a political party. Even if they are provided the opportunity to vote for a moderate, they will consider the median of that candidate’s party (Bafumi and Herron 2010). Creating a personal brand is an increasingly difficult task.

At the citizen level, citizens have also engaged in more partisan and polarized behavior over the past decades (Abramowitz 2010). The frequency with which Republican [Democratic] identifiers vote for Republican [Democratic] candidates has nearly monotonically increased since the 1970s (Bartels 2000). As voters rely more on partisanship as a heuristic of legislators’ future behavior, the importance of non-policy qualities and behaviors should decrease (Jacobson 2015). Citizens may discount casework and symbolic representation as replacement-level abilities. Finally, the policy positions of the electorate are, on average, more extreme and better sorted within the public (Levendusky 2009). This phenomenon has the effect of increasing the salience of ideology to the voter when she is making her decisions.

Nonetheless, there are still reasons to expect the home style phenomenon and non-policy evaluations to play an important role in the representational relationship. First, legislators continue to provide non-policy goods to their constituents, even prioritizing service over casework (Parker and Goodman 2009, Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012). Although they may have difficulty in establishing their own brand distinct from the party, such a challenge may provide greater incentive to engage in traditional home style activities (Dropp and Peskowitz 2012). If moderates are pinned to an ideological label they find harmful, they must create a connection to the public that is distinct. Within the modern era, legislators do, in fact, engage in such behaviors when they may be out of step with their constituency. They focus less on policy when promoting their records (Grimmer 2013ab) and their electronic communications are less ideological as their constituency becomes more moderate (Radford and Sinclair 2017).

Evidence indicates that polarization has yet to eradicate the demand side for non-policy representation. Recent studies of elections indicate that personal characteristics of candidates are able to provide insurmountable advantages (or disadvantages) (Stone and Simas 2010). In a 2013 nationally representative survey, more than three-fourths of Americans identified “Keeping in touch with constituents” as very important in their vote choice, while “Working on national issues” was identified as very important by fifty-seven percent.<sup>3</sup> Other recent evidence points to constituency service as being the highest priority of citizens from their legislators (Harden 2016).<sup>4</sup>

Changes in the American political environment demand investigation into the relevancy of home style and non-policy representation. Although general trends might suggest the minimalization of non-policy’s importance, evidence still remains that legislators provide and voters demand such benefits. While the evidence exists, little of it focuses on how individuals react to perceptions of such behaviors and how voters employ non-policy evaluations. For this reason, I aim to test the following hypotheses in this chapter.

**H1: Frequency of Contact and Non-Policy Evaluation Hypothesis:** Increased frequency of contact with the legislator will improve the citizen’s non-policy evaluation.

**H2: Level of Contact and Non-Policy Evaluation Hypothesis:** More personal levels of contact with the legislator will improve the citizen’s non-policy evaluation.

**H3: Content and Non-Policy Evaluation Hypothesis:** Receiving messages of constituency service or the personal background about the legislator will improve the citizen’s non-policy evaluation.

While these hypotheses predict legislators will improve their image with constituents with greater levels of contact, it would be unwise to assume representational relationships are identical for all citizens. While many studies find support that all strata of the population are

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<sup>3</sup>The American Panel Survey, November 2013 wave

<sup>4</sup>It should be noted that this finding is from the 2010 CCES for state legislators.

responsive to information and cues from elites (Enns and Kellstedt 2008, Erickson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002), attentiveness to politics could limit the effect of legislators' presentation of self. To be sure, each voter may have a unique pre-existing perception of the legislator before coming into contact with her home style. This relationship limits the ability of the legislator to mold her image. As Zaller (1992) posits in his model of reception and acceptance, citizens must come into contact with messages from elites and then process their meaning. Those who pay the most attention to politics should have opinions less easily swayed by new information. These individuals typically display more polarized and fixed preferences (Lauderdale 2013). The opinions of those who are most aware of political affairs are more likely to be influenced by detailed information rather than simple party cues (Kam 2005). It is those individuals who are moderately aware of politics who display the most change in response to the reception of messages of elites (Ellis and Stimson 2012, Zaller 1992).<sup>5</sup>

Relating this phenomenon to the representational relationship, non-policy aspects of a home style, when received, should be weaker among the most devoted supporters or the most bitter opponents of the representative. That is, those who follow politics and the actions of the legislator will be more impervious to the non-policy actions of the legislator. The effect of reception of home style or presentation of self will be stronger with less attentive subgroups of the constituency. More formally:

**H4: Home Style and Attentiveness Hypothesis:** While the frequency of contact, messages of personal attributes and service, and level of contact is posi-

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<sup>5</sup>Zaller's (1992) adaptation of the elaboration likelihood model (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) theorizes a curvilinear relationship between political attentiveness and response to elite cues: those who pay the most attention to politics have immutable perceptions, while those who pay the least amount of attention are less likely to encounter elite cues at all. Citizens with medium amounts of attention are the most likely to be affected. Since the subjects in this observational study are reporting contact and not just media consumption, I operationalize and hypothesize attentiveness as a continuous variable. Categorical implementations of attentiveness with the medium attentive subjects as the baseline, as well as a similar analysis using tertiles of political knowledge, provided nearly identical results when using self-reported contact: significant differences exist between the most attentive and the medium attentive from the least attentive, but less difference was found between the most attentive and the medium attentive from themselves.

tively related to non-policy evaluations, the relationship is conditional; the relationship is negatively related to attentiveness.

Fenno proposes that trust, or what I assume is reflected in a positive evaluation of the legislators non-policy activities, should lead to positive evaluations of the legislator. While much attention has been given to the purpose and form of home style, it is less understood how constituents react to exposure of their legislators' presentation of self. Fenno's arguments suggest that successful cultivation of a trustworthy image will lead to support among voters for personal rather than partisan or ideological votes. Others have used measurements of home style at the elite level, such as amount of franked mail, trips home, and federal appropriations procured for the district (Parker and Goodman 2009), to determine its effectiveness. Unfortunately, studies have yet to identify this influence at the individual level. This paper takes up where other works have ended: it tests the hypothesis that those constituents exposed to home style place higher value on non-policy characteristics in the representation relationship. Additionally, it tests the prediction that home style exposure leads to a more positive evaluation of the member of Congress.

**H5: Non-Policy Evaluation and General Approval Hypothesis:** Increases in the non-policy evaluation will increase likelihood of approval of the member

## 2.2 Research Design

### 2.2.1 Methods: Panel Structure

Obtaining measures of exposure to legislators home styles is difficult. A common tactic by researchers has been to employ legislator-level behaviors to predict either individual-level outcomes. While much data on legislator tactics exist and advances in textual analysis allow for greater measurement of home style content, it is unclear if individual constituents surveyed were in fact exposed to the treatment of presentation of self (Fiorina 1981). Survey

experiments may be a novel approach to this research question (Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2012, Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2015). Yet, relying upon lab studies or limited treatment period experiments may also prove problematic when studying the effects of home style. First, it is very difficult to manipulate real-world legislator behaviors such as visits to public events and provision of aid when dealing with the federal government. Second, constituent-legislator relationships, as stressed by Fenno, are not necessarily susceptible to one-shot effects. The trust which a representative wishes to cultivate often takes months or years. Thus, a field experiment may not yield the external validity to how citizen-legislator relationships ebb and flow.

The following analysis relies on nationally representative survey responses about observations and evaluations of legislator performance. Little national survey evidence exists on respondents recalling legislative effort, particularly gathered simultaneously with evaluations on a legislator's diverse characteristics and this work attempts to fill that gap (Parker and Goodman 2009). Admittedly, problems could exist with the validity of constituent's self-reported exposure. To be sure, much evidence exists that turnout is often exaggerated among many individuals (McDonald 2003). Furthermore, other studies find that survey respondents often provide higher than actual levels of contact with electoral campaigns (Vavreck 2007).<sup>6</sup>

Even if over-reporting of exposure were non-existent, these survey designs may be vulnerable to selection-biases, and consequently endogeneity issues, within a cross-sectional design framework. For example, those subjects who have high opinions of their representatives at the time of the study are more likely to seek their legislator's responsiveness activities than those who already hold a negative opinion (Green, Gerber and Nickerson 2003). Thus, it

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<sup>6</sup>To confirm the validity of these self-reported measures, I conduct a series of analyses using House members' press releases. I find some evidence that the changes in frequency of information regarding legislators is significantly related to changes in the frequency of elite messaging. The results of these analyses are discussed in the Appendix.

would appear that exposure to legislator effort influenced opinions about the representative. Such a design would confound any inference that could possibly be made from the data.

One possible way to overcome these many issues is with long term panel data. By taking advantage of the panel structure and measuring change in addition to the level of the observed variables, it allows the researcher to identify the real undulations that may occur within a long-term relationship. By asking panelists to provide their level or type of contact with their legislators, and measuring their perceptions over time, the researcher is able to observe within-subject variation.

Since this design relies on self-reported exposure from the respondent, it is not immune to the issue of unreliable responses. To be sure, an individual could either provide more or less exposure to their legislators' behavior. Yet, this study should control the bias that over-reporting produces. By focusing on change rather than level, over-reporters should maintain their over-reporting behavior over time. This assumption suggests that the unreliable behavior should not produce biased estimates of a differenced model.

Data for this analysis are drawn from the August 2013 and October 2014 surveys of The American Panel Survey (TAPS). TAPS is a monthly online survey of about 2000 people. Panelists were recruited as a national probability sample with an address-based sampling frame in the fall of 2011 by Knowledge Networks. To account for natural attrition, the sample has been refreshed twice since the panel began (June 2012 and February 2013). Individuals without internet access were provided a laptop and internet service. In a typical month, over 1700 of the panelists complete the online survey. More technical information about the survey is available at <http://taps.wustl.edu>. For waves of interest to this project, slightly over 1100 panelists responded to the outcome variables in both August 2013 and October 2014.

### 2.2.2 Outcome Variables

To measure the predictors and effects of citizens' views of their legislators' non-policy evaluation, I create a latent variable. This variable is derived from a set of items that are connected to extant literature on the multiple dimensions of responsiveness, particularly those outlined in Fenno's conception of trust. They capture citizens' perceptions of their representatives' qualification, identification, and empathy. These items include honesty, understanding of the issues, sufficiency in experience, keeping in regular touch with the district, leadership skills, and compassion. On each item, the panelists are asked how well each of the characteristics describes their legislator on a four-point scale.

Table 2.1 outlines the factor analysis of the two sets of non-policy evaluation variables. For both factors, the loadings suggest that the items are a good fit for a common latent variable. All loadings are above .75 for the first wave and all above .80 for the second wave. All  $\Psi$ , or uniqueness values are less than .50, indicating that more than fifty percent of the variation in each variable can be described by the first factor. For further evidence that these items are appropriate for a single dimension, the first eigenvalue is well above one and the second eigenvalue is well below .50. Finally, the  $\alpha$  for each wave's factor analysis is well above .90. All of these figures indicate that the measure is a reliable and valid conception of non-policy evaluations.

The factor analysis yields a factor score for each wave for each panelist. The change from the first to the second wave is calculated from the standardized factor scores. This change in non-policy evaluation is the outcome variable for H1-H4.

H5 requires an outcome variable that measures the overall evaluation of the representative. One's first instinct for measuring this concept may be to use vote choice. This study eschews that option because of the timing of the panel survey. The home style that panelists recall in the survey may be relatively recent. For this reason, the exposure could have no effect on the actual vote choice. Therefore, I follow the pattern of Grimmer (2013b) and



Table 2.1: Factor Analysis of Non-Policy Evaluations

Variable	Loading on Factor 1	Uniqueness
<i>2013</i>		
Honesty	0.855	0.270
Understands Issues	0.906	0.160
Has Sufficient Experience	0.873	0.221
Keeps in Regular Touch	0.782	0.368
Is a Strong Leader	0.849	0.279
Shows Compassion	0.845	0.139
First Factor Eigenvalue	4.650	
Second Factor Eigenvalue	0.410	
$\alpha$	0.94	
<i>2014</i>		
Honesty	0.892	0.205
Understands Issues	0.929	0.118
Has Sufficient Experience	0.899	0.164
Keeps in Regular Touch	0.832	0.286
Is a Strong Leader	0.893	0.203
Shows Compassion	0.871	0.214
First Factor Eigenvalue	4.940	
Second Factor Eigenvalue	0.340	
$\alpha$	0.94	

rely upon job approval measurements. Each month of the panel survey gathers data on the approval of individual members of Congress. The panelist ranks her representative on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disapprove to strongly approve. Change in approval is produced by taking the difference between the 2013 and 2014 values.

### 2.2.3 Explanatory Variables

The main explanatory variables in this analysis are changes in the content of legislator presentation of self (here, the frequency of being made aware of the representative's service or personal background while previously reporting not hearing about such material), changes in the level of contact (here measured as changes in the highest level at which the panelist reported hearing information about their legislator), and changes in the frequency with which the panelist reported coming into contact with their legislator.

In August 2013 and October 2014, TAPS included questions regarding the ways in which constituents learn about their members of Congress. The items of greatest interest to this study include the frequency, level and content of the messages they receive. Each panelist provided information regarding the *frequency* of reading or hearing about or having personal contact with their member of Congress on a five-point scale from “never” to “once a week or more.” From there, they were asked about the *level* of contact they had. This variable was coded into three ordered categories: “Third Party mediated” (Print media, television media, radio media, and internet media), “Representative Initiated Contact” (Internet or social media controlled by member, mail from member, phone call from member), or “Personal Contact” (Public event or large group meeting, Personal or small group meeting with member). This creates a four level variable with a base category indicating that the individual experienced no contact with the legislator. Respondents were provided a list of these types of contact and were also allowed to provide a free response. Nearly all free responses fell into these three categories. To measure *content*, panelists were asked what the content of each meeting with the member discussed. For the purposes of this study, I am interested in those interactions that involved “Personal assistance provided by the Representative to a constituent” and “Representative’s personal background.”

The *change in frequency* variable is derived by taking the difference between the two waves of the given panel. This choice results in a nine category variable ranging from -4 to 4 that indicates how the frequency of interaction between the legislator and the constituent changed over the years. To measure the *change in level* of contact, I chose to treat the ordered variable as continuous on a scale of 0 to 3, once again, taking the difference between the two years. Such a decision produces a continuous variable ranging from -3 to +3, with high values indicating the strongest jumps in the type of contact for the constituent. Finally, I chose to operationalize changes in the *content* of the presentation of self with two dummy indicators. As noted above, within both waves I measure whether or not the panelist was

made aware of information regarding the legislator’s personal service or personal background. To indicate change here, I simply created two dummy variables that are set at “1” if the panelist claims to have heard about either of these subjects when previously stating she had not, and “0” for all other cases.

## 2.2.4 Modeling

To test H1-H4, I use two models. For the first set of hypotheses, the dependent variable is continuous. Hence, ordinary least squares estimate the effects of home style on the non-policy evaluation. Recall that the first hypothesis predicts that increases in exposure to non-policy effort on the part of the legislator will increase the panelist’s evaluation of her non-policy characteristics. The first type of model is estimated using ordinary least squares:

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha + \beta \Delta \mathbf{X}_i + \epsilon \quad (2.1)$$

where  $\Delta y_i$  represents the change in the evaluation each panelist has for their representative on the non-policy dimension.  $\Delta \mathbf{X}_i$  is a matrix that contains the set of variables that relate to changes in each panelist’s exposure to the differing levels and types of contact with their legislator.

## 2.2.5 Modeling Heterogeneity in Response

The likelihood that constituents obtain information about their members of Congress is dependent on a variety of factors. Failure to account for these variables could lead to confounding at the individual level (Grimmer 2013b), so I include controls that may be related to a constituent’s ability to retrieve information about representatives: racial group, education, income, gender, and political interest (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Griffin and Flavin 2007). Yet, since I am interested in within-subject change, the modeling strategy

is less concerned with time-invariant covariates on the two outcome variables that measure change. As a result, the main analysis will not include such demographic controls.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, I am interested in heterogeneity of constituents' reactions to variations in the legislator's presentation of self. I interact the explanatory variables from the previous model with a four-point measure of the panelist's interest in political affairs. From here, the variation on the model is:

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha + \lambda \Delta \mathbf{X}_i \times \mathbf{z}_i + \beta \Delta \mathbf{X}_i + \gamma \mathbf{z}_i + \epsilon \quad (2.2)$$

where once again  $\Delta y_i$  represents the change in the evaluation each panelist has for their representative on the non-policy dimension and  $\Delta \mathbf{X}_i$  is a matrix that contains the set of variables that relate to changes in each panelist's exposure to the differing levels and types of contact with their legislator. Here,  $\mathbf{z}_i$  represents individual  $i$ 's level of political interest, as measured on the self-reported four-unit scale.

The second outcome variable is the change the constituent experiences in her overall evaluation of her legislator. Using ordinary least squares, I am able to estimate the first difference in this evaluation variable in relation to the change in the non-policy evaluation of the elected official:

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha + \beta \Delta \mathbf{x}_i + \epsilon \quad (2.3)$$

The vector  $y_i$  represents the change in the overall level of approval each panelist has for her member of the House of Representatives on a five-point scale. Within this model, the explanatory variable is the dependent variable from the previous analysis. Here,  $\mathbf{x}_i$  is a vector that contains each individual's non-policy evaluation of their member of the House.

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<sup>7</sup>All analyses in this chapter were run using demographic controls. The addition of these variables did not influence the statistical relationship between the main explanatory variables and the outcome variables. These findings may be found in the Appendix.

Thus, this model tests the relationship the change in this variable contributes to the change in overall approval.

## 2.3 Findings

Using ordinary least squares, I regressed the change in the non-policy evaluation on the changes in these variables. The results for this analysis may be found in Table 2.2.<sup>8</sup> Within column I, the output suggests that changes in the content of information a constituent receives about her legislator is significantly related to his changing non-policy evaluation. The explanatory variables in this model are dummy indicators where “1” represents the panelist responding that they had come across information regarding the personal background of or constituency service provided by their member of the House of Representatives in October 2014 when they had previously said they did not hear any such information in August 2013. Thus, a “0” indicates that no change in response occurred for the individual from 2013 to 2014. Column I displays that being made aware of service, as well as the personal background or character, is significantly associated with an increase in the panelist’s non-policy evaluation of the representative. Being made aware of the service record is associated with a roughly .29 unit increase in the non-policy evaluation. While this distance may appear relatively small considering the spread of change is roughly -3 to 3 on the relevant scale, it represents a roughly ten percent increase on the observed latent factor. Being made aware of the character or personal background is significantly related to the change in non-policy evaluation, but the estimates show that the effect is much weaker.

Column II demonstrates that increases in the level of contact also are related to changes in the non-policy evaluation of representatives. As the level of contact increases, the pan-

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<sup>8</sup>The models were also estimated using various demographic controls, accounting for the possibility that certain observable, time-invariant characteristics may influence the change in the non-policy evaluation. These models provided similar results regarding the time-variant covariates. These results may be found in the Supplementary Appendix in Table 2.6.

Table 2.2: Predicting Change in Non-policy Evaluation

	I	II	III	IV
Made Aware of Service	0.286*** (0.082)			0.226*** (0.079)
Made Aware of Character	0.170*** (0.064)			0.072 (0.062)
$\Delta$ Level of Contact		0.222*** (0.023)		0.169*** (0.027)
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact			0.126*** (0.016)	0.067*** (0.027)
Constant	-0.049** (0.024)	-0.023 (0.021)	-0.031 (0.021)	-0.061*** (0.023)
$N$	1,135	1,135	1,135	1,135
$R^2$	0.02	0.07	0.05	0.10

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

elist's evaluation of the legislator increases in kind. That is, the model predicts that should a voter come into contact with representative disseminated materials, while previously only encountering third party materials, she is likely to increase her non-policy evaluation modestly. While the coefficient in the table suggests that increases in the level of contact are analogous to the content of communication, with respect to their effects, it should be noted that this variable is the change of a scale. Thus, a two-unit increase in the level of contact, while rare within the sample, is associated with changes of a very high magnitude on the latent factor scale.

Increases in the frequency of contact also are strongly related to changes in the non-policy evaluation scale. Such a result suggests that stronger public effort on the part of the legislator has the potential to significantly improve the representative's non-policy image. This result holds when controlling for other types of changes in the presentation of self. While the change of frequency is the smallest effect in magnitude, it does remain significant and positive. Column IV indicates that within the less parsimonious model, being made aware of the representative's character is no longer a reliable effect. This change may be the result of hearing negative information regarding the background of the legislator, thus

weakening the overall effect. Finally, it should be noted that the intercept term in column IV is negative and statistically significant. From this finding, it can be concluded that there was a slightly negative trend towards incumbents from the summer of 2013 to the fall of 2014.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.3.1 Home Style and Attentiveness

Table 2.3 provides the results for testing H4. In order to find evidence of heterogeneity of effects by political interest level, a four point measure of political attentiveness is interacted with each of the explanatory home style variables. The mean estimates for the interaction term for both being made aware of service and level of contact are rather large and negative, but they do not reach acceptable levels of significance. Still, they provide some evidence that these effects are stronger for those who exhibit less political interest. With respect to change in the frequency of contact, however, H2 predicts that those who report being more interested in politics will be less susceptible to these public effort tactics. Put another way, less interested constituents are more likely to improve their non-policy evaluation of the legislator if they encounter more frequent information.

To further explore the difference in the marginal effects by political interest, Figure 2.1 provides the predicted change as the frequency of contact changes. The image displays two sets of predictions: the predicted level of change for those panelists reporting being very interested in political affairs (the highest level possible on a four-point scale) and the predicted level of change for those individuals reporting being only “somewhat interested” in politics (the second highest level on a four point scale). The x-axis provides the hypothetical

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<sup>9</sup>Even with panel data, the causal inference of this model may be inhibited by the fact that certain panelists may be more likely to seek out a legislator as an election nears, for reasons such as partisan or ideological attachments. To address this issue, I performed a sensitivity analysis to determine if certain covariates may confound the effect of reported contact with the legislator on non-policy evaluations. When accounting for this potential selection bias, the results of this analysis found that constituents are still likely to improve their non-policy evaluation. A greater discussion of this analysis may be found in the Appendix.

Table 2.3: Predicting Change in Non-policy Evaluation, Interacting with Political Interest

	I	II	III
Made Aware of Service	0.295 (0.199)		
Made Aware of Character	-0.071 (0.151)		
$\Delta$ Level of Contact		0.134** (0.054)	
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact			0.039 (0.016)
Political Interest	-0.040 (0.028)	-0.033 (0.028)	-0.031 (0.025)
Made Aware of Service $\times$ Political Interest	-0.295 (0.199)		
Made Aware of Character $\times$ Political Interest	-0.004 (0.111)		
$\Delta$ Level of Contact $\times$ Political Interest		-0.148 (0.080)	
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact $\times$ Political Interest			-0.051*** (0.019)
$N$	1, 125	1, 125	1, 125
$R^2$	0.02	0.03	0.06

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

level of change in contact that a panelist may encounter, while the y-axis provides the predicted level of change.

Increases in the frequency of contact provide a significantly larger influence on casual observers of politics. Those who tend to be very interested in political affairs are much less affected by greater effort from their legislators. For further evidence of the politically attentive's relative imperviousness to this treatment, note that no significant predicted effect can be found for a one-unit increase in the frequency of information reception. It is only when the most interested individual receives at least a two-unit increase that a significant positive change occurs.

These significant differences do not appear with respect to decreases in the frequency of contact. That is, both the very interested and the somewhat interested react to less frequent information reception in statistically indistinguishable direction and magnitude. Nonethe-



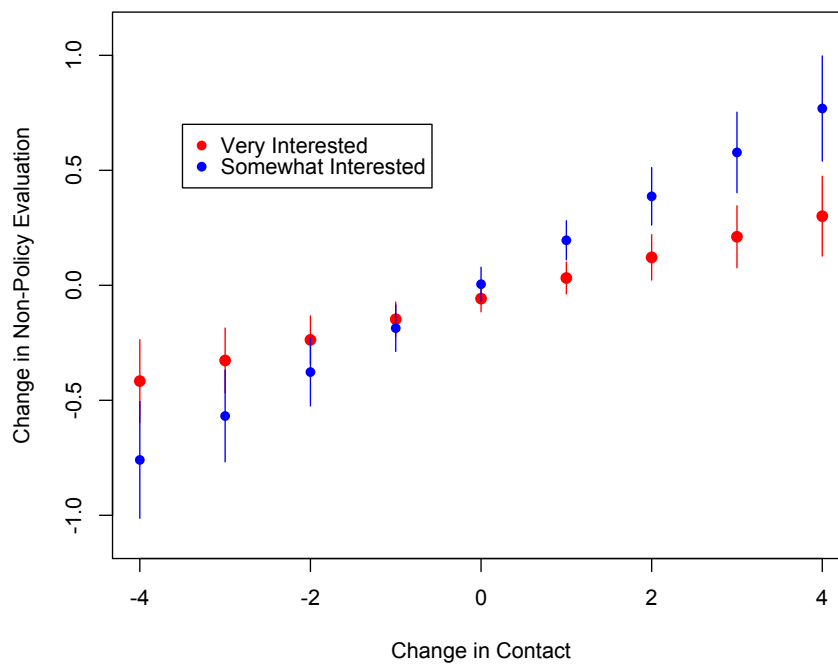


Figure 2.1: Predicted Effects on Change in Non-policy Evaluation: The Very Interested vs. the Somewhat Interested

less, unlike increases, predictions due to decreases in the frequency of contact are significant for both interested and less interested panelists. This result suggests that legislators would be unwise to shirk on their public efforts; voters of all levels of political attentiveness tend to think less of their non-policy attributes should such a change occur.

Finally, it is necessary to determine how these changes in the non-policy evaluation are related to the individual's overall evaluation of the legislator. To determine the effects of these non-policy perceptions, the model regresses the change in overall approval of the legislator on the change in the non-policy evaluation variable from August 2013 to October 2014.<sup>10</sup>

Table 2.4 displays the results of this model. Column I demonstrates that a significant increase in the approval of the legislator is associated with a similar change in the non-policy evaluation. A rather large positive coefficient of 0.328 indicates that representatives' evaluations are closely tied to their perceived non-policy attributes. To better understand the magnitude of this effect, consider that the mean value of observed change in the non-policy evaluation is approximately zero. That is, the average person's perception of these extra-ideological elements did not change during the study. One standard deviation from this mean is roughly 0.731. An increase in this variable by one standard deviation from the mean is associated with a predicted change of approval of 0.351, meaning that a hypothetical panelist would increase her approval by roughly one-third of a category. Similarly, a change of one standard deviation less than the mean produces a prediction of  $-0.133$  categories change in the outcome.

Although these predicted changes appear quite small, their magnitude must be put into context. The scale of approval is only a five-point measurement, indicating that the possible

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<sup>10</sup>Once again, this model was run using several time invariant covariates that may influence each individual's trend in approval over the course of the time period. The results of this model were consistent with the main explanatory variables' relationship to change in legislator approval. The findings may be found in the Supplementary Appendix in Table 2.8.

Table 2.4: Predicting Change in Legislator Approval

	All	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
$\Delta$ Non-policy Evaluation	0.328*** (0.042)	0.285*** (0.063)	0.344*** (0.058)
$N$	1,076	380	676
$R^2$	0.05	0.05	0.05

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

level of movement is quite constrained. The outcome variable in this analysis may take on nine possible values, but the individual panelist may only move a maximum of four units. Furthermore, the majority of movement is contained to two units. Very few individuals oscillate from strongly disapprove to strongly approve. With this pattern in mind, it becomes apparent that the predicted change from a one standard deviation increase is analogous to nearly twenty percent of all possible movement on the scale. Hence, these somewhat reasonable changes in the explanatory variable are related to rather meaningful perceptions of the legislator.

Table 2.4 also attempts to uncover whether legislators can make gains with ideologically opposed or ambiguous constituents on these non-policy characteristics. Within columns 2 and 3, the results of a subsetting regression are displayed by those who identified as the same party as the legislator and those who identified as Independent or of the opposite party, respectively. These results show that Fenno's argument that legislators can improve their standing among their constituency by appearing as trustworthy representatives has empirical merit. Among both copartisans and those who are not aligned, significant positive effects exist. This model suggests that the non-policy evaluation is relevant among both copartisans and those individuals who do not share affiliation with legislator.

To further demonstrate the importance of the non-policy evaluation with respect to the overall evaluation of sitting legislators, consider the possibility that a citizen's attitudes towards her representative may be influenced by a change in perception of the legislator's

policy positions in relation to her own. The perceived closing of a gap in ideological distance should correspond to a more positive evaluation of the legislator. If changes in the non-policy evaluation are not responsible for changes in approval when controlling for the change in perceived policy agreement, the addition of a policy variable should significantly decrease the magnitude of the non-policy evaluation’s effect.

In order to test this possibility, each panelist was asked to report how well she believed her legislator represented her policy preferences on a five-point scale, from “not well at all” to “very well” in both waves of this study. The difference of these measures, a five-point scale ranging from  $-4$  to  $+4$  with zero indicating no change in perceived congruence, was included in the previous regression models. The results of this exercise may be found in Table 2.5. The first column, which includes all panelists, demonstrates that while the estimated coefficient for change in the non-policy evaluation decreases, it is still not significantly different from the effect reported in Table 2.4. Furthermore, the effect is still positive and significant, indicating that an increase in the non-policy evaluation is positively associated with a change in approval, even when controlling for changes in policy congruence.

Table 2.5: Predicting Change in Legislator Approval, Controlling for Change in Perceived Policy Agreement

	All	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
$\Delta$ Non-policy Evaluation	0.195*** (0.054)	0.218*** (0.085)	0.185*** (0.071)
$\Delta$ Perceived Policy Agreement	0.235*** (0.060)	0.119 (0.092)	0.296*** (0.079)
$N$	1,050	378	672
$R^2$	0.07	0.06	0.06

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

The effect of change in policy congruence is statistically significant and positive for the set of all panelists, suggesting, unsurprisingly, that as citizens believe their representatives better reflect their own preferences, their approval of the legislators increases. This relationship is statistically reliable for those of the opposite party or Independents, but it is somewhat

weaker for those sharing the partisanship of their legislator. The finding that the non-policy evaluation, but not perceived policy agreement, holds a significant influence on evaluations of legislators for copartisans, would seem to run counter to Fenno's argument that it is policy which most resonates with shared partisans. While surprising, this finding further underlines the importance of changes in non-policy evaluation for both copartisans and those who do not share the partisan identity of the legislator.

These findings hold great importance for the polarized world. While some may posit that the importance of parochialism has diminished with nationalized elections and polarization, I find that at the individual level, changes in the evaluations of legislators on an alternative dimension, even when controlling for partisanship and policy congruence, play an influential role in overall approval. Legislators who are out of step with their constituencies may be able to build support by building goodwill through their home styles in meaningful ways. Similarly, simply because a constituent aligns with her representative in Congress does not mean that the incumbent is secure. Rather, a weak home style, and subsequently a weak NPE, can significantly harm the representational relationship, even for a copartisan. Thus, party and ideology do not monopolize the ways in which constituents connect to their elected officials.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter provides strong evidence that from the demand side, representation has more than one dimension. It also provides strong evidence that home styles have the ability to reach across partisan and ideological divides. Even among those constituents who do not share a partisan affiliation, legislators can make connections. The preceding analysis would seem to give strong support to the research question at hand: does the concept of home style and the non-policy component of the representational relationship remain in a

polarized world. The empirical evidence strongly supports that presentation of self is effective in building support among the constituency, even in an era charged by ideology.<sup>11</sup> While images of partisan rancor and influential ideologues dominate popular political narratives, constituents' evaluations of their legislators exhibit fluidity that is systematically related to perceptions of effort. These perceptions are associated with non-policy evaluations that matter a great deal for legislator support.

These findings do not negate previous work that identifies the public as more polarized or partisan. Rather, I argue that approaches to representation that limit their conclusions to a single dimension are merely underspecified. In addition to providing evidence of multidimensional representation at the individual level, I also demonstrated that views of legislators change in meaningful ways. The possibility exists that during this polarized era, legislators have merely adapted their home styles to meet their goals of re-election. If, as some put forward, that the polarization of the public is overstated in relation to elites (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005), then the findings from this chapter may suggest home styles serve to exacerbate polarization rather than limit it. By taking advantage of their non-policy evaluations with copartisans, anti-partisans, and Independents alike, incumbent legislators may be building up greater leeway with constituencies. In this way, they are able to move further right or left with fewer consequences.

The consequences of these findings demand more exploration. While I have determined that home styles and non-policy representation matter a great deal to the average constituent in a polarized world, the extent to which perceptions of policy can change and their relation to the evaluations of legislators is the next logical step in examining the representational relationship. I take up this task within the next chapter.

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<sup>11</sup>Furthermore, the sensitivity analysis improves the causal claims of Fenno that these actions taken by legislators directly improve their reputations in the district.

## 2.5 Supplementary Appendix

### 2.5.1 Models with Time-Invariant Covariates

Table 2.6 demonstrates the effects of changes in perception of legislator effort on the changes in the non-policy evaluation, while controlling for time-invariant covariates. Time invariant covariates include a dichotomous indicator for the citizen’s race (1=“White”, 0=“Other”), years of education (a 15-category ordered variable treated as continuous), income (a 16-category ordered variable treated as continuous), a dichotomous indicator for sex (1=“Female”, 0=“Male”), the perceived ideological distance between the panelist and her House member (coded as the panelist’s perceived absolute difference with the legislator on a 7-point ideological scale ranging from “very liberal” to “very conservative”), a 4-point measure of political interest, and dichotomous indicator representing shared partisanship between the panelist and the House member. The results suggest that nearly all of the effects from Table 2.2 remain consistent when adding these time-invariant covariates. Becoming aware of service to the district or personal background and character information has a strong, positive effect on the change in the non-policy evaluation. Additionally, an increase in the frequency and level of contact are strongly, positively associated with a change in the non-policy evaluation. That is, even when controlling for a series of baseline covariates, exposure to home style is significantly related to positive evaluations of non-policy. These patterns are also consistent with the statistical analyses for Hypotheses 2 and 3. That is, when controlling for a series of time-invariant traits of the panelists, I find that the relationship between non-policy evaluations and perceptions of public effort (Table 2.7) and the relationship between non-policy evaluation and approval are positive and significant. More directly, I find that even when controlling for possible confounders, the findings hold.

Table 2.6: Predicting Change in Non-policy Evaluation

	I	II	III	IV
Made Aware of Service	0.295*** (0.088)			0.231*** (0.086)
Made Aware of Character	0.222*** (0.070)			0.122* (0.069)
$\Delta$ Level of Contact		0.215*** (0.025)		0.161*** (0.029)
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact			0.123*** (0.017)	0.065*** (0.019)
White	0.037 (0.054)	0.053 (0.053)	0.065 (0.054)	0.058 (0.053)
Years of Education	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.011 (0.014)	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.014 (0.014)
Income	0.008 (0.007)	0.009 (0.007)	0.008 (0.007)	0.008 (0.007)
Female	-0.033 (0.047)	-0.032 (0.046)	-0.038 (0.047)	-0.035 (0.046)
Ideological Distance	0.048*** (0.016)	0.050*** (0.015)	0.045*** (0.015)	0.050 (0.015)
Political Interest	-0.097*** (0.029)	-0.080*** (0.028)	-0.075*** (0.028)	-0.077*** (0.027)
Share Party ID	0.133*** (0.051)	0.139*** (0.050)	0.148*** (0.051)	0.133*** (0.050)
Constant	-0.360*** (0.174)	-0.285* (0.170)	-0.321* (0.172)	-0.321* (0.172)
$N$	951	951	951	951
$R^2$	0.04	0.09	0.07	0.12

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .



Table 2.7: Predicting Change in Non-policy Evaluation, Conditional on Interest

	I	II	III
Made Aware of Service	0.260 (0.075)		
Made Aware of Character	-0.112 (0.169)		
$\Delta$ Level of Contact		0.104* (0.057)	
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact			0.015 (0.040)
Political Interest	-0.075** (0.031)	-0.073*** (0.028)	-0.064** (0.029)
Made Aware of Service $\times$ Political Interest	-0.019 (0.116)		
Made Aware of Character $\times$ Political Interest	-0.192** (0.089)		
$\Delta$ Level of Contact $\times$ Political Interest		-0.064** (0.030)	
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact $\times$ Political Interest			-0.061*** (0.020)
White	0.042 (0.054)	0.054 (0.053)	0.065 (0.054)
Years of Education	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.008 (0.014)
Income	0.009 (0.007)	0.009 (0.007)	0.009 (0.007)
Female	-0.036 (0.047)	-0.036 (0.046)	-0.043 (0.047)
Ideological Distance	0.045*** (0.016)	0.047*** (0.015)	0.044*** (0.015)
Share Party ID	0.136*** (0.051)	0.135*** (0.050)	0.141*** (0.051)
Constant	-0.321*** (0.175)	-0.271 (0.170)	-0.291* (0.172)
$N$	951	951	951
$R^2$	0.05	0.10	0.08

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

Table 2.8: Predicting Change in Legislator Approval

	I	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
$\Delta$ Non-policy Evaluation	0.297*** (0.044)	0.221*** (0.071)	0.321*** (0.059)
White	0.000 (0.075)	0.040 (0.119)	0.001 (0.099)
Political Interest	0.018 (0.040)	0.051 (0.068)	0.000 (0.050)
Years of Education	-0.048** (0.019)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.049** (0.024)
Income	0.016 (0.009)	0.023 (0.017)	0.007 (0.013)
Female	0.083 (0.066)	0.018 (0.110)	0.131 (0.083)
Ideological Distance	0.003 (0.020)	0.081* (0.047)	0.001 (0.050)
Constant	0.511** (0.236)	0.567 (0.403)	0.500* (0.300)
$N$	931	336	584
$R^2$	0.05	0.06	0.06

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

## 2.5.2 Sensitivity Analysis

Typically, causal inference in the social sciences relies upon an assumption that treatment statuses are independent of potential outcomes, conditional on a set of possible confounders (Imbens 2003). Although this modeling strategy employs a panel structure to overcome some of the problems with self-report and selection bias for the treatment, it is necessary to perform a sensitivity analysis which accounts for violations in this ignorability assumption. For example, it is certainly possible that those who are already aligned ideologically or by party with their legislators will develop stronger positive feelings over time and seek out these legislators, particularly as an election nears (e.g. Gelman and King 1993). In this analysis, I must determine if individual traits of the panelists influence their likelihood of coming into contact with their legislators, and therefore influence the interpretation of exposure to legislators in relation to changes in the non-policy evaluation.

Formally, this confounding can be expressed as (Blackwell 2014):

$$q(a, x) = E[Y_i(a)|A_i = a, X_i = x] - E[Y_i(a)|A_i = 1 - a, X_i = x] \quad (2.4)$$

Within this function,  $q$  represents the confounding as a function of being exposed to the legislator's home style,  $a$ , and covariates which may influence the likelihood of treatment.  $Y_i$  is the outcome for panelist  $i$ ,  $A_i$  represents the treatment, where a value of 1 corresponds to receiving an increase in exposure in information, and  $X_i$  refers to a set of each individual's covariates. Thus, confounding is defined by the difference between the expected observed outcome between treatment groups, conditional on a set of individually heterogeneous covariates. If treatment is assigned randomly, then the outcome's relationship to treatment group is assumed to be independent. As a result, confounding is non-existent. Yet, in an observational study such as the present, a similar assumption cannot be made.

Blackwell (2014) outlines a possible solution to the violation of the ignorability assumption. By modeling a confounding function of the treatment status and observed outcome, researchers are able to determine both the raw amount of confounding and the variance in the observed outcome explained by confounding produced by the covariates that are responsible for selection bias. Using this approach, it is necessary to construct a confounding function in which the treatment status is regressed upon covariates which may influence the likelihood of such status. Using this logistic regression estimation, the predicted values for each individual represent a propensity score to being in the treated group. These scores are then used to replace the observed outcome with an adjusted outcome without omitted variable bias. The new outcome variable is then regressed upon the treatment variable along with the confounding function, providing a new estimate that controls for selection bias.

The strength of this approach is that it allows for researchers to determine the extent to which confounding influences the estimated effect of the treatment. This method reparameterizes  $q$  so that it is possible to determine the extent to which the variance in the outcome variable,  $R^2$ , can influence the observed effect. Figure 2.2 displays the results of this analysis.<sup>12</sup> For the sake of interpretation, I have limited the analysis to the treatment of increased frequency of exposure to home style. The y-axis represents the estimated effect of an increase in this variable.<sup>13</sup> On the x-axis, the figure displays the amount of variance in the outcome variable, here the change in non-policy evaluation, explained by the confounding variables. The  $\times$  symbols represent the amount of partial variance each covariate has with the outcome variable.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Sensitivity analysis performed using the `causalsens` package in R.

<sup>13</sup>The `causalsens` package does not allow for a continuous treatment variable. Thus, I have chosen to dichotomize the variable to “1” if the panelist reported an increase in contact and a “0” otherwise.

<sup>14</sup>For this analysis, I have chosen to include age, sex, race, interest in politics, shared partisanship, and perceived ideological distance on a 7-point scale in the confounding function. The analysis tests these covariates for both negative and positive values.

The results of the figure indicate that for the entire range of possible variance explained by the confounding covariates, the effect of an increase in exposure to home style remains positive and statistically significant from zero. That is, even when accounting for the selection bias of coming into greater contact with the representative, constituents are still likely to increase their perceptions of the elected official's non-policy attributes. Such a finding greatly strengthens the causal claims of the home style relationship.

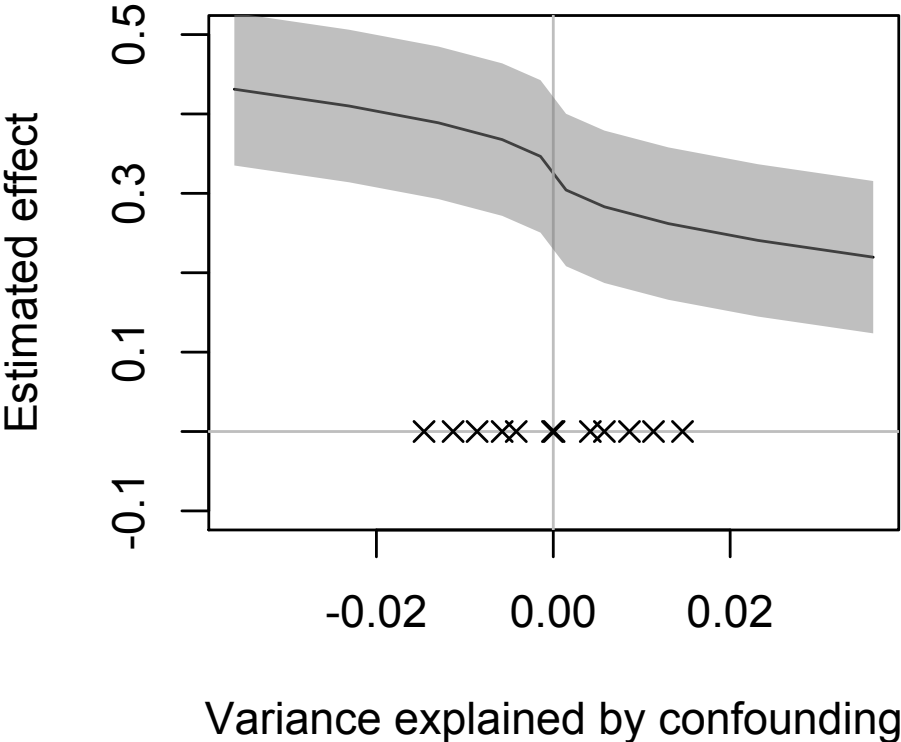


Figure 2.2: Sensitivity Analysis

### 2.5.3 Validating Measure of Self-Report with Press Releases

To further ameliorate concerns regarding the change in frequency variable, I compare the panelists' responses to changes in contact with changes in legislators' public messaging strategies. I gathered 212 House members' official press releases for the six month period before the first wave of the study and the six month period for the second wave of the study. Press releases are typically made available on the official House websites of members.<sup>15</sup>

I measure change in frequency of legislator disseminated information by subtracting total amount of press releases in the six-month period before the 2013 wave from the total amount of press releases six months prior to the 2014 wave. The resulting variable is weakly correlated with the change in reported levels of contact and information reception from panelists (0.16), though it has a much weaker relationship with the change in NPE (0.05). Legislators' change in press releases across these periods has a mean of almost  $-1$ , but there is high variation. The values range from  $-36$  (indicating 36 fewer press releases) to 121 (indicating 121 more press releases) and the standard deviation is nearly 14.

I use this change in press releases in a two-stage least squares instrumental variable analysis that may be found in Table 2.9. The findings of this analysis suggests two main points regarding the models in the main text. First, these changes in press releases are significantly related to citizens' changes in the differences in reported frequency of contact. Although the sample from district to district may be weak to identify direct effects legislator by legislator, in the aggregate, I find that changes in legislator messaging strategies are borne out in the responses of panelists. That is, it would appear that the measurement has some external validity. Second, the second stage of the model suggests that the effect for change in contact remains on the change in the NPE. As panelists report higher levels of contact,

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<sup>15</sup>For those legislators who had left office by the time of data collection in 2015, I was able to gather information using the *Wayback Machine* from the *Internet Archive* [web.archive.org](http://web.archive.org). With a few exceptions, sufficient captures were available to collect press releases in the period of this study.

their evaluation of the legislator significantly improves. Although the reliability is at the .1 level, the magnitude of the effect is still quite strong. It should also be noted that this is only on a quasi-random sample of districts. Increasing the sample to the full set of panelists should provide the precision necessary to achieve acceptable levels or reliability.

Table 2.9: Instrumental Variable Analysis

	First Stage	Second Stage
$\Delta$ Press Releases	0.017** (0.008)	
$\Delta$ Change in Contact		0.281* (0.160)
White	0.192 (0.172)	-0.249** (0.122)
Political Interest	-0.075 (0.081)	-0.014 (0.072)
Years of Education	0.014 (0.032)	-0.026 (0.023)
Income	-0.006 (0.025)	0.011 (0.018)
Female	-0.263 (0.163)	-0.057 (0.023)
Shared Partisanship	0.082 (0.169)	0.097 (0.133)
Constant	-0.066 (0.426)	0.252 (0.310)
$N$	493	493
$R^2$	0.06	0.08

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

I further examine the relationship between this change in press releases with the change in reported frequency in Table 2.10. Once again, column I confirms that press releases and reported levels of contact have a statistically reliable, positive relationship. That is, some evidence exists that shifts in reported contact are related to changes in real world political activity, particularly when controlling for time-invariant covariates which may be associated with natural shifts in perceptions. This effect, however, is quite small. A shift of 10 press releases, a somewhat sizable difference, changes the level of reported frequency roughly 0.16, or three percent of the entire scale.

Table 2.10: Predicting Change in Reported Frequency

	I	II
$\Delta$ Press Releases	0.016** (0.008)	
Directional Press Release Change		0.255*** (0.063)
White	0.220 (0.162)	0.019 (0.126)
Political Interest	-0.069 (0.079)	-0.122 (0.076)
Years of Education	0.019 (0.031)	0.014 (0.027)
Income	-0.012 (0.024)	-0.015 (0.021)
Female	-0.235 (0.154)	-0.140 (0.118)
Shared Partisanship	0.141 (0.157)	0.207 (0.131)
Constant	-0.107 (0.414)	-0.162 (0.369)
$N$	539	539
$R^2$	0.06	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

As stated previously, the measure for change in press releases possesses high levels of heterogeneity. The magnitude of the effects may be understated by the few members of the House who changed their behavior by one hundred or more press releases. To address this issue, I collapse the change in press release variable to a three point scale where  $-1$  represents a decrease in output,  $0$  represents no change, and  $+1$  reflects an increase in the number of press releases distributed. The results of this model may be found in Column II of Table 2.10. With this estimate, I find stronger support of a relationship between the difference in press releases and the change in the scale of reported frequency. A positive shift in the output of official messages is predicted to increase the perception of contact by roughly one-fourth of a category. Although this study of press releases does not confirm the validity of each panelist's experience, it does provide some evidence that general shifts in the panel survey are related to trends in legislator behavior.

## Chapter 3

# Legislator Effort and Policy Representation

In this chapter, I address competing theories regarding the role policy plays in citizens' evaluations of their legislators. I argue that, even with overwhelming evidence regarding the public's limited abilities to understand the issues, congruence in policy remains an important standard by which citizens evaluate legislators. I provide empirical evidence using panel data that demonstrates changes in beliefs regarding policy congruence are statistically related to changes in overall approval.

I also examine what drives perceptions of policy congruence. Using data that captures citizens' beliefs about the content, frequency, and type of interaction they have with their representatives, I argue that the change in perceptions of policy congruence is not one of persuasion. Representatives do not necessarily hold the power to persuade with their constituents, but rather they create reputations that facilitate citizen projection of their own views onto the legislator.

### 3.1 Elite Behavior and Policy Congruence

While legislators devote much of their home style to non-policy activity, they also use much of their time with constituents to discuss policy. Whether through correspondence, media interviews, or personal interactions, members of Congress are often asked to explain their



roll call votes (Kingdon 1989). As important studies demonstrate, members make voting decisions with their ability to explain their actions to their constituencies in mind (Kingdon 1989, Arnold 1990).

Legislators strategically highlight those policy positions that will provide them the greatest benefits (Hillygus and Shields 2014, Grose, Mahlotra, and Van Houweling 2015). When certainty of the audience's preferences is clear, representatives will provide clear positions, possibly taking the position to an extreme (Grimmer 2013ab). If the legislator believes the constituency has a high degree of uncertainty, the legislator will engage in "waffling" (Mayhew 1974, 63). Mayhew (1974) and Fiorina (1989) note that legislative offices typically draft multiple letters regarding the same piece of legislation: often these letters are subsetting based upon the position of the constituent.

Fenno (1978) expands upon the need to explain Washington behavior. Much of the home style phenomenon consists of the legislator promoting herself on a dimension that is most advantageous for building a positive reputation. For this reason, legislators may avoid the discussion of policy positions because it may alienate a potential supporter. A series of poor policy explanations to voters could "cost them dearly at the polls" in a relatively short time (Fenno 1978, 142). At the same time, however, legislators often maintain the belief that their ability to explain behavior presents an opportunity to win support. They believe they can win votes by explaining effectively and consistently. Reticence or the complete absence of explaining political behavior can lead to negative consequences. (Fenno 1978, 141-143).

Fenno's analysis stands in stark contrast to that of Fiorina and Mayhew. While legislators' presentation of self varies with the audience, explanations of policy stances tend to be consistent. Expecting to find demagoguery and position changing when explaining their roll call voting, Fenno notes that he "found little trace of such explanatory chameleons in my travels. House members give the same explanations for their Washington activity before people who disagree with them as they give before the people who agree with them"

(Fenno 1978, 157). In Fenno's view, consistency is essential to trust, which if earned, makes a legislator's explanations more acceptable and may yield leeway in the acceptance of votes that otherwise would not be accepted. Coming into contact with the legislator's clear positions could lead the citizen to defer to his authority as a policy expert (Fenno 1978, 169, Mansbridge 2003, Gabel and Scheve 2007, Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012, Lenz 2012).

Representation literature has posited two different reactions to policy home style interactions. First, citizens may simply adopt the positions of their representatives. Traditionally, this view finds its origins in the commonly held view that, on average, Americans are uninformed and uninterested in political affairs (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Those at the lower end of the political sophistication spectrum are expected to have little comprehensive ability with respect to elite cues. Thus, they have difficulty adopting the positions of elites (Zaller 1992). Likewise, those at the highest levels of political interest typically have strong, fixed preferences. As a result, they discount new elite information and are unlikely to change their behavior in response to new information (Zaller 1992, Ellis and Stimson 2012).

At the same time, research suggests that many citizens are likely to be influenced by the cues of their legislators. Rather than following the demand-input model (Wahlke 1971), citizens tend to adopt the positions of their legislators as a matter of deference (Lenz 2009, 2012). Additional research finds evidence that these effects of adopting elite positions tend to hold across levels of political attention and information (Bullock 2011). That is, policy adoption and influence of policy home styles should be a relatively uniform phenomenon within the constituency. Finally, Broockman and Butler (2017) provide strong evidence that the effect of legislator position-taking does not vary all that much with the amount of justification provided by the elite. More specifically, citizens appear to react to the incidence of policy explanations more than the type of explanation.

The second type of explanation effect found in the literature concerns persuasion. In this phenomenon, legislators “highlight how their proposals are consistent with the citizens’ preexisting values or by arguing they will accomplish shared goals” (Broockman and Butler 2017, 208). Within this form of communication, legislators appeal to the values of the constituent (Grose, Malhotra, and Van Houweling 2015). If they are able to do successfully, the citizen will update her issue position based upon the new information. In effect, she will change her mind on a policy issue and move her position closer to that of the legislator. Thus, the legislator is able to successfully convert the constituent to his position. Most specifically, this type of persuasion is known as “substantive persuasion” (Minozzi et al. 2015).

While the literature tends to focus on the two main mechanisms of adopting a specific policy position or changing one’s mind on a particular issue, a third process, projection, may be at work. A legislator who is well-liked because of an effective home style may find constituents attributing their own policy positions to him. Frequent positive contacts with a public official appear to be related to projection (Brody and Page 1972, Markus and Converse 1979, Visser 1994, Vecchione et al. 2013). One study argues that attentive representation and a more active home style may work as a form of “attributional persuasion” (Minozzi et al. 2015, see also Bianco 1994). In this process, a legislator makes a good impression by reaching out to the constituent. While testing for experimental evidence of the effects of attending town hall meetings on constituents, Minozzi and his coauthors (2015) attempted to measure substantive and attributional persuasion.<sup>1</sup> They found that listening to town hall meetings with one’s representatives had a significant effect on perceptions of policy congruence, but at the same time the effect was of the same magnitude and direction as positive feelings toward the legislator. That is, just coming into contact with the legislator increased the perception of policy congruence. These effects held for senators and House members. Legislators who are more likely to reach constituents more frequently through

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<sup>1</sup>The authors also measured changes in the political behaviors.

media and maintain larger staffs to help with casework are more likely to build up positive feelings with respect to policy positions (Parker and Goodman 2009, 2013). Evidence of these effects also holds for both House and Senate.

In sum, the literature contends that encountering elite cues regarding the representative's policy position should lead the constituent to develop a more positive feeling regarding how well her own views are being represented by her legislator. From here I put forth the hypothesis:

**Substantive Persuasion/Policy Adoption Hypothesis:** Learning of the legislator's policy positions will be associated with an increase in the constituent's perceived policy congruence.

Furthermore, some evidence suggests that constituents will reward positive perceptions of presentation of self with more favorable beliefs about policy representation. For this reason, I hypothesize that:

**Policy Projection Hypothesis:** Increased frequency of contact, increased levels of contact, and receiving messages of constituency service or the personal background of the member will be associated with an improvement in the constituent's perceived policy congruence.

## 3.2 Policy Congruence and the Evaluations of Legislators

Many studies restrict their focus of representation to the concept of policy congruence. Legislators are evaluated based upon their ability to serve as a "delegate, a subordinate substitute for the those who sent him" to the legislature (Pitkin 1967, 146). This approach suggests that legislators' roll call activities will reflect the will of their constituents (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). In this way, responsive legislators vote the way their constituents would, while less responsive legislators stray from the preferences of their voters (Powell 2004). This

form of an electoral connection is considered the “policy-demand-input” model; the origin of governmental behavior is found within the public’s preferences, or demands, and the outcomes of legislation reflect the supply (Wahlke 1971, Harden 2016). Subsequently, at the aggregate level legislatures which accurately reflect the geographic constituency should produce policy outcomes that match the overall liberal or conservative mood at that time (Erickson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002).

The assumption that policy proximity influences voter choice motivates many representation models (Black 1948, Downs 1957, Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook 1970, etc.). In a unidimensional policy space, voters will choose the candidate that is closest to their policy preferences based on the candidates’ announced positions (Merrill and Grofman, 1999). The spatial model posited by Downs and Black has been extended and tested empirically with varying results (Miller and Stokes 1963, Achen 1978, Powell 2004). Even though voters may lack knowledge or fully formed opinions on each issue that faces Congress, they can still rely upon partisan and ideological cues to accurately identify how well candidates reflect their views (Converse 1964). Still, Ansolabehere and Jones (2010) find that policy representation has an independent effect on constituents’ level of approval of their legislators. It is also the case that the effect increases as the elected official’s visibility increases; the independent effect of perceived policy agreement is much stronger for senators than members of the House (Roberts and Smith 2013). At the aggregate level, research also suggests similar outcomes; those members who deviate from their district’s median vote increase the risk of being unseated in November (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002, Carson et al. 2010).

In an era of strong party identification in government and the electorate, the importance of policy preferences may be overstated. Correlations between citizens’ issue positions and their vote choices could be an artifact of well-sorted voters (Levendusky 2009). In such a scenario, party identification drives the bulk of all political decisions, while ideology is merely an ancillary consideration. Yet, strong evidence suggests that the policy positions of voters

relative to those of their representatives matter. Jessee (2009, 2010) finds that independent of party, voters' preferences influenced choice in the 2008 election. Additionally, Highton (2012) provides empirical support for the argument that voters' support for the president changes with respect to their own policy preferences regardless of party identification. The basic hypothesis of policy congruence applied to legislators is:

**Policy Congruence Hypothesis:** Improvements in the constituent's perceived policy congruence will increase likelihood of approval of the member

### 3.3 Measuring change in policy congruence

I employ a series of first-difference models to evaluate the relationship between perceptions of legislator effort and perceptions of policy congruence. I measure perceptions of policy congruence and the related change in such a variable in a similar manner to the changes in the NPE. In August 2013 and October 2014, panelists were asked to measure perceptions of policy congruence with their House member on a 5-point scale.<sup>2</sup> Response options ranged from 1 ("extremely well") to 5 ("not well at all"). To measure the change in perceptions of congruence from year to year, I subtracted the October 2014 value from the baseline value collected in August 2013. The resulting measure of change in perceptions in policy congruence is a 9-point scale ranging from  $-4$  to  $+4$ .

More than 1500 panelists answered the baseline question in the original wave. Of those subjects, 1230 responded to the same question more than one year later. To be sure, for most panelists, the level of congruence on this scale is fixed. That is, approximately sixty percent of individuals participating in both waves did not change their response. Nonetheless, a sizable portion of the panel did exhibit change in their perception of congruence. Roughly

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<sup>2</sup>Panelists were asked "In your opinion, how well do the following phrases describe Representative X?" and provided a list of attributes that could apply to their respective member of the House. The question wording for this particular characteristic was "He/She shares my views about legislative and policy issues."

thirteen percent of those surveyed twice indicated that their perception of congruence had decreased over the past year. The remaining twenty five percent of subjects responded that they believed their level of congruence with their House member had improved. Among those who improved, a slight majority (approximately thirteen percent of the panel) improved by one point on the 9-point scale. Overall, the change indicates that in the aggregate the panel's perceptions of their policy alignment with their legislators improved from 2013 to 2014 by a non-ignorable amount.

The choice to use change in this 5-point scale for measuring changes in perceptions of policy congruence may seem somewhat unorthodox. One possible way to measure the change in policy perceptions would be to ask panelists to place themselves in the same ideological space as their legislators (Alvarez and Nagler 1995). Subjects would self-identify on the traditional seven-point ideological scale ranging from "very liberal" to "very conservative." At the same time, they would also indicate where they believed their own representative is on the liberal-conservative scale. To measure a perception of congruence, the absolute difference between the two would be derived. This option has two main advantages. First, survey respondents are quite familiar with the concept of the liberal-conservative scale and it exerts little cost on the survey instrument and survey taker. Second, it provides a common space between the elite and the citizen that researchers have struggled to validly identify (Rogowski 2014, Ansolabehere and Jones 2010, Groseclose 2001, Jessee 2009, 2010). By limiting the individual and the legislator to the same space, spatial measures that compare the level distance and the distance of change allow researchers to examine perceptions of congruence with some internal validity.

Still, such a measure has its flaws. Most problematic in using ideological self-identification for measuring the individual's policy preferences is the issue of interpersonal comparability (Shor and Rogowski 2016). As Ellis and Stimson (2012) and others (Claassen, Tucker, and Smith 2015) demonstrate, within the American public, the extent to which the liberal-

conservative scale relates to how citizens prefer the government acts with respect to policy varies quite a great deal. Primarily, the seven-point scale is seen as more symbolic and extra-political for individuals who pay less attention to public affairs. Ellis and Stimson (2012) note that policy preferences relate more to “operational ideology” instead of the “symbolic ideology” captured by the traditional scale. In short, heterogeneity exists in how survey subjects interpret these questions (Conover and Feldman 1982, Brady 1985).

Another approach that might capture policy representation is placing citizens and elites within the same dimensional space using responses to questions regarding issue positions. Once citizens’ responses can be captured with survey data, researchers use a variety of methods to “bridge” the space between the public and elites using various legislator measures, such as roll call votes (Clinton 2006) or responses to candidate surveys, such as Project Vote Smart (Shor and McCarty 2011). Traditionally, findings using this method have been mixed. While Miller and Stokes (1963) and Converse (1964) found that the level of congruence varied by issue, more recent findings have provided encouragement to the level of responsiveness between elites and the public.<sup>3</sup> For example, many find that ideal point estimation on a few key policy questions can create a common space between legislators and the populace (Ansolabhere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008, Jessee 2009, 2010, 2012, Bafumi and Herron 2010).

For the purpose of this study, however, these approaches also present significant limitations. First, citizens still make mistakes when responding to policy preference questions, particularly when they are asked to provide opinions on an extensive battery of policy items, many of which they may prove to be the result of weak or unformed preferences (Broockman 2016). Second, measures of ideology derived from scaling extensive batteries do not reflect ideological divergence or extremity accurately. Rather, these measures tend to present a form of ideological constraint or consistency (Broockman 2016). They identify which sub-

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<sup>3</sup>To be sure, the great progress made in the area of statistical methods and measurement are partially responsible for these findings.



jects provide conservative or liberal responses more often than not, but they do not correctly demonstrate to what extent an individual is a conservative or a liberal. In this way, an ideologically cohesive party of elites would be difficult to distinguish from an ideologically extreme one. Finally, this study does not intend to measure responsiveness, but rather it is interested in how citizens perceive congruence. Therefore, traditional models of congruence are insufficient for this analysis.

For the previous reasons, I have chosen to use the more direct measure of perceived policy congruence in this analysis. Nonetheless, these imperfect measures still provide the potential to check the validity of the current measure. Within TAPS, panelists were asked to place themselves and their federal legislators on the seven-point ideological scale.<sup>4</sup> Roughly half of the panelists who were able to do so indicated that they were within one point of their House member. Comparatively, only sixteen percent of panelists believed their legislator represented their policy views “extremely well” or “very well” on the five-point scale. This result suggests the relationship between the seven point scale and my measure is imperfect. Yet, a correlation between the two variables, while not dismissing the flaws of the liberal-conservative scale for my purposes, still demonstrates some reliability. The inter-variable correlation between the five and 7-point scales is somewhat high at .51. Similar to the findings of Ellis and Stimson (2012), I find that the relationship between symbolic ideological congruence and directly asking about policy congruence is higher for those panelists who pay the most attention to politics. That is, among the most interested panelists (those indicating they are “very interested” in politics and public affairs), the correlation between the two is

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<sup>4</sup>These comparisons are between the August 2013 wave and the September 2014 wave of TAPS. While citizens were asked to identify the ideological placement of elites and themselves in October 2014, it was done so within a campaign context. That is, only those members of the House and Senate who were running for re-election were measured. This change led to a certain amount of missingness for comparisons of the change measure.

above .6, while among those who pay attention to politics fleetingly (those indicating they are at most “slightly interested”), the correlation is below .4.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, panelists were asked to identify how well their members of Congress represent their policy positions on a series of political issues. Provided with a seventeen item battery, panelists identified their level of agreement with their House member on each issue realm on a five point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).<sup>6</sup> To obtain a comprehensive measure of perceived policy congruence with the House member, I first ran a factor analysis on the seventeen items. The results of this analysis suggested that panelists’ views of congruence with their House members loaded well onto the first factor. The first eigenvalue was above 11, while that of the second was below .5. Additionally, the first factor explained .94 of the variance in the individual items. All items loaded onto the first factor at a rate above .6, while the uniqueness values of each were well below .5, indicating that for each item, the first factor explained more than half of the variance.

To compare these results to the five-point measure of congruence, I derived the first factor scores for each panelist. These scores had a mean of 0 with a standard deviation of .99 and ranged from  $-2.8$ , suggesting very little agreement, to  $+2.4$ , indicating very high levels of agreement across many issues. The correlation between these two variables was approximately .51, much similar to that of the liberal-conservative seven-point scale. Similarly to those comparisons, the inter-variable correlations for the most interested in politics was well above .6 and for those least interested, the values were well below .4. As

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<sup>5</sup>For the purposes of statistical power, those indicating they were “not interested at all” were pooled with those “slightly interested.” The majority of those “not interested at all” were unable to locate their House member on the seven point scale. Additionally, those in the group “somewhat interested” displayed a correlation of .41, further confirming the unreliability between the liberal-conservative scale and perceptions of policy congruence.

<sup>6</sup>The exact question wording was “Indicate how much you agree with Representative X on each of the following issues.” The seventeen issue realms were: abortion, the budget deficit, the cost of living, crime, fuel/gas/oil prices, the economy in general, education, the environment, healthcare, unemployment, immigration, aid to foreign countries, moral decline, national security, poverty, taxes, and the war in Afghanistan. Data were gathered in November 2013.

one might expect, the correlation was much better for the more attentive panelists. This result provides some face validity to the measure.<sup>7</sup>

### **3.3.1 Modeling change in perceived policy congruence**

To test the relationship between legislator effort and perceptions of policy congruence, I use a model similar to that measuring the relationship between non-policy perceptions and perceptions of the legislator. In this model, I treat the change in perceptions of policy congruence as a continuous outcome variable. For this reason, I have chosen to estimate the model using ordinary least squares regression. Again, in a similar manner to the models estimating change in the NPE, I employ a series of first-difference explanatory variables to predict changes in perceptions of policy. For the most part, these variables are identical to those used in the previous model. That is, I use variables to gauge how perceptions of the House member's frequency of contact, level of contact, and content of contact moved from 2013 to 2014.

Unique to this model is the inclusion of an explanatory variable that identifies the panelist hearing about their legislator's policy positions. In both waves, panelists were asked about the content of their interactions with House member information, conditional on indicating an occurrence of contact with the legislator. Two of these variables related to the policy positions and ideological stances of the representative. These variables included "votes or positions taken by Representative X" and "how liberal or conservative Representative X is." Responses to these questions over the duration of this study were collapsed into a dichotomous variable. If the panelist responded that she did not hear anything regarding these two variables in 2013, but she indicates that she did hear about them in 2014, she is coded as 1. All other instances of these variables are coded as 0.

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<sup>7</sup>While it would be useful to measure the change in this scale of perceived agreement, the questions were unfortunately only asked once.

The model estimated using ordinary least squares regression may be written more formally as:

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha + \beta \Delta \mathbf{X}_i + \epsilon \quad (3.1)$$

where  $\Delta y_i$  represents the change in each panelist's perception of policy congruence with their representative.  $\Delta \mathbf{X}_i$  is a matrix that contains the set of variables that relate to changes in each panelist's exposure to the differing levels and types of contact with their legislator.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to testing the importance of changes in legislator effort in relation to changes in perceptions of policy congruence, I also hypothesize that these beliefs are significantly related to changes in overall approval. That is, citizens' beliefs about policy representation matter with respect to overall evaluations. The second outcome variable is the change the constituent experiences in her overall evaluation of her legislator. Using ordinary least squares, I am able to estimate the first difference in this evaluation variable in relation to the change in the non-policy evaluation of the elected official:

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha + \beta \Delta \mathbf{x}_i + \epsilon \quad (3.2)$$

The vector  $y_i$  represents the change in the overall level of approval each panelist has for her member of the House of Representatives on a five-point scale. Within this model, the explanatory variable is the dependent variable from the previous analysis. Here,  $\mathbf{x}_i$  is a vector that represents the change in each panelist's perception of policy congruence with

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<sup>8</sup>Models were also estimated using the time-invariant controls race (a five category nominal variable), years of education, political interest, income, sex, and a dichotomous indicator for shared partisanship. Results with these covariates included provided identical statistical inferences as the models shown here. All of the controls exhibited unreliable or weak effects on the change in the perceptions of policy congruence. The one exception was the covariate of shared partisanship. That is, panelists who shared their partisanship with the legislator significantly improved their perception of congruence from wave 1 to wave 2. This finding is in line with Gelman and King (1993). Still, the main findings' magnitude and reliability hold.

their member of the House. Thus, this model tests the relationship the change in policy has with the change in overall approval.

### 3.4 Findings

Results from these analyses indicate a strong relationship between perceptions of legislator effort and changes in how citizens view their policy views are represented. Table 3.1 displays the results of the first policy regression. The dependent variable in these estimates is the change from 2013 to 2014 in perceived policy congruence on the five-point scale. Positive values reflect an improvement in beliefs about policy representation. Within the first column, the results indicate that exposure to information regarding the House member's legislative record or ideological position have a positive effect on the perceptions of policy representation. This effect, while somewhat large, lacks the precision to consider it significant. This simplified model presents evidence of policy-based home styles influencing evaluations of the legislator, but that evidence is hardly conclusive.

Evidence of projection in policy positions may be found in columns 2 through 4. First, I find mixed support for the relationship between non-policy information improving the relative positioning between the elite and the citizen. The estimate for the effect of service awareness is quite weak and demonstrates a large degree of uncertainty. At the same time, becoming aware of the personal background or character of the House member is related to a significant, positive effect on the change in policy perceptions. The predicted effect of coming into contact with this content is associated with a predicted improvement of a one-quarter category.

Stronger evidence of projection in policy congruence may be found in column 3. Increasing the level of contact is significantly and positively related to change in the outcome variable. The model predicts that a one unit increase in the closest proximity of contact

corresponds to improvement of .17 on the five point scale. To better conceptualize this phenomenon, consider the citizen who had no contact with their legislator when data were gathered in wave 1, but by the data gathering process in 2014 had received representative disseminated material, such as a phone call or franked mail. This corresponds to a change of 2 in the variable.<sup>9</sup> Such a prediction corresponds to a net increase of about one-third of a category of approval.

Finally, change in the perceptions of frequency of contact demonstrate highly reliable and substantive effects with respect to the change in the outcome variable. The results indicate that a one unit change in frequency over the course of the year corresponds with a change of approximately .15 in beliefs about the degree to which the legislator represents the citizen's policy views. To put this change into context, consider a citizen who experienced hearing information about their member of the House a few times a year in August 2013, but increased their level of response to a few times a month in 2014. This change represents movement of two categories in the explanatory scale. The model predicts that this individual will move their level of perceived congruence by roughly .3 on the scale. Likewise, decreasing contact with the legislator from approximately bimonthly to biweekly predicts a similar drop in the belief of congruence.<sup>10</sup> To further elucidate this change, the model predicts that one out of every three subjects who experienced this change in perception of contact would change their response on the scale by one category, or twenty percent of the entire scale. That is, these views of legislator effort, which on their face have little to do with policy or ideology, have serious implications for the extent to which citizens believe their preferences are being represented. It would appear that legislators' attentiveness expands beyond the the traditional conceptions of policy responsiveness.

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<sup>9</sup>While not the modal observed behavior, approximately fifteen percent of the panelists exhibited change of 2 or more categories.

<sup>10</sup>A little more than one-fifth of the panelists participating in both waves of the study experienced an absolute change of at least two categories. Of the entire sample in both periods, approximately nine percent exhibited the change from bimonthly to biweekly or biweekly to bimonthly.

When controlling for each item in the matrix of legislator effort perceptions, I still find weak support that hearing about elites' policy positions influences citizens' relative positioning. While the effect is positive and of a relatively similar magnitude to the simplified model, the precision worsens. This finding undergirds the notion that little persuasion occurs between legislators and elites over a long period of time. Further strengthening the idea that this is a projection phenomenon, I find stronger evidence suggesting the changes in the level of contact and the frequency of contact lead citizens to believe they are closer to their representatives on the policy dimension. The frequency effect for this less parsimonious model is quite similar to that of column IV. The significance level drops for the level of contact estimate, but it remains at a level of acceptable reliability. Finally, the effect for changes in character awareness remain positive and of a somewhat substantive magnitude, but the reliability is weakened.

Table 3.1: Predicting Change in Perceived Policy Congruence

	I	II	III	IV	V
$\Delta$ Policy Awareness	0.095 (0.086)				0.098 (0.099)
$\Delta$ Service Awareness		0.055 (0.117)			-0.057 (0.135)
$\Delta$ Character Awareness		0.250*** (0.091)			0.153* (0.090)
$\Delta$ Level of Contact			0.173*** (0.034)		0.099** (0.039)
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact				0.146*** (0.022)	0.109*** (0.026)
Constant	0.215*** (0.033)	0.192*** (0.033)	0.212*** (0.030)	0.198*** (0.030)	0.163*** (0.047)
$N$	1,220	1,220	1,220	1,220	1,220
$R^2$	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

The lack of a perfect bridging method between citizen and House member makes it difficult to discriminate between projection and persuasion. Putting citizens in the same space as legislators poses a great challenge. Identifying change in citizens' positions to those

of their representatives presents even further obstacles. Yet, for the purpose of this project it is not necessary for citizens to be in the same policy space to understand if their preferences move in response to contact with the legislator. Although I cannot accurately identify if panelists move closer to their legislators in the same ideological space, I do have the ability to identify if perceptions of contact with the legislator correspond to changes in opinion regarding public policy.

If policy based home styles are successfully persuasive, it should be the case that the panel data exhibit significant changes in the citizen's policy preferences. I take advantage of repeated policy preference batteries asked in TAPS in May 2013 and September 2014.<sup>11</sup> These batteries include thirteen questions gauging panelists' opinions on salient political issues.<sup>12</sup> Each item includes a statement with which the panelist provides her level of agreement on a five-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (-2) to "strongly agree" (+2).

An intrawave measure of operational ideology is derived by conducting an exploratory factor analysis on the items. The first factor's eigenvalue in each wave provide strong evidence of unidimensionality of these policy preferences. Both values are well above five, with the second factor's eigenvalue well below one. Each first factor accounted for more than .96 of the variance in the items. Furthermore, loadings for each item were above .50. Operational Ideology scores represented the predicted value of each panelist's first dimensional score. To obtain a measure of change in policy preferences, each wave's first dimension scores were standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. The change operationalized for the models is measured by the absolute difference from wave one to wave two.

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<sup>11</sup>The same battery was asked in the spring of 2014. The results using that month as the baseline hold.

<sup>12</sup>The items include opinions on abortion, education spending, taxes, gay marriage, social security privatization, regulation of business, gun control, global warming, Medicaid expansion, Obamacare, immigration reform, raising the minimum wage, and affirmative action.



Across time, these measures display remarkable stability in the aggregate. Figure 3.4 displays the collapsed preferences to categories of “Agree,” “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” and “Disagree.” It is clear that over six waves (a four year period), the aggregate levels of opinion are relatively fixed and exhibit very little change. Such a finding suggests that longitudinal individual opinion is quite limited. Further evidence of this can be found in the correlation between the standardized scores of the two waves of interest for this study, seventeen and thirty-four. The standardized values of these operational ideologies correlate at the very high value of 0.94. Intra-item inter-wave correlations provide more reasons to believe that individual change is at most restricted. Among these thirteen items, the inter-wave correlations are at least 0.65 for each policy statement.<sup>13</sup> It is possible, although admittedly unlikely considering few overall trends in Figure 3.4, that such correlations do not capture large, unidirectional shifts in preferences among individuals. For this reason, it is necessary to examine systematic change at the panelist level.

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<sup>13</sup>The highest inter-wave correlation is 0.83 for opinions regarding states’ recognition of gay marriage. The lowest correlation (0.66) related to federal initiation of greater affirmative action programs.

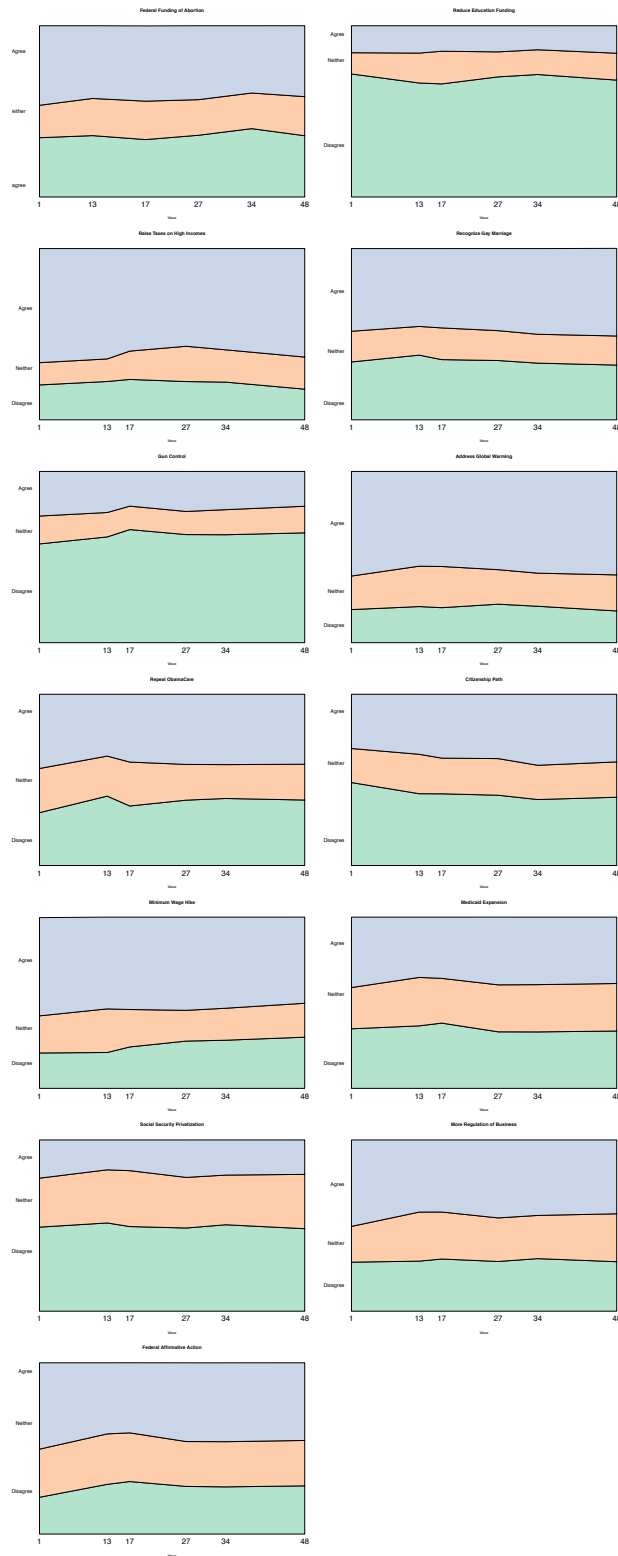


Figure 3.1: Aggregate Policy Preferences

If perceptions of contact with legislators correspond to opinion change, it should be the case that shifts in the explanatory variable measuring exposure to home style would relate to changes in the policy preferences of the citizen. Thus, I have chosen to regress absolute changes in these operational ideology scores on changes in the absolute difference in perceptions of the frequency with which the panelist receives contact with the House member. While this measure does not perfectly identify if the panelist is moving closer to the legislator's true positions, it does capture movement in opinion that would be necessary for persuasion to occur. The results of this exercise may be found in Table 3.2.

Column I shows that instances of change in the frequency of contact correspond to changes in the stability of the panelist's policy preferences. This is what would be expected if actual persuasion were occurring. More directly, the greater the increase, or decrease, in contact from 2013 to 2014, the greater the predicted change in operational liberalism among the subject. This change is predicted in either direction so as to identify opinions that may shift due to legislator neglect. While this effect is positive, it is not very reliable. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that any real position changes are occurring in response to contact from legislators.<sup>14</sup>

Time invariant covariates were added to the model in column II to control for factors that may be associated with natural instability in policy preferences. This model first reveals that certain variables predict significant change in the outcome variable. For example, more educated panelists display greater interwave stability than those less educated. Additionally, White panelists displayed significantly more stability between 2013 and 2014 than those panelists who identified as either Black or Hispanic. I also find that Republicans demonstrate slightly more movement between the waves than Democrats. This model also provides modest evidence that panelists who change their perception of contact changed their policy

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<sup>14</sup>A similar model was conducted using the exposure to policy positions of the legislator. The estimated effects were quite minimal and of an insufficient precision.

opinions more than those who did not. The effect of this coefficient is estimated to be positive and significant at the 0.90 level. It must be noted, however, that this change is of almost no substantive magnitude. The scales of operational ideology for both waves range from  $-2.4$  to  $+2.0$ . Thus, even the rare maximum change of four units in this main explanatory variable only corresponds to a difference of 0.06 on the ideological scale. Since this predicted movement only represents about one percent of the entire ideological scale and the effect itself is only slightly significant, it is difficult to conclude that persuasion occurs with this sample of panelists.

Table 3.2: Predicting Change in Policy Preferences

	I	II
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact	0.011 (0.007)	0.012* (0.007)
Years of Education		-0.014*** (0.004)
7-Point Party ID (7= Strong Rep.)		0.008** (0.003)
Black, Non-Hispanic		0.064** (0.027)
Hispanic		0.072*** (0.023)
Other, Non-Hispanic		0.032 (0.055)
2+ Race, Non-Hispanic		-0.006 (0.037)
Political Interest		-0.007 (0.009)
Income		0.002 (0.002)
Female		-0.016 (0.014)
Constant	0.253*** (0.009)	0.353*** (0.054)
$N$	1,079	993
$R^2$	0.01	0.04

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

Finally, it is necessary to examine how change in perceptions of policy congruence are related to changes in overall approval. That is, I am interested in determining if citizens'

policy perceptions play a role in how they evaluate their representatives in Congress. Table 3.3 provides the results of this model. Column I displays a model including all panelists participating in both waves. This estimate provides strong support that the individual's beliefs about how well their representative puts forth their own opinions in Washington matters. The effect is of a relatively large magnitude, positive, and statistically significant. If a panelist were to move their perception of congruence by two categories on the five point scale it would correspond to more than two-fifths of a category on the five-category approval measure. Considering the limited scope of the approval scale, such a predicted movement is quite large.

This movement is similar, but somewhat weaker for those members of the same party. As column II shows, copartisans are expected to reward those legislators who they believe improve their level of representation over the course of the year. This effect is predicted to be only about seventy percent of the overall effect. For those who are of the opposite party or independent, the effect is stronger in the positive direction. That is, members of the House who are not aligned by partisanship can make greater gains in support by improving their relative positioning with a voter. As the model predicts, a two category improvement in the right hand side of the model corresponds to a predicted change of almost one-half a category in the approval scale. That movement represents ten percent of the entire possible values.

It is worth remembering that these effects for changes in policy congruence continue to have a significant, positive effect on changes in approval even when controlling for changes in the NPE. These results bolster the argument that policy perceptions play a large role in citizens' evaluations of their legislators, even in a world with polarized parties. As the results in Table 3.3 indicate, members of the same party can choose to punish or reward their representatives for perceptions of straying from their own personal preferences.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>15</sup>To be sure, approximately fifteen percent of copartisans developed worse feelings toward their House members, while twenty percent of non-aligned panelists did so.

this phenomenon also occurs when members who do not belong to the same party of the panelist suffer with respect to policy perceptions. In short, policy congruence serves as a tool for legislators to reach large swaths of citizens, regardless of partisanship.

Table 3.3: Predicting Change in Legislator Approval with Change in Policy Perceptions

	All	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
$\Delta$ Perceived Congruence	0.216*** (0.050)	0.154*** (0.042)	0.247*** (0.040)
Constant	0.050 (0.041)	0.139** (0.054)	0.001 (0.038)
<i>N</i>	1,165	417	728
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.03	0.05

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

### 3.5 Conclusion

Legislators go to great lengths to establish themselves on a policy dimension of representation. In response, political scientists have provided insight into how legislators explain their roll call voting behaviors to their constituents. This chapter attempted to expand the discipline’s understanding of the home style phenomenon. Rather than limiting the scope of study to the legislators, I measured changes in citizens’ perceptions of their legislators home styles and the subsequent changes in their perceptions of ideological agreement. Confirming the projection hypothesis, positive changes in the perceptions of the home style or legislator effort were accompanied with more favorable beliefs regarding the distance between the elite and the citizen. Perhaps surprisingly, the effect of policy specific information lacked the precision to conclude that explanations themselves are effective in bridging the ideological gap. While evidence exists that this policy home style was effective in creating a connection, it

could not be distinguished from the basic aspects of a traditional presentation of self. Thus, the persuasion or policy adoption hypothesis could not be confirmed. Further circumstantial exploration of the same panelists' policy positions and their stability undercut the notion that persuasion occurred.

Although these findings regarding the development of policy representation beliefs are essential on their own, they lack importance if they are divorced from the overall evaluation. In this chapter I was able to determine that changes in policy representation possess significant and substantive effects on changes in the perception of the legislator. Additionally, these changes were strong for members of the same party and those who did not share identification with the legislator. In short, policy perceptions matter a great deal in the representational relationship.

To be sure, there are deficiencies in the measure of policy awareness. The way in which this measure was collected limits the tone of the information received about the policy perceptions. Research shows that mixed messages regarding an elite's position can provide an ambiguous effect (Chong and Druckman 2007). Nonetheless, the findings within this section provide clear evidence that the home style process maintains an effective tool for legislators to create a connection on the policy dimension of representation with their legislators. Those representatives who are able to successfully connect with their voters should be rewarded with higher levels of approval.



## 3.6 Appendix: The Relationship Between Policy and Non-Policy Representation

### 3.6.1 Cognitive and Affective Origins of Attitudes

Foundational models of voting behavior often assume the individual is a rational actor. She wants to maximize her utility in the policy space. To achieve this end, she processes the state of the world and her representative's behavior (Downs 1957, Fiorina 1981, Kiewiet 1983). The citizen then makes an informed decision regarding her support for the incumbent. Many have been critical of this approach to the representational relationship for its failure to address the emotional components of politics (Abelson 1963, Conover and Feldman 1986, Kinder 1994, Jost et al. 2003, Lodge and Taber 2005). Objections to the rational model argue that emotion biases the ways in which people process information (Lodge and Taber 2005, Redlawsk 2006). The preferences that survey respondents provide are not motivated by reason alone. Feelings and affect drive attitudes towards policy. and political actors.

Studies often identify two components of political attitudes: the cognitive and the affective (which is sometimes referred to as the emotional) (Conover and Feldman 1986, Ottati, Steenbergem, and Riggle 1992, Brader 2005, Gross 2008). The former typically “involves the representation knowledge and the processes involved in acquiring such information” (Conover and Feldman 1986, 51). Within the representational relationship, one can consider cognition as constituents appraising the policy positions of their legislators and identifying those that best fit their own ideal preferences. The affective component of attitudes consists of “feelings, moods, and emotions” (Conover and Feldman 1986, 51).

In their most basic form, cognition and affect are theorized to be independent of each other (Fiske and Taylor 1984). Affect originates from immediate responses to external political stimuli. Yet, others argue that the two components are interlinked (Ottati, Steenbergem, and

Riggle 1993, Marcus et al. 2000, Lodge and Taber 2000, Taber and Lodge 2001, Lodge and Taber 2005). Affect towards political actors or outcomes situates itself within the individual's long term memory (Lodge and Taber 2005). In this way, it can influence the cognitive process of attitude development. Elites attempt to take advantage of this linkage by appealing to emotion or affect to change constituents' ways of thinking. If successful, the elites hope to persuade constituents to win support.

Elite cues often appeal to the emotions of voters rather than the cognitive abilities. By using the proper frame, an emotional appeal can engender support for the elite and relatedly influence the opinion of the voter (Jacoby 2000, Brewer 2001, Druckman 2001). Different types of emotional appeals can lead citizens to make policy judgments that may not necessarily be in line with their predispositions (Brader 2005). Legislators may make use of this process through their home styles. They manipulate information in order to make themselves seem like "one of the people" rather than present nuanced policy platforms. To the constituent, an external stimulus of warmth and compassion may influence how the citizen feels about the policy platform of the elite in relation to their own preferences. Such a mechanism is at play when legislators develop leeway with their constituencies.

### **3.6.2 Non-Policy Evaluation Producing Leeway**

In many ways, this concept of interwoven policy and non-policy responsiveness is related to the notion of leeway. Legislators appeal to the emotions of their constituents with their qualifications, identity, and empathy through their presentations of self. Once trust has been established through these three qualities, the citizen is more likely to believe the representative has her best interests in mind during roll call voting (Fenno 1978, 151, Bianco 1994). In this way, the concept of non-policy representation directly effects how the constituent approaches the relationship. Being less informed about the intricacies of policy, citizens defer to the judgment of the representative if trust has been cultivated sufficiently.

With trust, the legislator is able to freely, at least to a point, pursue her own policy goals that may not align with those of the constituent. The mechanism by which this takes place can occur in two ways. First, once the constituent develops a positive impression of the legislator on a non-policy dimension, she can discount the policy costs for which the legislator strays from her own ideal point in the ideological spectrum. This discounting can only occur up to a certain limit, but the constituent will accept a reasonable amount of divergence from a representative she trusts (Ashworth and Bueno De Mesquita 2006). Second, as discussed previously, and perhaps more common with respect to personal vote cultivation, non-policy reputations are used to change the dimension of evaluation (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, Fiorina 1989, Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012, Wichowsky 2012, Harden 2016). The citizen's beliefs about policy outcomes are important, but she may associate the legislator with an alternative dimension given the elite's positive (or negative) reputation in the non-policy realm. In this way, the legislator is provided more leeway to behave contrary to the constituent's own preferences because her evaluation depends less on certain roll call votes (Arnold 1990).

Most narratives of leeway tend to focus on an economical relationship between the voter and the representative. The legislator strays from dyadic alignment but must compensate the constituent through a non-policy benefit. Implicit in this argument of trust providing leeway is the assumption that the constituent is aware of the legislator's divergence. That is, the divergence from the ideal point is seen as acceptable because the constituent's benefit on the non-policy dimension exceeds or meets what she would receive from a replacement legislator. This approach to the relationship between non-policy and policy representation undersells the importance of the constituent's lack of policy information and the authoritative nature of a legislator's position with respect to legislation (Fenno 1978, Grose, Malhotra, and Van Houweling 2015, Butler and Broockman 2017). Rather than acknowledge the distance on an ideological dimension, the constituent may come to believe that the legislator represents

her preferences more closely as a result of the elite's sterling non-policy reputation. In this way, a strong, or improved, non-policy evaluation would lead directly to an improvement in the perception of policy congruence.

At the same time, the direction of the relationship between non-policy and policy representation perceptions is not necessarily clear. The classical home style approach to leeway consists legislators engaging in tactics to stray from their districts' preferences (Fenno 1978, Arnold 1990). In the modern polarized environment, this causal mechanism may be reversed. At the elite level, legislators of both parties may be perceived as ideologues; any leeway they are able to craft with a more moderate constituent will be discounted due to pre-existing perceptions of great divergence (Bafumi and Herron 2010, Merrill, Brunell, and Grofman 2016, Carson et al. 2016). At the constituent level, many argue that Americans are currently at their highest levels of ideological polarization in recent history (Abramowitz 2008, Abramowitz 2010). The importance of partisanship in House voting continues to rise (Bartels 2000) and split ticket voting continues to decline (Jacobson and Carson 2015). While elite and mass polarization phenomena may contribute to the irrelevancy of the non-policy dimension, Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) note that affective polarization is a serious consequence to the polarized world. Shared policy preferences or other common political attributes could work antecedently to social goodwill (Tajfel et al. 1971). Due to a common bond of partisanship or ideology, constituents may believe that those who are unlike them on a policy dimension are deficient on a non-policy dimension (Huber and Malhotra 2016, Rogowski et al. 2017). In this way, if legislators improve their perceived policy congruence with their constituents, they may improve their non-policy evaluation.

To further explore the relationship between the non-policy and policy representation, I employ a non-recursive path model using a two stage least squares structural equation approach. In such a model I estimate the effects of the home style variables on both perceived policy congruence and the NPE simultaneously. For the sake of parsimony, I have chosen

to estimate the model using a reduced form of previous models. What is unique about the non-recursive model in this analysis is that the change in perceived policy congruence is regressed onto the change in the NPE. Similarly, the observed level of change in the NPE is regressed onto the observed change in perceptions of policy congruence.

The results of this model may be found in Table 3.4. Within the first column, much like the findings of the previous analysis, improvements in the level of contact of interaction with the legislator are associated with positive shifts in the NPE. Likewise, with respect to the change in policy congruence, significant positive changes in the frequency with which the constituent hears information about their member of the House is associated with an improvement in the perception of policy representation. The results also indicate that policy information corresponds to a positive, but less precise effect on the perception of policy congruence.

Table 3.4: Non-Recursive Path Model, Two-Stage Least Squares

	$\Delta$ <i>Non-Policy Evaluation</i>	$\Delta$ <i>Policy Congruence</i>
Intercept	-0.115 (0.070)	0.197* (0.028)
$\Delta$ Frequency	0.021 (0.043)	0.069* (0.030)
$\Delta$ Policy Awareness		0.090 (0.072)
$\Delta$ Level of Contact	0.129* (0.046)	
$\Delta$ Policy Congruence	0.429 (0.364)	
$\Delta$ Non Policy Evaluation		0.629* (0.182)
RMSE	0.532	0.836
F-Statistic	63.26*	26.28*
Pseudo $R^2$	0.456	0.382
$N$	1117	1117

The \* indicates coefficients significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

Of most interest to this analysis are the non-recursive findings identifying the relationship between the change in the NPE and the change in perceived policy congruence. With respect to a change in policy congruence, the model predicts that for panelists who improve their perception of policy representation, the change in the NPE should improve quite substantively. This predicted movement, however, is quite imprecise. For the most part, the polarized political approach to the relationship between the non-policy dimension and policy dimension holds. A legislator improving her policy proximity with a constituent should be seen more favorably on a non-policy dimension. This lack of precision, however, seems to indicate that insufficient evidence exists to conclude that, when controlling for the non-recursive relationship between the two measures, policy drives legislators' non-policy reputations.<sup>16</sup>

Within column 2, I find strong evidence for the more traditional leeway argument. That is, improvements in the non-policy dimension of representation lead to improvements in the constituent's policy perceptions. The predicted effect for this relationship is not only statistically significant, but the predicted magnitude is quite substantive. Consider that one standard deviation in change of the NPE is approximately 0.75 on the constructed scales. This change corresponds to nearly 0.5 change in the scale of perceived policy congruence. More plainly, one standard deviation difference in the variable of interest represents a ten percent change in the total scale of policy congruence.

The theoretical implications of these findings suggest that legislators who successfully cultivate a personal vote make great strides on a policy dimension as well as a personal one. In this way, I find strong evidence that the two dimensions of representation do not exist in mutually exclusive vacuums. While this approach to the connection between the two dimensions does not measure leeway per se, its direction speaks to the phenomenon that

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<sup>16</sup>In many ways, this confirms the findings of Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) that affect is driven more by partisanship than ideology and policy.

is typically articulated (Fenno 1978, Bianco 1994). Legislators build a strong non-policy reputation and their perceptions on a policy dimension improve.

### 3.6.3 Extending the Relationship to the Senate

I also extend this modeling strategy to test the relationships with constituents and their senators.<sup>17</sup> The first column of Table 3.5 presents the results of estimating effects on changes in the NPE. I find that, unlike the relationship among constituents and House members, changes in perceptions of policy congruence are significantly related to changes in non-policy affect. A senator who successfully improves her image of policy representation is likely to improve on the constituent's non-policy dimension. It should be noted that this effect not only has greater reliability, but its magnitude is substantively greater than that of the House member model. Here, the predicted coefficient is more than double the size of the previous estimate.

From this result, it appears that senators' policy standing with their voters plays a more prominent role in the role of representation. Whereas policy congruence was an unreliable predictor of feelings towards the House member on the non-policy dimension, here beliefs about congruence play a more important role in generating personalistic goodwill. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this finding makes some intuitive sense. Senators play a more prominent role in the policymaking process. It may be the case that citizens respond to structural forces that gear them towards associating policy more closely with their senators. This concept will be further explored in the following chapter.

The second column provides the results in predicting changes in beliefs of perceptions of policy congruence. Within this model, I find that panelists behave in a manner more

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<sup>17</sup>In this model I “stack” the data so that each panelist is in the model twice. While analyses of perceptions of senators in the following chapter will similarly stack, the non-recursive path model prohibits the clustering of standard errors on panelist. While this may lead to an estimation of imprecision, the limit of each panelist only being in the model twice limits estimation concerns.

Table 3.5: Non-Recursive Path Model, Two-Stage Least Squares, Senate

	$\Delta$ <i>Non-Policy Evaluation</i>	$\Delta$ <i>Policy Congruence</i>
Intercept	-0.070 (0.026)	0.056* (0.018)
$\Delta$ Frequency	0.004 (0.011)	0.005 (0.009)
$\Delta$ Policy Awareness		0.046 (0.041)
$\Delta$ Level of Contact	0.043 (0.032)	
$\Delta$ Policy Congruence	0.959* (0.284)	
$\Delta$ Non Policy Evaluation		0.606* (0.182)
RMSE	0.621	0.535
F-Statistic	15.16*	11.41*
Pseudo $R^2$	0.215	0.302
$N$	1117	1117

The \* indicates coefficients significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

in line with the evaluation of House members. Changes in the NPE are significantly and positively related to changes in movement along a policy dimension. That is, an improvement in perceptions of the personal qualities of the senator results in the panelist believing the elite more closely represents her opinions in Congress. In this way, senators may also engage in the leeway process. By creating or improving the reputation as an upstanding person, constituents may believe their preferences are better represented in the legislature.

Comparing this effect with that of the House model provides less insight. While the Senate effect is weaker than that of the House, it is difficult to conclude that House members' extra-policy reputations play a more dominant role in the evaluation process. The estimates for these two effects are essentially the same. Still, the more personalistic nature of the House member-constituent relationship may lend itself to such a prioritization. To further explore this process, I discuss the differences (and, as this model demonstrates, the similarities) between perceptions of House and Senate representation.



# Chapter 4

## Differences between House and Senate Representation

### 4.1 Differences between House and Senate Home Styles

The framers believed the legislative branch had the potential for tyranny. Fearing the arbitrary power of a democratically elected body, they constructed two houses in order to serve as checks on one another: the House and the Senate (*Federalist* 51, 63). Until the early part of the 20th century, senators and House members were elected in different ways: House members by popular election and senators by state legislatures. By answering to different constituencies than the general public, the incentive structure was weaker for senators to be service providers or adhere to their district's median (Baker 2001, Aldrich 1995, Kernell 1977). Nonetheless, there was still evidence of an electoral connection in the 19th century (Bianco et al. 1996, Schiller 2006). Still, with the passage of the Seventeenth Amendment, research suggests that the responsive nature of senators improved on both a policy and non-policy dimension (Bernhard and Sala 2006, Meinke 2008, Gailmard and Jenkins 2009, Finocchiaro and Jenkins 2015)

Electoral mechanisms between the chambers have converged, but structural differences still exist. These dissimilarities have the potential to produce differences in behavior between senators and House members, as well as within-citizen priorities between expectations and

perceptions of the two sets of legislators. In his expansion of the theory of home style to the Senate, Fenno identifies two major differences between senators and House members that lead to distinctly unique presentations of self: media coverage and accessibility (1982).

#### 4.1.1 Media Coverage

The first difference between the two types of legislators is their dependence upon media. Both provide serious time and effort to attract favorable media coverage. While both greatly desire coverage, Fenno notes the inequality in media demand from the two. On average, local news media prefer to cover senators over House members. The roots of this prioritization are partly structural; barring extraneous events, the minimum period of representation for a senator is longer. Reporters risk less in opportunity costs by developing a relationship with members of the Senate. Furthermore, the size of the chamber presents greater opportunity for the senator to stand out. Senators face much less competition than House members for attention. In this way, a senator may provide more material for local news media. Perhaps most plainly, coverage differences spring from disparities in the size of media markets. With the exception of single House member states, senators are guaranteed to represent more people. From the perspective of newspapers and television stations, this status leads to more potential consumers. Thus, devoting scarce coverage time to the senator makes more economic sense. This difference in coverage produces the hypothesis:

**Free Media Coverage Differences Hypothesis:** Panelists will report hearing about their senators through mass media more frequently than representatives

The mass media serves as important and prominent means by which citizens gather information and connect with their legislators. Yet, it is hardly the only pathway elites employ to make connections with their constituents. As Fenno and others discuss, representatives often use their own resources and time to control the information by which they are evaluated. Legislators spend considerable effort in order to connect through micro-targeting and

personal contact. By making their presences known in the district and to the constituent directly, they are able to highlight their positive personal characteristics, while also avoiding those attributes, such as contrary policy preferences, that may alienate the voter.

Many of the same reasons for which senators rely more heavily upon mass media are responsible for why House members rely more on direct forms of contact. Having fewer constituents to contact (although still a large number) provides House members with a relatively greater payoff for employing personal vote cultivating tactics. Furthermore, the probability of the average citizen coming into contact with a House member is greater due to the, on average, smaller size of the congressional district relative to the state. Thus, panelists should report having higher frequencies of contact with their House members with respect to legislator controlled forms of communications relative to senators.

**Legislator Controlled Media Coverage Differences Hypothesis:** Panelists will report hearing about their representatives through legislator media more frequently than senators.

#### **4.1.2 Accessibility and Representation**

The second difference between the home styles of House members and Senators is their accessibility. Since senators have a greater advantage with media coverage, they rely less on personal contact to build a constituency. To be sure, in most cases, senators are less likely to be responsive or come into contact with constituents than House members (Lee and Oppenheimer 1999). Without the benefit of high levels of press, House members make a point to appear in front of as many voters as possible, particularly in more personal settings. Although senators make an effort to promote themselves and make large-scale public appearances, Fenno (1982) notes that the type of public appearance is much different. It is a comparative disadvantage to speak directly with constituents or spend long periods of time meeting individuals. Rather, they will devote greater resources to media appearances.

For House members, success in home style is measured by the quantity and quality of personal interactions. For senators, the same value is gauged by the type and breadth of coverage in the state's media markets.

Accessibility to senators is also less than that of House members due to the nature of their elections. Since they occupy a more prominent position in the media landscape, senators draw much more attention from interest groups and organizations outside the state. Senators raise more money from political action committees and out of state groups.<sup>1</sup> They must cultivate a constituency that is national, rather than simply local (Polsby 1970). Rather than focus on local issues or spending time cultivating trust with their constituencies, senators must find issues that make them appealing to a national audience. In this way, a senator promotes herself more with respect to policy and ideology than would a House member. The national constituency will respond less to service for the state or personal narrative. A House member is likely to promote her policy positions only when she is certain it will be advantageous to her audience. With greater attention, the senator must always think of the national audience.

On the one hand, senators hold more prominent positions in government than the average House member. With greater influence over the policy process, their position taking and roll call voting history will attract greater attention from the public. The average House member still holds influence in policy crafting, but she does so to a much lesser extent. As a result, the more pivotal nature of the senator leads news coverage to provide greater attention to the member of the upper chamber. Furthermore, senators' positions are much more likely to gain the attention of national media. Citizens following national news coverage of politics will more likely witness their senator on a Sunday morning television program than their House member.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.opensecrets.org/overview/instvsout.php>

Senators reliance upon free media leads to a greater association with policy. The benefit of name recognition often comes at the expense of image control. House members are able to focus on those issues that will best achieve reelection. If a House member feels a certain position is out of step with a district, she will avoid promoting her roll call record. Senators, however, must reach larger audiences. This expansion of the electorate requires a symbiotic relationship with the press. Senators provide material for public consumption, but they are also more prone to be interviewed by state and national reporters. These reporters will often ask questions regarding the senator's position on important legislation (Fenno 1982). Media are driven by market forces. Traditionally, ideological conflict or prominent positions that are out of step with the state will lead to more interested audiences. For this reason, media have an incentive to promote those issues that will be controversial. Since senators come into greater contact with the media, they are more likely to receive questions on these issues and thus be associated with policy more frequently than House members (Fenno 1982).

Institutional structure influences the greater attention given to senators with respect to policy than House members. Facing reelection much less frequently affords senators greater opportunities to focus on major policy areas. Although the fear of a challenger always looms, they have more time to build a reputation within Washington, rather than focusing on the quotidian concerns that may arise within a congressional district. Subsequently, they take on prominent roles in major pieces of legislation. Those policies that become contentious nationally, or gain salience among the public, will draw attention to the respective senators who are either crafting the policy themselves, or standing in the way of passage. House members spend time on crafting legislation, but the constant reelection cycle limits the average representative from greater involvement in the policy process.

These various reasons produce the following hypothesis:

**Content Differences Hypothesis:** Panelists will report hearing about aspects of their senators' policy representation more frequently than their representatives.

## 4.2 Consequences of Differences

Structural differences lead to differences in the ways in which legislators reach their constituents (Hibbing and Alford 1990, Oppenheimer 1996, Lee and Oppenheimer 1999). I have hypothesized that this variation results in differences of coverage and access with citizens. These outcomes, if found to be true, could have serious consequences on how citizens interact with and evaluate their legislators.

### 4.2.1 Legislator Information

Hearing different types of information at different rates may affect the relative information citizens can recall about their legislators. House campaigns exist in an environment in which voters know very little about both incumbents and challengers (Zaller 1992). While still existing in a relatively low information environment, senators and senate campaigns receive much more attention (Krasno 1994, Jacobson 2006). Subsequently, findings suggest that information about senators and Senate candidates far outpaces that of House incumbents and candidates (Gronke 2000).

Many find evidence that Americans are aware of their federal legislators' behavior. Ansolabehere and Jones (2010) find that a majority of Americans' express beliefs about the roll-call voting habits of members of the House. Furthermore, their research puts forward that those beliefs about policy representation are as influential in the incumbent assessment as partisanship. Roberts and Smith (2013) extend these findings to the Senate, arguing that salience of the legislator positively conditions the effect of beliefs about policy representation on overall evaluations.<sup>2</sup> I hypothesize that:

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<sup>2</sup>It should also be noted that they do not confirm Ansolabehere and Jones' hypothesis regarding citizens' knowledge of roll-call votes. Smith and Roberts argue that Ansolabehere and Jones' findings of accuracy are in part driven by high party voting. By examining those instances in which members of Congress vote against their party, these results are called into question.

**Policy Information Hypothesis:** Panelists will be able to identify information regarding their senators' with better accuracy than their representatives.

#### 4.2.2 Contacting Legislators

Even less well understood is how and when citizens contact their legislators. This lack of clarity on how and what citizens want from their interactions with legislators becomes muddled when considering the fact that each citizen has three legislators in Congress who are each responsible for representing her. While each legislator holds similar duties, the rational calculus of citizens when approaching each may be different. Senators have more influence over legislation. At the same time, from the perspective of the constituent, greater competition exists with fellow constituents in gaining the attention of a senator than a House member.

This challenge forces citizens to think strategically when considering which representative to contact. Senators are more prominent legislators, but the likelihood of reaching the senator directly is low. Likewise, House members have less individual influence over legislation, but by representing fewer constituents, the means of contact are more direct. The data demonstrate that citizens place very high levels of importance in being able to keep in contact with their legislators (Lapinski et al. 2016). For this reason, I expect that, on average, citizens will contact their House members more often than one of their senators. Getting an answer and receiving it quickly will be of great importance to the average voter.

**Frequency Contact Hypothesis:** Panelists will contact their representatives more frequently than their senators.

At the same time, the purpose of contact should influence whom is contacted by the constituent. Senators' prominence in the media and their association with policy will lend a sense of importance in the mind of the constituent. Realizing the greater weight a senator holds on Capitol Hill, citizens will want the greatest potential payoff to their means of

contacting a legislator. For this reason, I expect that those citizens who contact legislators for the purpose of making their voice heard with respect to policy or legislation will contact their senators more often than their House member. In this way, citizens are attempting to ensure that their policy preferences are known by the political actor who can affect policy the most.

**Policy Contact Hypothesis:** Among panelists advocating policy, senators will be contacted more frequently than representatives.

This same rational calculus is considered when constituents require assistance with the federal government. When citizens are dealing with federal agencies, time's status as a scarce resource is magnified. For reasons of expedience, they will prefer to deal with an office that is more likely to receive their petition and act accordingly. House members, representing fewer voters and devoting more resources to the district offices for the purposes of casework than senators (Ornstein 2014), will be more likely to act upon a constituency service request. Thus, I expect citizens who seek help from a legislator in dealing with the federal government to seek out their House member more often than one of their senators.

**Service Contact Hypothesis:** Among panelists requesting assistance with the federal government, representatives will be contacted more frequently than senators.

### 4.3 Evaluating Legislators

In addition to affecting the information citizens have about their legislators and how they prioritize representation between the two sets, these structural differences influence public evaluations. I argue that the media prominence and greater visibility of senators weaken the effect of home style among constituents. To be sure, such exposure to constituents remains an integral part of representation. Due to their already higher visibility, I expect



the marginal benefit of an increase or decrease in senators' contact with their constituents to be less than the same change for House members.

**Non-Policy Evaluation Difference Hypothesis:** The effect of increased frequency, increased levels of contact, and receiving messages of constituency service or the personal background of the representative on the non-policy evaluation will be of a significantly greater magnitude than those of a senator.

Although, both houses of Congress serve similar roles, they maintain (for the most part) different constituencies. On average, a senator represents a larger population. The average individual constituent is less likely to encounter have direct contact with a senator than with a representative. Consequently, we may find that the electorate acquires different perceptions and expectations of representation with respect to senators and representatives. That is, due to the relative "intimacy advantage" held by House members, their position's non-policy attributes may be seen as more valuable to the voter. Less direct contact with senators would lead an individual to give less weight to non-policy attributes and more weight to policy considerations. These expectations are reflected in the following hypothesis:

**Approval Differences Hypothesis:** The effect of non-policy evaluations on approval of House members will be significantly greater than those of senators.

## 4.4 Findings

### 4.4.1 Media Coverage

To test whether citizens receive more information about their senators through major media sources than their representatives, I examine data from TAPS gauging what types of contact citizens have with their legislators. Once panelists indicated that they had come into contact with or received information about their legislators, they were provided with a list of typical means by which they could receive information about their legislators. Four of

those categories provided fell under the umbrella of traditional news services. Those sources were *Newspapers*, *Television News*, *Radio News*, and *Internet News or Blogs*.

Figure 4.1 displays the differences in reported percentages of contact with the legislators with respect to these “free media” services. It should be first apparent that the citizens report relatively high levels of contact regarding these traditional news services. Such a finding should not be surprising. Even for a House member the cost is high for both the constituent and the legislator to make personal contact. House members still represent hundreds of thousands of voters and the scarcity of time makes contact with each impossible. Even though they receive relatively less attention from local media, they are still heavily dependent upon it to connect to their voters.

Panelists report that both senators and House members are visible through newspapers at roughly similar levels. Although senators are slightly more likely to be seen by the public through a newspaper, it is only marginally so, with fifty-eight percent reporting hearing about their House members through print media, while sixty percent did so for the senator. The relatively equal reporting of this source is somewhat surprising. These findings provide strong evidence that legislators of both chambers rely upon local newspapers heavily.

Disparities in coverage do occur. With demands of wider audiences to consider, television news appears to provide significantly more coverage to senators. The results of the panelists’ reporting where they receive information about their legislators confirms this gap. House members are seen by large portions of the television viewing audience. Slightly less than sixty-three percent of the panelists receiving information about their legislators came into contact through such a medium. Yet, more than roughly three-fourths of those reporting contact with their senators did so through television. This double digit gap is substantive and significant. Citizens gathered much more information about their senators through television news than their House members, confirming the hypothesis that the senators make greater use of free media than House members.

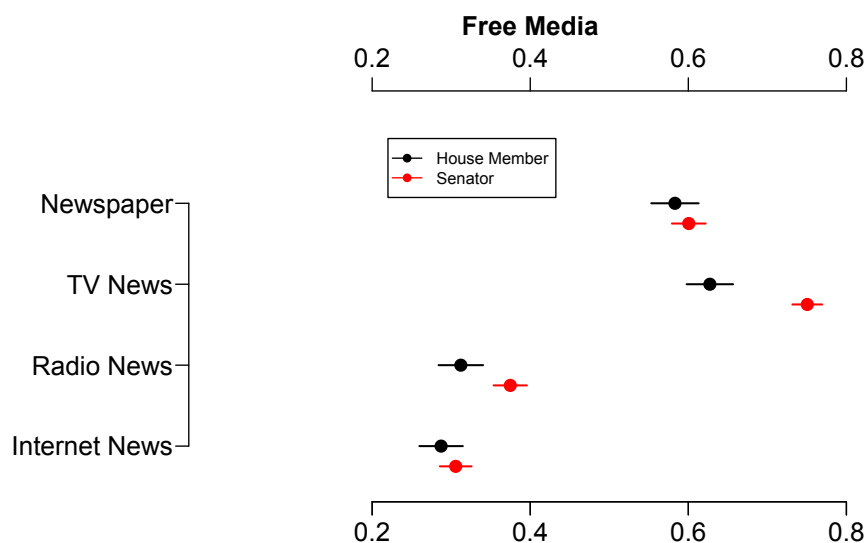


Figure 4.1: Source of Media Exposure

This significant gap is also apparent with respect to news through the radio. While fewer panelists reported gathering information about their legislators through the radio, significantly more received information about their senators. Once again, it becomes apparent that citizens hear more about senators through mass media that has an incentive to report on elites who appeal to the broadest audience.

Hearing about legislators through the internet results in a somewhat more muddled picture. The results of self-reporting suggest there is little difference between finding out information about senators and House members. For each representative, approximately thirty percent of panelists responded that they hear about the given individual through online news fora or blogs. In the most cursory way, this finding runs counter to expectations. Online news media have similar incentives to cater to broad audiences that television and radio do. Nonetheless, the specialized nature of the internet allows citizens greater ability to seek out local issues and news sources. These sources may provide greater focus to the House member than the senator on average, particularly if they are of a more parochial nature.

To test whether citizens receive more information about their House members through legislator controlled sources than their senators, I examine data from TAPS gauging what types of contact citizens have with their legislators. Once panelists indicated that they had come into contact with or received information about their legislators, they were provided with a list of typical means by which they could receive information about their legislators. Six of those categories provided fell under the umbrella of legislator controlled means of communication. First, citizens were asked if they came into contact with their legislator through *Social Media* accounts such as Facebook and Twitter. Second, panelists were asked to provide if they came into contact with legislator disseminated material through postal *mail*, *phone* messages, and *email*. Finally, information was also gathered on the frequency of personal contact with the legislator through two options. Panelists indicated their incidence of contact with legislators at large *public events* and *small group* meetings. The frequencies may be found in Figure 4.2.

On average, these legislator controlled methods are much less frequent means of contact than mass media. Still, they remain important tools for legislators hoping to make an impression on their constituents. The proportion reporting contact with these means constitute a non-ignorable amount. Very few constituents report hearing about their legislators from social media accounts. Less than ten percent of citizens reporting contact with the given legislator reported doing so through these online methods. For both senators and House members, the percentages are statistically similar. It might be expected that House members would contact constituents more frequently through such networks. It should be noted, however, that social media outlets are different than more traditional means of representative-controlled contact in that the constituent typically “opts in,” or chooses to follow the legislator’s account. Thus, the micro-targeting that occurs through these means is often reliant upon the citizen’s original interest. If citizens take an equal interest in both sets of legislators online, than a significant difference should not exist.

Significant differences do exist, however, with respect to more traditional forms of legislator-initiated contact. The biggest gap occurs with respect to postal mail. Of those experiencing contact with a member of the House, roughly thirty-six percent did so through the mail. The percentage reporting mail contact with a senator was significantly lower; only about fifteen percent of subjects reporting contact identified the mail as a method. Similarly, panelists were much more likely to respond that their House member contacted them by phone than their senator. Receiving a phone call from a House member occurred with a frequency of about eleven percent, but senate contact by phone was much lower, only slightly above two percent. Finally, email contact provides less evidence of a gap in contact between chambers.

Admittedly, personal contact between the citizens and the legislator is a rare occurrence. Of those who identified having contact with a federal legislator, less than ten percent did so within the physical presence of one. Even though the incidence of these events is quite low, evidence still suggests a gap between the ways in which citizens interact with their senators and House members. Sizable gaps exist between the types of legislator with respect to public events. Citizens were much more likely to encounter members of the lower chamber at large public events. Similarly, reported interactions in small groups were more common with House members. Once again, this difference should be expected. House members represent much smaller districts, thus the probability of personal contact is much higher. Additionally, the electoral cycle of the senate requires fewer trips home. House members leave the re-election cycle for only the briefest of moments. Senators, on the other hand, face re-election challenges less often than their colleagues from the other chamber. For this reason, the senator is under less pressure to appear as the attentive legislator who is home every weekend (Fenno 1982).

The differences in reported levels of exposure across type of contact reaffirm the hypothesis that members of the House are much more dependent upon more traditional forms. Due to market forces, senators enjoy a comparative advantage in reaching constituents through

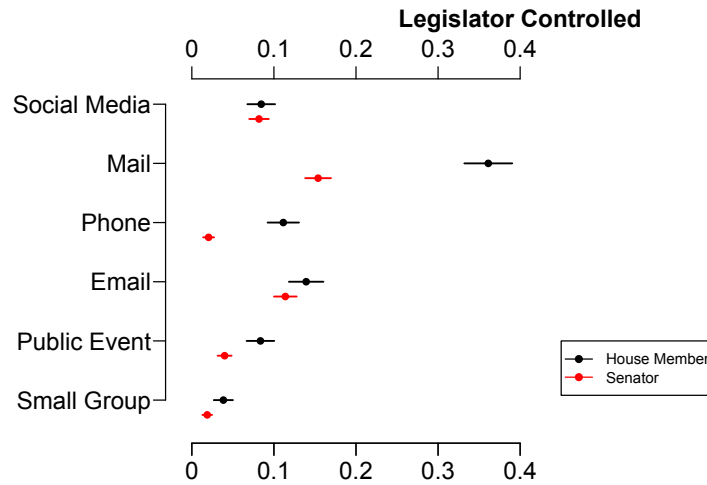


Figure 4.2: Source of Legislator Controlled Exposure

free media such as television and print. Members of the House must be somewhat more entrepreneurial in reaching their voters. These individuals are much more likely to come into contact with constituents through the more targeted, controlled ways, such as franked mail and telephone calls. As a result, it is possible that the relationships between members of the House and their constituents are fundamentally different than those between the same constituents and senators. Senators are more visible in the public eye, but they are not necessarily seen as more accessible. Quite the contrary, the proximity of the House member's contact is related to a much more personal relationship.

#### 4.4.2 Content of Information

Figure 4.3 displays evidence that significant differences exist in the types of information citizens receive about their federal legislators. TAPS asked those panelists who responded that they come into contact with information about their legislators to identify the content of such contact. Panelists were provided with a list of six categories encompassing typical pieces of information an individual may encounter regarding a member of Congress. Citizens

were asked if they had heard about “special projects or funding that [the legislator] secured for the state.” The mean percentage of those panelists providing such a response is labeled *pork*.

Three different categories were provided to measure the incidence of hearing about a legislator’s policy activities. First, panelists indicated if they had learned about “bills introduced by [the legislator]”, coded as *bills introduced*. Second, they responded if they had learned about “votes or positions taken by the legislator,” coded as *votes*. Third, panelists identified if they had learned about “how liberal or conservative [the legislator] is.” This final policy category is labeled as *ideology*.

Finally, panelists were also asked to provide information regarding decidedly non-policy activities of their legislators. In order to determine the frequency with which individuals learned about constituency service, subjects responded if they had come to know anything about “personal assistance provided by [the legislator] to constituents.” This variable is labeled as *service*. The final category to be measured relates to the personal attributes of the legislators. Panelists identified if they learned anything that relayed information regarding “[the legislator’s] personal background.” This variable is labeled as *background*. Additionally, panelists were allowed to provide a free response to this question through a text box. Such responses were reclassified into the given categories if appropriate.

Perhaps surprisingly, the data suggest that citizens are more likely to hear about the appropriations activities of senators than House members. Pork is often considered an apolitical means to reach constituents. Legislators provide a public good that can be enjoyed by all of a district’s citizens. With more concentrated populations, House members are more likely to receive credit for procuring such outlays to their district. Since they are the only representative of their district in the respective chamber, they also need to worry less about sharing credit. Yet, the data suggest that voters hear more about senators’ ability to provide funds for special projects. Roughly thirty-five percent of panelists coming into contact

with their legislators responded that they heard about their House member securing special projects or funding to their home district. The same figure for senators is slightly larger; about forty-two percent of subjects responded to coming into contact with information about pork. This difference may seem substantively small, but it is statistically distinct. Senators appear to do a better job of promoting their appropriations abilities with the public than House members. To be sure, senators do exert a great deal of effort to make their appropriations activities well known (Grimmer 2013ab).

Due to geographic and electoral constraints, citizens come into contact with non-policy information of House members more often than senators. Figure 4.3 provides marginal evidence that such differences exist in the predicted direction. While constituency service remains an important element of a legislator's profession, its publicity among the population is quite limited. Overall, less than one in five panelists encountering their legislators learned about personal assistance the congressperson provided to a constituent. Only fifteen percent of the subsample responded that they heard of such activities with House members and slightly less indicated the same for senators. While this finding may suggest that House members are more vocal regarding their service provision, the difference is not statistically distinguishable.

With respect to personal information, evidence suggests that the House member-constituent relationship is more personal than that with the senator. Admittedly, however, this evidence is scant. Approximately twenty-six percent of panelists coming into contact with House members learned personal information about the legislator, while only twenty-three percent did so with their senator. Once again, this difference is not significant. These findings appear to indicate that, while senators and House members rely on different methods to reach their constituents, they do not dedicate radically different amounts of time to the non-policy elements of representation. While this finding does not confirm that House members will adopt more personal tones in their home styles, it does provide some evidence to suggest that



senators are driven by similar incentives to build a non-policy brand with their states. Trust may be less important to the senator-constituent relationship, but it is still necessary for senators to make a personal connection with their voters.

Large differences do exist with respect to the amounts of policy information reported. Panelists were more likely to indicate they learned information about bill introduction from, votes taken by, and the ideological leaning of their senators than their House members. Bill introduction possesses the biggest gap in reporting with 42 percent reporting they learned of a senator introducing legislation, while only 31 percent indicated a House member doing so. When considering the greater agenda power granted to senators instead of House members, such a finding makes sense. While House members can introduce legislation easily, they have much less probability of getting their pieces of legislation considered by the chamber (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Subsequently, they should expect much less coverage of their legislation.

The most common piece of information that citizens hear about their legislators relates to their roll call voting practices. A majority of panelists reported learning information regarding such activity. Even though both sets of legislators are highly associated with their voting behaviors, senators are attached to their votes slightly more frequently than House members. More than two-thirds of those coming into contact with senators learned information about their voting, while slightly more than 60 percent did so for House members. This finding may reinforce the policy primacy among senators, but it should also underline the importance of policy to both chambers. Citizens may have an incentive to prioritize service with House members, but those who follow politics still learn a great deal of policy information about their representatives.

Finally, the data suggest that citizens learn more information regarding the ideology of their senators than their House members. About forty-five percent of this subset of the data indicated they learned about how liberal or conservative their senator was, while only thirty

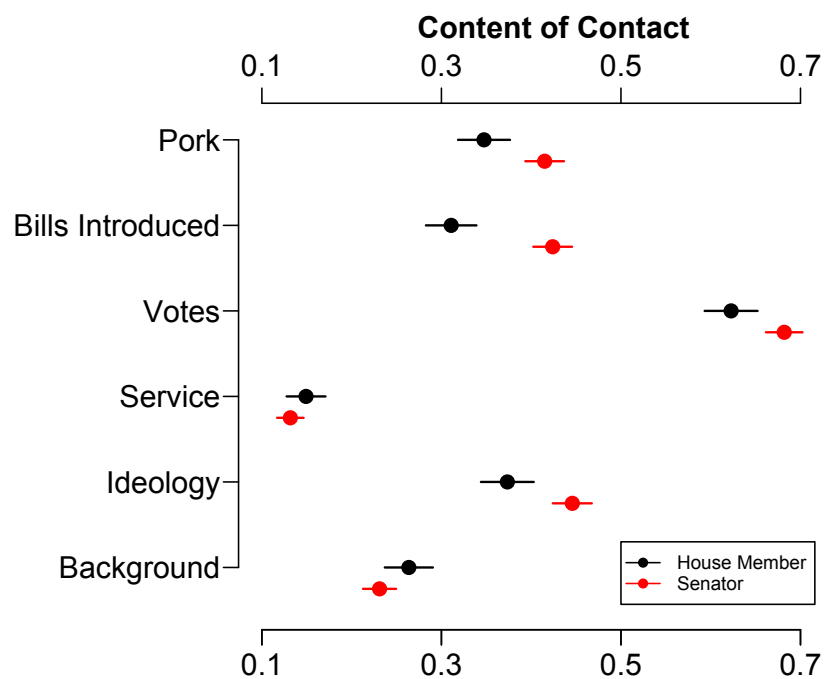


Figure 4.3: Information Content of Contact

percent learned about their House member. These results are expected due to the difference in forces exerted on the two chambers. Senators control less of their messaging strategies. As a result, other individuals and groups are able to highlight their policy records, even when they may not wish to do so. House members, on the other, may be more adept at obfuscating their own overall ideologies due to greater reliance upon traditional legislator controlled communications.

These mean estimates of the types of content citizens gather about their legislators highlight important divergences and convergences. Individuals gather myriad types of information about their representatives in Congress. The most common information for both sets of representatives, however, relates to policy. People learn the most about their legislators vote taking habits, regardless of chamber, and this gap is quite large. Still, people also learn non-ignorable levels of information about non-ideological activities, such as pork projects and

constituency service, as well as personal background information. Nonetheless, differences do exist between the degree to which citizens learn about the policy activities of senators and House members. On average, citizens hear significantly more about the policy activities of their senators than they do of their House members. These disparities may seem insignificant. Admittedly, they are often quite small. Yet, they have somewhat substantial consequences for how individuals view and approach their members of Congress.

### 4.4.3 Legislator Information

To further explore the consequences of this information gap, panelists were asked whether they knew the party of their legislators in Congress.<sup>3</sup> Figure 4.4 displays the results for the percentage of panelists who were able to correctly identify the party of their legislators for the 112th Congress. For members of the House, this figure was approximately sixty-six percent. While this value appears high, it belies the point that roughly one-third of Americans either misidentified or responded that they did not know the political party of their member of the House. Senators, as expected as a result of their greater visibility, are slightly more identifiable by partisanship. About seventy-one percent of those responding were able to correctly identify the partisanship of their senator.<sup>4</sup> The difference between the two sets may be small, but it is significant. This finding suggests that the gaps in coverage lead to gaps in the information of the public.

If beliefs about roll-call votes influence how legislators are evaluated, it is important to determine if these perceptions are uniform across representation. Should citizens possess differences in their knowledge, or at least perceptions of knowledge, about their senators and House members, we may expect different types of evaluation regarding the two sets

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<sup>3</sup>Panelists are asked to identify their members of Congress party several times within the panel structure of TAPS. To limit conditioning effects, only those results from the first instance of such data collection are included here. These data were collected in February 2012, the third month of the panel survey.

<sup>4</sup>Once again, this is a pooled percentage.

of legislators. To further explore this possibility, I have chosen to examine differences in citizens' knowledge of their federal representatives' roll call voting behavior.

The American Panel Survey asked its subjects to identify how their legislators voted on pieces of legislation that faced both houses of Congress the month following a roll-call vote.<sup>5</sup> By limiting the data collection to those bills upon which both chambers voted, the design ensures the legislation will be of some salience to the subjects. From 2012 to 2014, panelists were asked about eight important votes.<sup>6</sup> While examining the first of half of these data with respect to accuracy, Smith and Roberts (2013) find that differences exist with respect to correctly identifying the voting habits of members of Congress with respect to the chamber of the representative. When responding to the question of how their representatives votes, panelists identified both chambers with sixty-six percent accuracy.

By itself, this finding is quite interesting. Senators have much more visibility, but their correct association with roll-call votes is identical to that of House members. Furthermore, as shown previously, citizens are significantly more likely to report hearing about a senator's voting record than that of the average House member. The similarity across chambers suggests that a smaller gap exists with respect to policy preferences than would be expected.

Deeper exploration and extension of these data, however, provide more surprising information regarding the knowledge gap between senators and House members. Roberts and Smith limit their exploration to those citizens who are willing to respond to the identification questions. That is, they drop the "Don't Knows" from their analysis. For each of these identification questions, a very large subset of the sample respond that they do not know how their legislators voted on the given bills. The second row of percent estimates in

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<sup>5</sup>Information was also gathered regarding the president's position or action on the legislation, as well as their own opinions.

<sup>6</sup>These important pieces of legislation include the Payroll tax and unemployment benefits extension (H.R. 3630), the JOBS Act (H.R. 3606), the 2012 Budget Resolution (H.Res. 223), Student Loans (H.R. 4348), Continuing Appropriations Resolution 2014 (H.J.Res. 59), Continuing Appropriations Act 2014 (H.R. 2775), The Bipartisan Budget Act (H.J.Res. 59), and the Temporary Debt Limit Extension Act (S. 540).

Figure 4.4 presents the mean percent across these eight votes for those panelists venturing a guess for these questions. More directly, it represents the percentage of the sample saying they know how their legislator voted. Contrary to the hypothesis that senators will be more closely associated with their policy records than House members, I find the opposite. Approximately fifty percent of panelists, on average, responded that they could identify their House member's position on the given issue. For senators, this figure was significantly lower; only forty-five percent of panelists, on average, were willing to identify a position of their senator. That is, on average, a majority of the sample responded with "don't know" for the Senate data, while that was not the case for the House.

Slightly greater expertise at micro-targeting positions on roll call votes by House members may be able to explain this gap. Perhaps a more plausible explanation lies in the power of partisanship and the greater association senators have with their party than House members. A lower level examination of these questions provides some evidence of this phenomenon. Much of the gap between senators and House members is driven by questions coming from the first half of the battery. For example, for these first four pieces of legislation, the gap between "don't knows" is between seven and thirteen percentage points. For those pieces of legislation voted on between September 2013 and February 2014, convergence occurs. The gap for these subsequent months is between  $-1$  and 2 percentage points. That is, for one month, panelists were less likely to identify senators vote choice with a "don't know."

Salience of the legislation being considered may be driving this convergence in late 2013 and early 2014. The first half of the design includes important pieces of legislation, such as JOBS Act and the 2012 Budget Resolution, but for the most part, these events did not necessarily garner the attention of the nation as a whole. Those bills being considered for the second half of the design include major actions regarding the government shutdown in the fall of 2013. Actions involved those votes that failed to avert and those that ended the stalemate. The entire event garnered large scale press and, according to estimates from the

Office of Management and Budget, cost the government nearly \$2 billion dollars.<sup>7</sup> With heightened attention, the average panelist is more likely to know where each party stood on the major votes. Moreover, two of the bills were straight party line votes in the Senate, while only three total House members crossed the aisle. In this way, panelists likely maintained a relatively strong knowledge of the parties' positions and thus were more confident and willing to identify how their senators voted.

Still, the significant, and somewhat substantial, gap for the less salient pieces of legislation should not be ignored. These results, that are in the opposite direction of what is expected, call into question what other information seems to support: that senators maintain a greater association with policy matters than House members. While more information may be received about senator's policy performance, citizens often feel that they have sufficient knowledge about their House members. The surprising results of this exercise underline the notion that even though differences exist in the content of coverage, one cannot entirely compartmentalize senators as policy trustees or delegates and House members as service providers. Rather, the public maintains relatively high associations of both types of legislators with roll-call votes and policy. This lack of complete separation is further highlighted in the following section examining those instances in which citizens reach out to their members of Congress.

#### **4.4.4 Citizens Contacting Representatives**

To be sure, the data suggest that most citizens do not seek out their legislators. TAPS indicates that only fifteen percent of the panelists indicated that they had sought out their members of the House of Representatives. While this figure is admittedly low, I do find support for the hypothesis that on average, Americans seek out their members of the House more than their Senators. The proportion of respondents indicating that they had contacted

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<sup>7</sup><http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-fiscal-shutdown-costs-idUSKCNORT1U320150929>

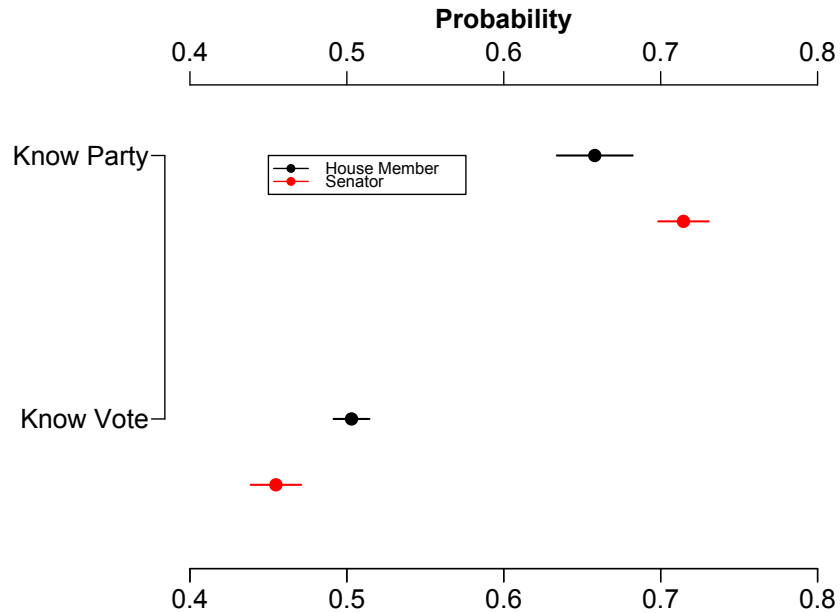


Figure 4.4: Policy and Party Awareness

their current senators was slightly lower at eleven percent. While these percentages were not statistically distinct, the difference does provide some evidence that citizens will reach out to members of the lower chamber before senators.

Panelists were also asked about the ways in which they contacted their legislators. First, each subject was asked if they had ever contacted their current legislator. For those who responded “yes,” they then provided the form of communication they used. These forms included telephone calls, handwritten letters, emails, personal contact, signing petitions, and form written letters. Finally, panelists were asked what the purpose, or content, of these communications entailed. To measure this variable, panelists were provided with four broad categories that cover common reasons to contact a legislator. The first category consisted of “To ask for assistance on a personal or family problem with the government,” or *Casework*. The second category addressed informational issues, asking if the panelist had ever sought out the legislator “To acquire information about a legislative or policy issue.” Third, panelists

were also asked if they had contacted their legislators “To persuade her to change her position on an issue.” Finally, panelists were provided a second policy representation category, being asked if they had contact the legislator “To support or oppose her position on an issue.”

The content of these forms of contact provides more insight into how citizens view differences between their legislators. Figure 4.5 provides the percentage of panelists who indicated that the given reason in the survey was behind their efforts to contact their given legislator. First, it becomes apparent that relatively few of those who sought out their representatives did so for the less ideological service-oriented reasons of casework and information on federal policies and legislation. Among those contacting their legislators, less than one-fourth did so for these reasons. Overall, more citizens contacted their legislators to voice pleasure or distaste for a legislator’s position or simply in an attempt to persuade their representative to support their own position on a given issue.

Second, evidence in Figure 4.5 indicates support for the hypothesis that conditional on requiring assistance with a federal agency, significantly more Americans seek out their member of the House rather than their senator. To reiterate, this percentage is small, mainly because the average person does not require the benefits of constituency service all that often. Yet, I do find evidence to suggest that constituents prioritize assistance from the more accessible House member when encountering difficulties with the federal government. Very few subjects indicated that they sought out their senator to receive assistance for themselves or their family members. With respect to receiving information about legislation or federal policy, the data provide some evidence that citizens are more likely to contact the House rather than the Senate. Although the differences between the two chambers is less distinct than that of casework, the finding still makes intuitive sense. Informational benefits from the legislator are more likely to be answered in a timely manner from the legislator who represents far fewer individuals. Thus, citizens prioritize House members when seeking help with seemingly confusing federal policies.



Third, I find somewhat stronger support regarding policy representation and prioritization of the senate. Conditional on seeking out the representative, panelists who attempted to persuade a legislator to change her position on a piece of legislation were slightly more likely to indicate that they contacted a senator rather than a House member. Roughly forty percent of subjects who reached out to the elites did so to a senator, while slightly less than thirty percent contacted a House member. Due to the conditional nature and relatively low sample size of the data, this gap between the two types of members is not statistically distinct. Nonetheless, it does provide some evidence that citizens who attempt to persuade the opinions of their legislators reach out to the more prominent senator more often.

This greater association of policy representation with senators and not House members is also reflected in the panelists' decision to voice their support or opposition to a legislator's position. The fourth and final option for contact demonstrates that slightly more than sixty percent of this subset subjects indicated that they commented on their senator's policy stance. With respect to House members, this figure is much lower, slightly less than fifty percent. That is, citizens decide to contact their House members much less frequently when they have concerns regarding their votes and positions. Once again, while the intervals regarding the mean percentages of these values are not statistically significant at the 95% level, the point estimates are distinct from the other interval. Furthermore, a ten-percentage point difference on each of these policy representation items suggests sizable differences in perceptions of legislators.

These results indicate that citizens do engage in some strategy with respect to certain elements of representation. Those activities which require alacrity and assistance are more often associated with the House member. On the other hand, matters of national policy and roll call votes tend to be reserved for senators. The difference in prioritization does not ultimately suggest that citizens view one chamber as less important or less reliable than the

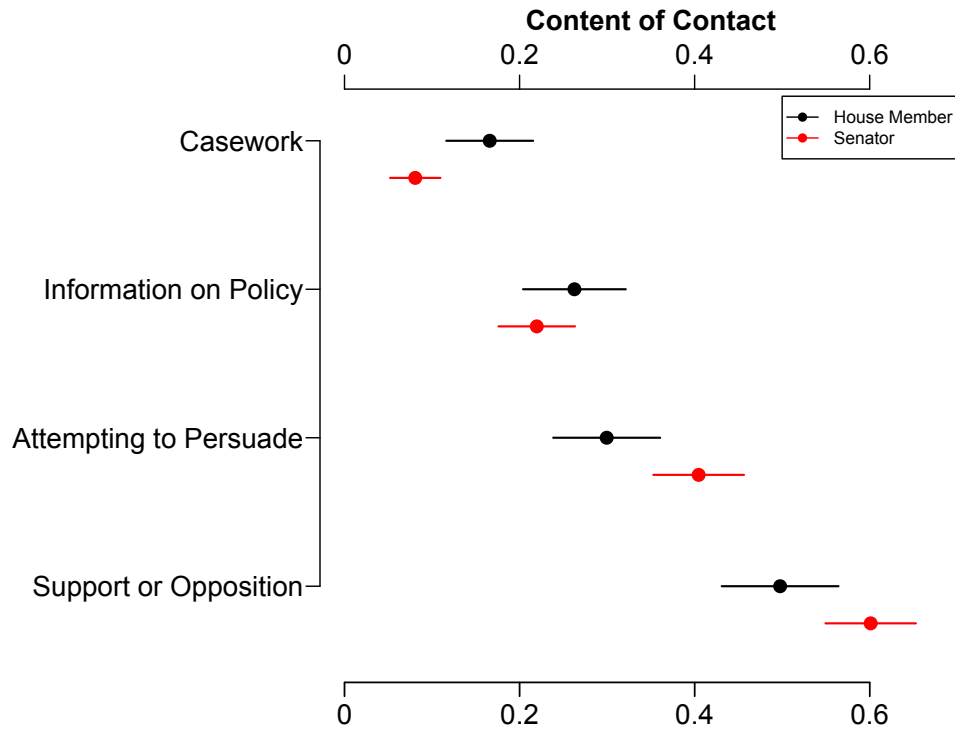


Figure 4.5: Purpose of Constituent Initiated Contact

other. Rather, citizens make rational decisions when approaching the many dimensions of representation.

#### 4.4.5 Evaluating Legislators

Findings presented up to this point reveal that citizens receive slightly different levels and types of information regarding each type of legislator. The effects of these differences are not always clear. It would appear that citizens value policy and non-policy elements from both of senators and representatives. The degree to which they place importance on these attributes does tend to vary, but the fact remains that citizens tend to view representation for both types as a multifaceted job.

For the most part, the home style phenomenon and the determinants of citizens' views of representation move in similar manners across chambers.<sup>8</sup> This result is somewhat expected due to the large overlap in duties performed by senators and House members. Yet, as stated previously, reasons exist to expect the level at which these relationships vary with respect to the office. For these reasons, it is necessary to compare the estimates of House members and senators to determine if the magnitudes of these relationships diverge. Discovering differences across the chambers would provide some evidence that citizens are more susceptible to influence on a given dimension for a particular type of office.

Figure 4.6 provides insight into the differences with respect to the NPE. Within the plot, the point estimates, as well as the relevant standard errors, for the coefficient relationships with changes in the NPE are displayed. First, it should be noted that all estimated relationships are in the same direction, indicating that, on average, panelists tended to value improvements in perceptions of contact as positive attributes on a non-policy dimension. Second, with one exception, all of the estimates are of accepted reliability. That is, the results of the models suggest that citizens rely upon their perceptions of the frequency, content, and level of contact to evaluate the extrapolitical characteristics of their members of Congress. This holds true for both members of the Senate and the House.

The first set of estimates present the first set of differences. The change in frequency variable for a House member possesses a significantly stronger magnitude on the change in the NPE than it does for the senator. This finding confirms the hypothesis that the changes in the home style variable will produce greater changes in the NPE for House members among constituents. While senators are still able to manipulate their NPE, it is to an apparently lesser extent than that of House members. With respect to each home style variable, the effect of change is stronger for the House member. In addition to the change in frequency

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<sup>8</sup>A replication of the models in chapters 2 and 3 with senators may be found in the Appendix. Nearly all of the relationships and inferences hold.

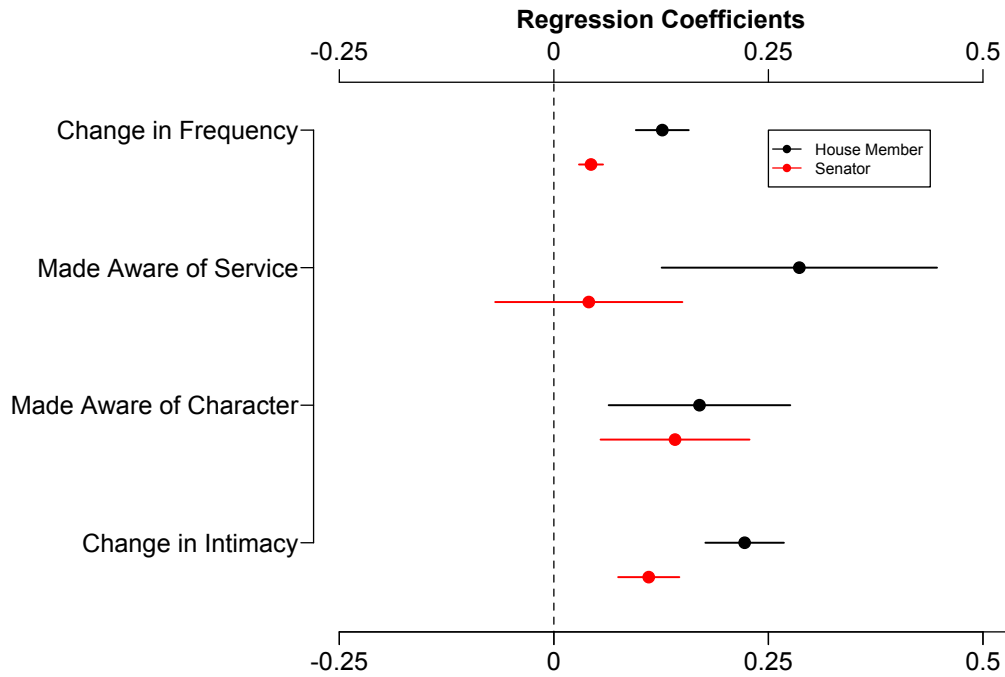


Figure 4.6: Coefficient Estimates for the Effect on Non-Policy Evaluation

coefficient, the change in the level of contact is significantly stronger for members of the House. House members tend to receive greater benefits to their NPE by increases in the perceived level of proximity with which they communicate with their constituents. It bears repeating that senators will be able to make significant gains by employing personalistic home style strategies. It is just that their ability to cultivate goodwill on the non-policy dimension is somewhat more limited.

The degree to which the NPE and the perception of policy congruence influence the citizen's approval of the legislator is also an important consideration. First, consider the first difference's effect on the change in approval, as explored in previous analyses. Figure 4.7 provides the comparison of these effects across legislators and their standard errors. As the plots indicate, there is no significant difference in the magnitude to which change in the perceptions of representation influences the means by which senators and House members are evaluated overall. If anything, the effects for House members are stronger for both pol-

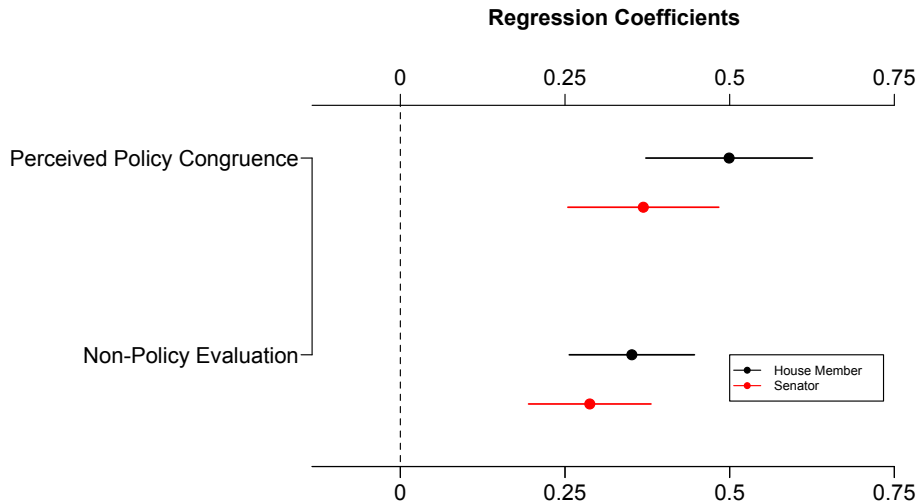


Figure 4.7: Comparing Change Effects

icy congruence and the NPE, but by no means is this difference of a substantive nature. The slight differences may suggest that, on average, House member evaluations are somewhat more fluid than those of senators. This inference would seem to be consistent with the previous findings regarding greater knowledge of senators than members of the lower chamber.

While the drawbacks of cross-sectional analyses for the study of representation have been previously discussed, it may prove useful to investigate House-Senate differences at such a level. For example, if one set of legislators are operating from a significantly more stable position, it would be the case that differences in the effects of change would be an improper means to draw comparisons. For this reason, I have chosen to compare the level effects of perceptions of policy congruence and the NPE on the overall level of approval within the same period.

Figure 4.8 displays the differences in these level effects on the overall approval of the respective legislator. These level effects exhibit vastly different effects than those predicting change. First, with respect to perceptions of policy congruence, the effect for senators is

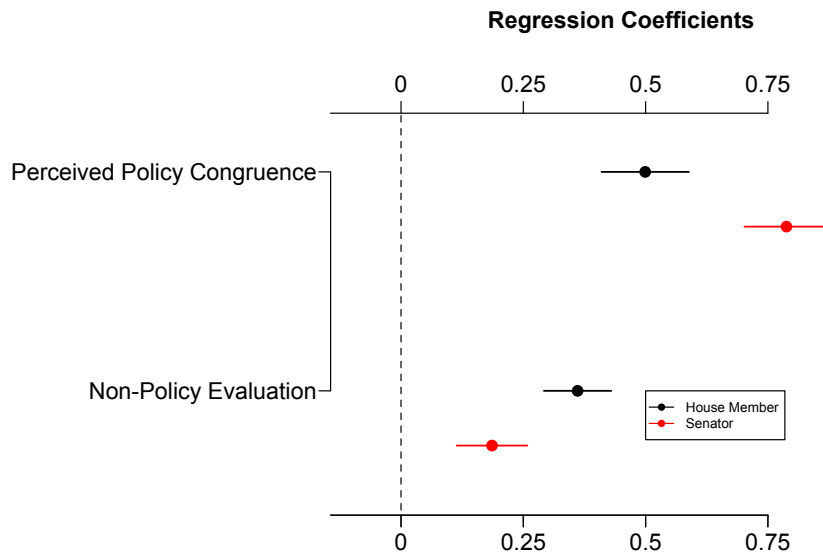


Figure 4.8: Comparing Level Effects

much stronger than that of House members, roughly fifty percent greater. While substantive, this difference between members is also significant at the the 95% level. With respect to the NPE, the order of effects is reversed. For House members, the NPE is significantly and substantively larger than that of senators. That is, it would appear that the more personalistic measure of the NPE has a much stronger effect on approval for House members than senators.

It is also worth noting that within senator evaluations, the effects of both variables are significant. For the average individual, perceptions of policy congruence have a greater effect on approval than the NPE. As has been established, senators maintain much more prominent policy roles and they are more strongly evaluated on this dimension than the NPE. This within-legislator comparison is not significant for House members. To be sure, the models predict that the point estimate for perceptions of policy congruence to be stronger than that of the NPE. While House members strive to make personal connections, beliefs about policy still play a a major role in evaluations. Yet, this difference is not statistically

significant at the 95% level. The NPE remains an important element in the evaluations of the House member, one that rivals that of beliefs regarding policy representation.

These findings reaffirm two major points of how Americans develop views of representation. First, both policy and non-policy considerations are dynamic and important factors when approaching legislators from both chambers of Congress. They are dynamic in that beliefs about both types of representatives are susceptible to change in systematic ways. Coming into contact, the type of contact, and the type of information, all play a part in altering perceptions of legislators on both dimensions. Furthermore, these dimensional evaluations also move in concert with overall evaluations of the representative. Both policy and non-policy evaluations influence how citizens view their senators and House members. Citizens do not judge their senators and House members by mutually exclusive criteria.

Second, while perceptions of legislator effort drive citizens' dimensional evaluations of both types of representatives, we find strong differences within the citizen-elite relationships. More directly, these differences in effects suggest that senators maintain a slightly stronger attachment to policy than their House counterparts. With respect to changes in the non-policy evaluations, effects are stronger for each set of variables for House members. This difference is significant for two of the four coefficients. With respect to policy evaluations, the predicted effects of hearing about policy positions are almost double for senators than that of House members. While this difference is not statistically reliable, the effect is only significant for senators.

The expected differences are stark when considering change and level of overall evaluations of legislators. Citizens tend to rely heavily on policy and non-policy evaluations for both. I find that these effects, when measured as change, are significant for both senators and House members. Strong differences are highlighted when treating these variables as level effects. It would appear that panelists in this study tend to rely significantly higher on policy congruence when judging their members of the Senate than they do their members

of the House. This relationship is flipped when considering the NPE; the effect of the non-ideological variable in its cross-sectional state is significantly weaker for senators than it is for House members. That is, these findings would confirm the notion that House members rely upon a much more personalistic relationship with their constituents than senators.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the context in which citizens differentiate between their different types of federal legislators. One might expect citizens to evaluate senators and House members in the same manner. This expectation would have merit since members of both chambers fulfill similar duties: they vote on the same legislation, they both secure appropriations for their constituents, they perform casework for citizens in need, and they both put forth an effort to be seen as “one of” the district’s people. As this chapter concludes, such a prediction has a great deal of merit. Panelists routinely indicate that they value multiple facets of representation for each. They contact both types of legislators with concerns regarding legislation being considered, and they attempt to persuade each to vote the way in which they prefer. At the same time, they still solicit senators for assistance in dealing with the federal government, as well as obtaining information regarding policy.

Within this chapter, I argue that structural differences between the two chambers contribute to citizens conceptualizing their legislators in different ways. Different structural and economic pressures of media outlets and the representatives themselves lead to citizens associating different types of contact and different types of legislation with the two chambers. I find that, on average, panelists encounter somewhat more information about their senators. This attribute is primarily the result of senators taking greater advantage, or at least being afforded a greater advantage, of free media such as television and radio. House members still rely upon these methods a great deal, but senators attract a larger audience



and require broader means to reach a wider group of voters. House members, on the other hand, must reach more localized populations of typically less diverse interests. As a result, I find strong support to suggest that citizens come into contact with these legislators through more personal, or at least legislator controlled means. Citizens indicate they hear about their legislators much more frequently through direct mail, telephone calls, and personal contact with the legislator than they do with their senators.

The consequences of this structure also lead to different types of information that are associated with federal representatives. This chapter's findings suggest that while there are few mutually exclusive realms of representation between senators and House members, significant differences do arise in what citizens learn about their legislators. For example, citizens are more likely to report hearing about casework or the personal background of House members than senate members. Conversely, ideological and policy dimensions of representation, and also appropriations secured, were much more likely to be reported if the citizen was evaluating a senator. I also find that the consequences of this disparity are not always clear. When examining data regarding citizens' ability to identify legislators' votes and party, as one would expect subjects were significantly more likely to identify a senator's partisanship. Yet, citizens' expressed much more confidence in their ability to correctly identify House members' votes than those of the senator.

The disparities in structure, frequency of coverage, and content of coverage lead Americans' to prioritize their representation needs with their different legislators. Citizens tend to look more often to their House members for more immediate needs, such as casework and information regarding federal government policy. At the same time, they are more likely to contact a senator than House member to make their opinion known regarding legislation. That is, citizens do not appear to focus their attention on one type of legislator when reaching out to elected officials. They look to both types for a variety of representational duties,

but there does appear to be a clear demarcation towards policy making that is associated with senators.

The consequences of these differences appear to be borne out in how Americans evaluate their legislators. I find that the many of the same traits and behaviors that shape individuals' perceptions of their House members are also useful in predicting how they will develop opinions regarding their senators. That is, policy and non-policy evaluations matter a great deal in how senators are evaluated. While they maintain positions of higher prominence, senators cannot shirk on the clientelistic and personalistic obligations of their office. The results provided here suggest that even these members of Congress' reputations are dynamic; they move systematically with perceptions regarding their effort.

Perhaps more prominent is the extent to which these non-policy evaluations play a role in the overall evaluation of the legislator. Models from this analysis clearly show that, like House members, policy and non-policy considerations influence how citizens view their legislators. More importantly, senators will develop a lower NPE if their voters perceive them as being less attentive. In turn, this reflects poorly on their overall evaluation. It cannot be understated, senators and House members are subject to the same types of evaluation from constituents.

At the same time, however, large differences do exist in how constituents view representation between the chambers. First, while it has been stated that both policy and non-policy matter, these results find some support for the argument that senators are *more* attached to policy representation than they are to their NPE and that this perception of policy congruence plays a significantly greater effect than the NPE within and across legislator type. Specifically, NPE evaluations play a larger role in developing perceptions regarding House members than the policy evaluation.

## 4.6 Appendix: Replicating Findings Using Senate Data

Although senators occupy different positions, I expect that that citizens will react to their behaviors in similar manners as they do to House members. To test this expectation, I regressed the change in citizens' non-policy evaluations on perceptions of their home style activities in a similar manner to that of the previous analysis. Since each panelist has two senators, this empirical test differs in that the data are "stacked." That is, each individual is in the data set twice, evaluating each senator. Rather than saturate the model with random intercepts for each individual panelist, I have chosen to cluster the standard errors of each subject.<sup>9</sup> The results of the first test may be found in Table 4.1.<sup>10</sup>

Mixed evidence exists for the argument that changes in the content of contact influence how citizens evaluate the non-policy dimension of their senators' representation. Learning about the personal background or character of their senator exerts a modest, positive effect on the change in the non-policy evaluation from 2013 to 2014. This result indicates that hearing about non-policy information increases the non-policy evaluation by roughly .25 on a scale that ranges from -2.6 to 2.8, with a mean of zero. While such a change may seem small within the overall level of change witnessed during the sample of the panel, it should not be understated. As stated, the mean change was zero, but approximately four-fifths of change occurred within the range of -1 to 1. A predicted difference in change of non-policy evaluation of .25 is equivalent to moving from the 50th percentile to the 75th. That is, being exposed personal information is quite effective in improving the citizen's non-policy evaluation of the senator.

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<sup>9</sup>For coding purposes, senators are grouped into two categories, "Senator 1" and Senator 2." As a robustness check, I also ran two sets of models for each of these groups in which each panelist was only included once. The findings from this exploration were consistent with the stacked approach and may be found in the appendix.

<sup>10</sup>These models were also estimated using time invariant characteristics. The results were consistent with those found in Table 4.1.

With respect to learning about constituency service, however, the relationship to the non-policy evaluation is much weaker. Although the relationship remains consistently positive, a significant relationship cannot be established. The effect in this instance is near zero for the dichotomous independent variable. That is, learning about constituency service of a senator hardly registers in a change on the evaluation of non-policy attributes. For House members, similar changes related to significant, and rather substantive, effects with respect to the NPE. One possible reason for the disparate levels of change may reside in the previously stated ability of senators to perform casework. Senators maintain responsibilities over a larger group of voters. Voters understand this, and as noted in the discussion of citizen initiated contact, seek out House members much more frequently for such performance. As a result, citizens hear less about casework from senators and they are less prone to translate the news they do hear into changes in the NPE.

Changes in the level of contact also relate to changes in the NPE for senators. Column II demonstrates that a positive one-level change in the 4-category ordinal variable relates to a significant positive change in the NPE. More directly, increasing the level of contact to a more personal form is associated with citizens increasing their non-policy evaluations of their senators. For example, if a panelist responded in 2013 that her closest level of contact with the senator was through third-party disseminated material, but in 2014 she indicated that the closest level of contact with the same legislator was through representative disseminated materials, her NPE increased by a value of .185. This finding suggests that senators who increase their level of personal contact will reap positive benefits. Similarly, those who become more distant will suffer negative consequences.

The frequency with which one perceives to have contact with their senator also influences the NPE. As column III shows, on this dimension, those senators whose citizens identify as increasing their level of contact over the period of a year are rewarded with higher evaluations. While this effect may appear small, it has large substantive implications for constituent-

senator relations. Consider a one category move in the negative direction. For example, a constituent's beliefs about the frequency of contact move from "a few times a month" to "once a month." Such shifts are somewhat common, with roughly one-third of the sample cited at least such movement. The model predicts that the NPE will correspondingly decrease by about .12 on the scale. This movement would be akin to moving from roughly the 50th to 30th percentile in terms of overall change in NPE over the course of study.

Finally, column IV of Table 4.1 displays the effects of the model when the NPE is regressed on all variables gauging the change in contact. Within these results I find strong evidence for the arguments that changes in the content, the level, and the frequency of contact are all related to changes in citizens evaluations of their senators on a dimension that is separate from policy. Greater frequency of perceived contact and closer levels of contact lead to more positive NPE. Additionally, I find that hearing information regarding the personal background or the character of the senator leads to higher NPEs. The direction and significance levels of these results largely conform with those of House members. This finding suggests that while citizens look to their different legislators for different tasks and hear different types of information regarding those representatives, they evaluate them in similar ways with respect to the non-policy attributes.

Table 4.1: Predicting Change in Non-Policy Evaluation for Senators

	I	II	III	IV
$\Delta$ Service Awareness	0.036 (0.067)			0.033 (0.069)
$\Delta$ Character Awareness	0.203*** (0.052)			0.129*** (0.053)
$\Delta$ Level of Contact		0.185*** (0.022)		0.144*** (0.023)
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact			0.061*** (0.009)	0.034*** (0.009)
Constant	-0.060** (0.018)	-0.014 (0.017)	-0.060** (0.018)	-0.050** (0.018)
$N$	2,639	2,639	2,639	2,639
Clusters	1,401	1,401	1,401	1,401
$R^2$	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.05

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

Table 4.2 displays the results of models in which changes in the type, level, and frequency of contact predict changes in the panelists' perceived levels of policy congruence. Column I demonstrates that as citizens learn information regarding their senators' policy positions, they believe these respective legislators' positions are closer to their own. This result would seem to give credence to the notion that policy based home styles are effective. When citizens learn of their legislator's positions, they tend to have more favorable evaluations of those stances. While this result is in the same direction of that for House members, it is much greater and more precise. Such a result suggests that citizens make policy associations with senators slightly more readily than they do with members of the lower chamber.

The remaining columns of Table 4.2 provide strong support for the arguments made regarding contact with legislators and the phenomenon of projection. Panelists' reports of

coming into contact with information regarding the personal background of the senator were associated with strong, positive effects. Learning non-policy information about a senator is associated with positive changes in the perception of how well the the senator represents the constituent's views in Congress. Furthermore, coming into closer contact and more frequent contact with the senator reflect similar relationships. Perceptions of increased proximity significantly improve the level of perceived policy congruence. Although the senators are more closely associated with policy positions and roll call voting than House members, their evaluations on this dimension are not restricted to ideological criterion. Rather, senators can build goodwill with their constituents on the policy dimension through non-policy means, as well.

The most important finding from Table 4.2 is that, while citizens' policy preferences may tend to be somewhat stable over a long period of time, movement in their evaluations of senators' positions relative to their own is systematically related to their perceptions of the legislators' behavior. Differences in policy evaluations are not driven by purely ideological or issue-based means. Rather, even the ostensibly "polarizing" elements of representation are in many ways viewed through a non-policy lens. Senators, while more closely associated with policy and farther removed from the average citizen than a House member, can still improve their policy standing by engaging in non-political, less likely to offend, traditional home styles in the style of Fenno.

Table 4.2: Predicting Change in Perceived Policy Congruence

	I	II	III	IV	V
$\Delta$ Policy Stance Awareness	0.114*				0.105*
	(0.047)				(0.047)
$\Delta$ Service Awareness		0.041			0.036
		(0.056)			(0.061)
$\Delta$ Character Awareness		0.141**			0.099*
		(0.044)			(0.050)
$\Delta$ Level of Contact			0.111***		0.052*
			(0.021)		(0.025)
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact				0.043***	0.019*
				(0.009)	(0.009)
Constant	0.045*	0.039**	0.059***	0.030***	0.018
	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.022)
<i>N</i>	2,776	2,776	2,776	2,776	2,776
Clusters	1,426	1,426	1,426	1,426	1,426
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

Perceptions of policy and non-policy representation are, in part, driven by similar factors. It is now essential to examine if changes in these dimensions are related to changes regarding the overall evaluations of senators. Tables 4.3 through 4.5 display the results for these models. As Table 4.3 reveals, differences in the non-policy evaluation are strongly and significantly related to changes in overall approval. Even for senators, non-policy evaluations play an important role in how citizens appraise. Furthermore, the NPE plays an important role for both copartisans and those not sharing the identification of the incumbent. Non-policy evaluations are not simply artifacts for those who do not share an identification or policy



connection with the legislator. Rather, even allies, such as copartisans, employ the NPE to gauge the performance of their senators.

Table 4.3: Predicting Change in Senator Approval

	All	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
$\Delta$ Non-Policy Evaluation	0.194*** (0.033)	0.241** (0.063)	0.189*** (0.054)
Constant	0.012 (0.035)	0.002 (0.044)	0.004 (0.033)
$N$	1,361	445	805
$R^2$	0.01	0.02	0.01

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

With respect to the importance of policy in changes in the evaluations of senators, the results may appear somewhat more puzzling upon first glance. As found in Table 4.4, a slight positive effect exists for all respondents with respect to an improvement in the perceived level of policy congruence. That is, as constituents believe they are closer to their senator's own policy stances, their level of approval slightly improves. This effect is consistent with the hypothesis regarding the importance of policy. To be sure, policy does play a role in the evaluations of senators. Yet, this effect, while still positive, is much less precise when comparing copartisans and the non-aligned. While the decrease in statistical power resulting from the subsetting may be responsible for this change, it does not obfuscate the notion that changes in the perceptions of congruence are much weaker for citizens with respect to senators than it is for House members.

Table 4.4: Predicting Change in Senator Approval with Change in Policy Perceptions

	All	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
$\Delta$ Perceived Congruence	0.093*	0.084	0.099
	(0.039)	(0.062)	(0.052)
Constant	-0.012	-0.017	-0.009
	(0.026)	(0.047)	(0.032)
$N$	1,339	475	854
$R^2$	0.01	0.01	0.01

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

The models in Table 4.5 extend this exploration. In a similar manner to the effects found with House members, changes on the non-policy dimension are positively and strongly associated with changes in the level of approval. For both sets of partisans, the NPE plays an important role in determining fluctuations in views of approval. Here, the effect of changes in the level of perceived policy congruence are positive, suggesting that as the perception of congruence improves, the constituent's evaluation improves. Nonetheless, these estimates do not reach levels of acceptable reliability. Additionally, the effects are of a very small magnitude with respect to the observed change in the dependent variable.

Table 4.5: Predicting Senator Approval with Perceived Policy Congruence and Non-Policy Evaluation

	All	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
Non-Policy Evaluation	0.194*** (0.033)	0.230** (0.063)	0.177*** (0.054)
Perceived Congruence	0.067 (0.043)	0.072 (0.065)	0.058 (0.056)
Constant	-0.004 (0.027)	-0.019 (0.047)	-0.005 (0.032)
<i>N</i>	1,339	475	854
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.03	0.01

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate how citizens approached the representational relationship in a polarized world. How, if at all, do citizens' perceptions of their legislators change when party identification dominates the political landscape? The answer from this study may be surprising to casual observers of American politics. First, I find that Americans' views of their legislators are modestly dynamic. Using original, nationally representative panel data, I find that perceptions of legislators move a significant amount on both a non-policy and policy dimension. Second, these levels of affect and congruence are systematically responsive to perceptions of legislators' public efforts and home styles. Even in a time of clear partisan cleavages, legislators can change their reputations through their home styles. Third, I find that evaluations on both a policy and non-policy dimension have strong, significant effects on the public's overall approval of the legislator. Although differences on policy at the elite level are quite stark, legislators can still make connections with constituents on a non-policy dimension that will build their support. This phenomenon is not limited to copartisans, but rather extends to independents and members of the opposite party.

Furthermore, I find that these relationships are formed and changed in both the House and Senate. Senators, while occupying a more prominent position in the policy process, are still subject to non-policy representation demands. This sharing of obligations does not

imply that citizens view the two sets of federal legislators as identical. Rather, I find evidence that the non-policy dimension has a relatively more important role to play in the evaluation of House members than it does for Senators. Due to structural forces, Americans associate their senators more often with policy and ideology than their House members, who are more frequently associated with non-policy representation. The consequences of these associations and structural forces manifests in how Americans reach out to their legislators: senators are more likely to be seen as traditional delegates or trustees, while House members are more likely to be viewed as service providers.

It is possible to view the implications of this dissertation's findings as both ameliorating and exacerbating the partisan rancor that plagues American politics. On the one hand, the results suggests that legislators can break away from the reputations of their party in the policy realm. They are able to change their perceptions by appealing to constituents on a non-policy dimension and reap real rewards. On the other hand, incumbents use this relationship to their advantage. They are experts in appealing to voters and know how to build successful non-policy reputations more effectively than challengers. With expertise in crafting a strong non-policy reputation, they may successfully obfuscate their real level of congruence from moderate voters. Thus, citizens could continue to elect partisan extremists to Congress based on the strong non-policy reputations incumbents create and fortify.

What is clear, however, is that Americans' attitudes regarding representation are hardly straightforward. The theories put forth by Richard Fenno and others in an era of low polarization in the electorate and weak parties in government still remain strong today. Powerful members of Congress, such as Eric Cantor, who are in step with their districts ideologically must still maintain a strong non-policy reputation or they will suffer the consequences. Likewise, legislators who may belong to a party that is out of step with the district can use their non-policy reputation to keep their seats. To be sure, I find that policy representation, as one would expect in a highly partisan and polarized era, is very important in evaluations

of legislators. Yet, these perceptions are also subject to perceptions of legislator effort. Although constituents' preferences may remain relatively fixed in the aggregate, changes in their perceptions of effort are directly related to their beliefs of proximity with elites.

I add to the literature of representation by providing strong evidence that legislators can change their reputations on a non-policy dimension and a policy dimension and that these changes are very important in the overall score of evaluation. By demonstrating the complexity of representational relationships, this dissertation leaves theoretical questions that demand future investigation. First, this project demands further investigation of the "life cycle" of the representation relationship. While I use panel data to evaluate dynamism in perceptions of legislators, each dyadic relationship is starting from a point other than the origin. This arrangement may have external validity from the majority of legislators, but it fails to fully capture how perceptions begin and change from their initial position. Future exploitation of TAPS would provide further insight into how Americans change their perceptions, particularly with freshmen legislators.

Second, I have provided analysis of change at the individual level over time, but little research exists on longitudinal change within the home styles of legislators. How members of Congress adjust their behaviors in response to electoral challenges or redrawn district lines is still an important question regarding the ways in which members of Congress build their reputations. To better understand legislators' non-policy behaviors, I have begun to collect two data sources that may speak to their home styles: office locations and flights home receipts. The former provides evidence of a legislator's commitment to service provision, while the latter speaks to the representative's desire to be seen as attentive.

Third, attention must be paid to the mediating relationship between policy and non-policy representation. The connection between the two dimensions is an essential part of Fenno's argument: successful home styles can influence the constituents' response to legislators' policy behavior. In this way, the legislator builds leeway for voting through the

non-policy reputation. Similarly, it may be the case that legislators who are able to convince the constituent that they are strong policy delegates are able to win support on a non-policy dimension. This connection of representation demands is similar to connection between voters' reliance upon cognitive and emotional mechanisms to evaluate candidates. Preliminary non-recursive path modeling of this process suggests that legislators are able to build leeway through a successful home style, but the reverse is less evident. That is, legislators are less successful at building strong non-policy reputations through policy congruence alone.

Finally, with respect to House-Senate differences, further research must identify the extent to which party identification influences prioritization of legislator duties. Observational data makes it difficult to determine if copartisans will reach out to each other for service provision or policy advocacy in favor of a more easily accessible legislator. One possible way to address this question would be with experimental data.

Polarization in the electorate remains high. Party voting in Congress remains high. Few seats remain competitive. Nonetheless, the relationship between legislators and constituents remains an exciting and dynamic process. Legislators are able to change their reputations and these changes have serious consequences. It is my hope that the findings of this dissertation will encourage fellow scholars to reconsider representation as a more complex process. Citizens demand more than policy congruence from their legislators. Studies of representation should continue to recognize this phenomenon and pursue understanding how even in a highly partisan environment, political relationships can hinge on things that exist independent of partisanship and ideology.

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