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The incumbency effect: An analysis of Virginia's Second Congressional District

Mary Catherine Dunn

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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THE INCUMBENCY EFFECT:
AN ANALYSIS OF VIRGINIA'S SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Government
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by


Mary Catherine Dunn

1978

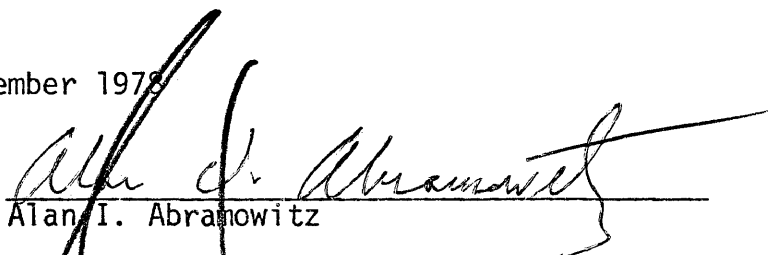
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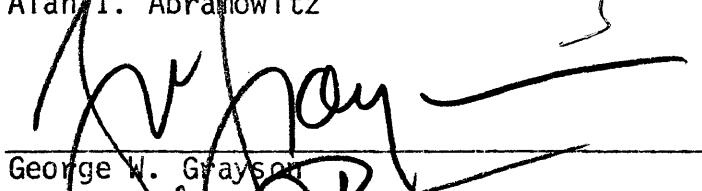
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Author

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Alan I. Abramowitz


George W. Grayson

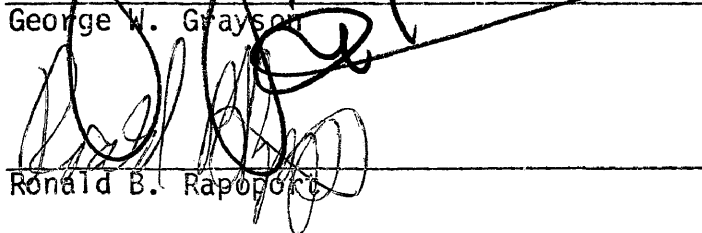

Ronald B. Rapoport

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine various factors influencing constituents' level of awareness and opinion of the incumbent congressman in Virginia's second congressional district.

The incumbency effect has established itself as a pervasive feature of the American political system, with recent elections returning more than ninety percent of incumbent congressional candidates to office.

A questionnaire was administered to a sample of three hundred voting age residents of the second congressional district using the random digit dialing telephone sampling technique. The questionnaire was designed to measure the respondents' sources of information, level of awareness of the incumbent, rating of the incumbent's job performance, opinion of the incumbent, political identification and stance, and various socioeconomic characteristics.

The survey results were tabulated and interpreted within the framework of seven hypotheses involving the respondents' level of awareness and opinion of the incumbent, and those factors influencing their opinion formation.

It is suggested that the respondents' level of awareness and opinion of the incumbent are influenced by the respondents' attention to certain information sources, their political identification and stance, activities of the incumbent, and selected socioeconomic characteristics.

The results suggest that the respondents' level of awareness of the incumbent is generally high, and their opinion of the incumbent is overwhelmingly positive (with both factors dependent upon the variables measured by the survey). The respondents' information sources, personal political stance and party identification, certain socioeconomic factors, and activities of the incumbent were seen to influence their opinion formation and awareness of the incumbent. As the respondents' attention to "costly" information sources increased, their awareness of the incumbent rose and their opinion of the incumbent became more positive. While respondents identifying themselves as Independents were more likely to be aware of the incumbent than were either Republicans or Democrats, the incumbent's fellow Republicans were more likely to express positive opinions of the incumbent than were Independents or Democrats. Those respondents sharing similar political stances with the incumbent (middle of the road or conservative) were also more likely to exhibit greater awareness of the incumbent than were respondents labeling themselves as liberals. As the respondents' age, income and educational levels rose, their awareness of the incumbent increased, and their opinion of him became more positive, particularly among white respondents. Certain activities of the incumbent (personal contact with the respondents and distribution of newsletters) produced the most significant impact upon respondent awareness and opinion formation, with respondents who had ever met the congressman or received a newsletter from him much more likely to be aware of the incumbent and to express strongly positive opinions of him.

It may be concluded that several factors which were seen to influence the respondents' awareness and opinion of the incumbent (age, race, income, education, political stance and party identification) cannot be controlled by the incumbent. However, the incumbent was seen to exert significant influence upon the respondents through personal contact, monopolization of information through newsletters, and manipulation of the media, with the end result of increasing voter awareness of the incumbent and producing more positive assessments of his job performance.

THE INCUMBENCY EFFECT:
AN ANALYSIS OF VIRGINIA'S SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION

The electoral advantage of incumbents is a well-established feature of the American political system. Since 1954, 92 percent of the congressional incumbents involved in over 3,000 primary or general elections have been victorious.¹ The reelection of incumbents by region is even more impressive: between 1954 and 1960, 99.5 percent of incumbents in the South won reelection, with the lowest reelection percentage (89.1 percent) in New England.² At the present time, only 25 percent of congressional elections represent a competitive situation where the decision rests on less than a 60 - 40 percent split of the vote.³ The electoral effect of incumbency has led one writer to note: "It is crucial to recognize that most members of the House . . . are elected permanently when they are elected once."⁴

The reelection of congressional incumbents is not only pervasive, it is also increasing. Before 1900 the average term for all House members never exceeded 2.79 terms; in this century the average has never fallen below 3.10 terms, and since 1955 has always exceeded 5 terms.⁵ Freshmen members often constituted one half of the House membership before 1900, yet since the turn of the century the number of freshmen has exceeded 30 percent in only four of thirty three congresses, typically averaging less than 20 percent in recent sessions.⁶

In 1976, 385 incumbents ran for reelection; of that number three lost their bid for candidacy in the primary election, and 368 (95.6

percent) were returned to Congress in November.⁷ Probably as a result of Watergate and Nixon's resignation, 79 Democrats were elected as freshmen in 1974 to the 94th Congress; what happened to these freshmen in the next election "is a testimony to the potency of incumbency."⁸ Of these 79 Democratic freshmen, 78 sought reelection and 76 were victorious. In the face of such results, one is inclined to agree with Charles Jones' observation that perhaps "no real campaign is necessary" to those congressional members facing reelection.⁹

The increasing success rate of incumbents has been paralleled by a decline in the number of "marginal" or competitive seats, with the proportion of "competitive" congressional districts steadily declining since the middle of the 1950's.¹⁰ Empirical studies have determined that the decline of marginal seats can be attributed to the increased electoral advantage of incumbency; from the late fifties to 1966 the incumbency advantage more than doubled, from between one and two percent to approximately five percent.¹¹ A substantial drop in the "swing ratio" (the percentage increase in House seats a political party accrues from a one percent increase in the popular vote) was also evident during this time.¹²

While much of the turnover of earlier congresses can be attributed to a lack of incentives for their members to remain in office, this is no longer the case. Congress has become one of the most "professionalized" of legislatures, promoting careerism among its members while offering them the salaries, staff, and resources to maintain their careers.¹³ The lengthening tenure and rising age of House members is due in part to incentives for incumbency, as well as other political factors.¹⁴ The desire to stay in office may be influenced by the

power and prestige associated with House service, the high salary and numerous perquisites available to congressmen, and an opportunity for public service and national leadership not matched in most other occupations.¹⁵ Thus, one of the prevalent concerns of the members of Congress is getting reelected, using the numerous resources available to congressmen.¹⁶

The average congressman has at his disposal "a series of public-funded accounts, perquisites, and services that amount to between one-half million and one million dollars over the course of a two year term."¹⁷ In the past several years new accounts for constituency communications and computer services have been created, while old established accounts have increased substantially. Among the new appropriations are unlimited WATS line privileges for long-distance telephone calls; increased travel to the district, from 26 to 32 free trips per year; increased district office rent for urban congressmen; new funds for the rental of a van or trailer as a mobile district office; and the unlimited transfer of funds between nine small accounts whose total surpasses \$60,000 per year.¹⁸

The frank represents one of the most "useful and misused" congressional privileges. In 1976, incoming mail to House members totalled about 25 million pieces, outgoing mail over 350 million pieces.¹⁹ With an average district containing 170,000 postal patrons, the franking privilege alone for four newsletters amounts to almost \$90,000 per year, with some congressmen making up to eight mailings yearly at a postage cost of \$176,000.²⁰ The printing, folding and maintenance of computerized mailing lists for the newsletters is also accomplished using congressional funds. Congressmen are also

provided with \$10,000 worth of government publications annually for distribution to their constituents. The yearly allocation for office supplies, books and stationery, available at reduced prices, is \$6,500. Private television and recording studios with complete staffs are available to House members for the production of tapes usually broadcast as "public service" programming in the district. Perhaps the most important perquisite available to congressmen is their staff, for which they may spend over one quarter million dollars annually.

Not all of the assets of incumbency are so tangible. Psychologically, the incumbent is at an advantage over his challenger; his self-confidence is bolstered by at least two years' service in the House, and he is usually armed with greater name familiarity and the reputation he has built through constituency services. The incumbent always has an available forum and the opportunity to build good will and attain positive publicity through frequent appearances in the district. The confidence and respect built among constituents can place allies, funds, and services at the disposal of the congressman.²¹ The perquisites available to congressional incumbents conducting a continuous campaign are so substantial that many congressmen believe that, "aside from isolated instances where an overriding issue is present, there is little excuse for defeat."²²

David Mayhew has divided the activities related to reelection in which Congressmen constantly engage into three categories. The first, "advertising," involves disseminating the congressman's name in a favorable image having little or no issue content through visits, speeches, and letters.²³ Through "credit claiming" the congressman personally takes responsibility for causing some government action

considered desirable by constituents, such as grants-in-aid, increased social security benefits, or decreased taxes.²⁴ Finally, "position-taking," the public enunciation of judgemental statements on matters of interest to the constituents, can be accomplished through floor addresses, speeches, or press releases.²⁵ Casework, publicity and constituency education are therefore important activities for congressmen: almost 80 percent of congressional members feel constituents require, and are entitled to, help in their dealings with the federal government; 80 percent of all congressmen circulate newsletters, and 60 percent issue questionnaires to their constituents.²⁶ Thus, "the normal activities of [House] members are those calculated to enhance their chances of reelection."²⁷

Much of the growing electoral success of incumbents is closely related to the campaign resources available to congressmen that make reelection highly probable. Incumbents start a campaign well ahead of their challengers, with the advantages of exposure, previous public experience, a public record, the numerous perquisites of congressional office, and access to large special interest contributors and national party campaign committees.²⁸ The cost of an effective campaign is rising rapidly: in 1972, over \$77 million was spent by all congressional candidates, and a competitive campaign for the House can cost each side \$100,000 or more.²⁹ The value of congressional "perks" therefore cannot be underestimated, since "not counting salaries, a congressman gets more than \$400,000 a term in campaign help from the government, and since that figure accounts for no staff time at all, it is probably quite low."³⁰

While the challenger must ask the voters for something - their support - the incumbent has something to offer his constituents: his contact with national government, his constituency services, and his experience in office.³¹ The non-incumbent has little or no continuity with the past or future, and must work without a meaningful or relevant record of his own. The incumbent, on the other hand, not only has the momentum of past electoral victories, but a record of involvement to provide continuity.³² From the candidate's standpoint, the election campaign is a process of acquiring and using the political resources that can secure votes, and the incumbent is in a superior position to insure that the resource balance favors him rather than his challenger.

The congressman's reelection campaign is therefore often merely an intensified extension of the sort of activities in which he is usually engaged during his term of office, when another term is a general, rather than specific, goal.³³ The analysis of the survey results will address the influence of certain congressional prerequisites upon voter awareness and opinion of the incumbent. The effect of the incumbent's "advertising" activities through personal contact with the voters, newsletters and information presented in the media, will be determined in relation to the survey respondents' awareness levels, ratings of the incumbent's job performance, and reasons for voting for or against the incumbent. The impact upon respondents of those activities related to reelection which are engaged in by the incumbent will be determined through the reasons stated by respondents for voting for or voting against the incumbent. The survey results will therefore attempt to refine previous studies of congressional

perquisites and activities, and assess the influence of these factors upon voters in the second congressional district.

The study of the growing incumbency advantage has produced numerous theories and hypotheses for the occurrence of this phenomenon. The decline of competition in congressional elections has recently received a great deal of attention. That a steady decline in the proportion of "competitive" congressional districts exists is generally agreed upon; the distinction among authors lies in their explanation of this finding. Three explanations for the decline of competition have been proposed. The first explanation holds that changes in the institutional setting of congressional elections have contributed to the incumbency advantage. Robert Erikson was one of the first to examine the effect of congressional districting on party fortunes in congressional elections, concluding that: "It is particularly striking that neither malapportionment nor deliberate partisan manipulation of district lines played the major role in the creation of the one-time Republican advantage in congressional districting."³⁴ Edward Tufte has written that redistricting has a major effect on the decline of the swing ratio ("the percentage increase in House seats a party obtains when it receives a one percent increase in popular vote").³⁵ Tufte claims that "reapportionment rulings have given incumbents new opportunities to construct secure districts for themselves . . ."³⁶

A second explanation attributes the decline of competition in congressional elections to a shift in the electorate's voting behavior. Burnham states that "the most important single factor has been systematic change in mass voting behavior since 1960."³⁷ The electorate's decreasing partisan loyalty and subsequent rise in

ticket-splitting is "the cause of the apparent boost in the incumbency advantage," according to Erikson.³⁸ Cover has also documented the shift in electoral behavior, concluding that "not only are partisan defections becoming more common but they are falling into a heavily pro-incumbent pattern."³⁹ In supporting the behavioral change explanation, Ferejohn concludes that "voters seem to be shifting away from the use of party affiliation as a decision rule and toward increased utilization of incumbency."⁴⁰ Hinckley has also confirmed the tendency of voters with little information on the political candidates to vote for the candidate in office, using incumbency as a voting cue.⁴¹ Similarly, Cowart has found that a sizeable portion of the electorate, lacking other information, will apparently use incumbency as a voting cue.⁴² In his study of postwar Senate elections, Kostroski concluded that "incumbency now serves, at least in Senate elections, as an important alternative voting cue to party."⁴³ The analysis of the survey results will examine the influence of party identification upon voter awareness and opinion of the incumbent, as well as upon actual voting behavior. In order to address Ferejohn's conclusion that voters increasingly rely upon incumbency, rather than party affiliation, as a voting cue, the analysis of the data will determine the party identification of the respondents, the relation of this variable to awareness and opinion of the incumbent, and the impact of the variable upon voting behavior in the 1976 general election.

The final explanation holds that institutional change is responsible for the modification of voting behavior. Mayhew attributes the shifts in voting behavior to the increased use of the institutional advantages of incumbency, as previously detailed. As the incumbent's

visibility increases so does the electoral value of incumbency, with an end result of decreasing the number of marginal districts.

Fiorina also cites the value of resources which the incumbent possesses to invest in his reelection effort.⁴⁴ In support of Mayhew's

hypothesis, he states: "An institutional change - the growth of the bureaucracy - has encouraged behavioral change among congressmen, which in turn has encouraged behavioral change among some voters."⁴⁵

In an effort to identify the impact of institutional change, this study will assess the incumbent's use of available resources in relation to the survey respondents' awareness and opinion formation. The relative influence of the incumbent's activities will then be measured against the influence of information sources, party identification, and certain socioeconomic characteristics of the survey respondents.

The electoral setting of congressional elections has been studied at length. The effect of presidential "coattails" upon congressional elections has been of particular interest, with studies confirming a twofold effect; first, the presidential contest can affect the number and type of citizens who go to the polls on election day, and secondly, voters may support a House nominee primarily because they are attracted to his party ticket by his presidential running mate.⁴⁶ As the vote for a party's presidential candidate increases, the vote for that party's House candidate will also increase, producing upswings and declines in the presidential popular vote that are reflected in the congressional vote.⁴⁷ According to Hinkley, the off-year loss of House seats by the president's party in every midterm election since the Civil War can be explained by the coattail effect

in on-year elections.⁴⁸ Cummings chooses to explain this phenomenon by stating that the electorate in individual House districts changes its party allegiance for President more readily than it shifts its choice for Representative.⁴⁹ The effect of the presidential vote upon the congressional vote in the 1976 general election will be addressed briefly by the survey results. A comparison of the two votes will be made; however, since data on previous electoral results for the survey respondents is not available, it will not be possible to analyze the cumulative effect of presidential coattails in the second congressional district. The data must instead be viewed in reference to electoral results for the district as a whole, rather than among the survey respondents. Even within this limitation, the relationship between presidential and congressional voting in view of the stated party affiliation of the respondents can be explored.

The socioeconomic characteristics of voters are often determining factors in congressional elections. From his study of party, constituency and congressional voting, Shannon has concluded that "the selection of Democrats and Republicans in congressional elections is highly associated with certain socioeconomic characteristics of the various constituencies."⁵⁰ Shannon related certain variables to congressional voting patterns and found a "pronounced tendency for certain types of constituencies to select Democrats and for other types to select Republicans."⁵¹

While the correlation of certain socioeconomic factors to voting behavior has been established, the relationship is hardly stagnant. The changing nature of the voting population coupled with the fluctuating intensities of certain variables influencing voting behavior

produce divergent electoral situations over time. As the proportion of Independents has grown, party loyalty has weakened considerably, with demographic differences failing to strongly distinguish Republican and Democratic identifiers.⁵² While women's participation in voting is now equivalent to that of men, young voters are no more politically active than older groups.⁵³ Younger voters are also less affected by partisanship, and more influenced by policy issues.⁵⁴

Various socioeconomic characteristics, and their impact upon constituent awareness, reasons for voting for or voting against the incumbent, and opinion of the incumbent will be analyzed in the survey results. The effect of the respondents' age, income, educational level, race, and sex upon their awareness and opinion of the incumbent will be tested through the hypotheses, as will the influence of the party affiliation and personal political stance of the respondents.

The changing characteristics of voters have a profound effect upon congressional voting behavior. With the decomposition of party identification, voters are more likely to desert their party to vote for the opposition candidate, and the importance of other cues, such as incumbency, increases. The individual voter evaluates candidates on the basis of information and impressions conveyed by the mass media, information that is often imperfect and incomplete. The resultant electoral instability is evident in ticket-splitting and in vote switching from one election to the next.⁵⁵ Based upon an evaluation of the reasons given for voting for or voting against the incumbent, the influence of party identification upon the survey respondents will be examined. The effect of the party identification of the respondents upon their awareness and opinion of the incumbent will

also be addressed.

The phenomenon of ticket-splitting is fairly recent to American voting behavior. Prior to World War II, 78 percent of American voters cast straight party ballots, with between 60 and 70 percent of voters casting straight party ballots in the fifties.⁵⁶ However, in a 1968 post-election survey, Gallup found that only 43 percent of voters surveyed had supported a straight party ticket.⁵⁷ DeVries and Tarrance cite the weakening association with party and the increasing number of voters who identify themselves as Independents as the two major contributing factors to split-ticket voting.⁵⁸ Cummings has found that the amount of congressional split-ticket voting varies markedly from election to election in response to the special characteristics of each individual campaign; and even if the number of voters actually splitting their ticket is minimal, the effect on the distribution of party strength in Congress can be substantial.⁵⁹ He concludes that "the impact of incumbent House nominees on split-ticket voting for President and for Congress is (thus) a persistent one."⁶⁰ DeVries and Tarrance find the ticket-splitting phenomenon so important that "ticket-splitting is, most of the time, the balance of power in elections."⁶¹ In the second congressional district, the phenomenon of ticket-splitting has been evident in recent elections, with the Republican congressman consistently returned to Washington while Democratic candidates win the majority of the remaining elected positions. The survey results will examine the impact of party affiliation upon awareness, opinion formation, and actual voting behavior in consideration of the ticket-splitting theories advanced by DeVries and Tarrance.

Miller and Stokes found that "perceptions of individual candidates account for most of the votes cast by partisans against their parties," and that such perceptions were almost devoid of information on the policy stands of the candidates.⁶² The meager amount of information which voters possess for low visibility offices, such as House seats, has been confirmed by Hinckley, who concludes: ". . . incumbency effects are more important in voting for low-visibility offices about which the voter has relatively little other information."⁶³ Baker and Walter also found that there is a tendency for those who perceive little difference among candidates to vote for the incumbent, who represents a "known quantity" as opposed to the challenger.⁶⁴ In her study of issues and information costs in congressional elections, Hinckley discovered that with less information, voters would often endorse the policy of the status quo and choose the incumbent.⁶⁵ Thus, as Miller and Stokes stated: "The increment of strength that some candidates, especially incumbents, acquire by being known to their constituents is almost entirely free of policy content."⁶⁶ The influence of various information sources upon the survey respondents will be examined in relation to awareness, opinion formation and reasons stated for voting for or voting against the incumbent. The "cost" of those information sources employed by the respondents will be a determining factor in the analysis, which will expand upon Hinckley's concept of the relationship between information costs and issues in congressional elections.

It can be readily seen that, as Hutcheson has stated, "incumbency has a considerable effect on the outcome of elections;" an effect which is "not simply an influence [reflecting] the underlying party

identification."⁶⁷ In his study of Senate electoral trends, Kostroski found that the relative importance of party and incumbency in Senate elections has changed dramatically over the last quarter century, with party identification having undergone an overall decrease in influence, while incumbency has experienced a roughly proportional increase.⁶⁸ According to Burnham, the effect of voters casting their ballots for incumbent representatives as incumbents over the past two decades has not only increased, it has been "electorally decisive."⁶⁹

The advantage of incumbency in congressional elections has even been quantified by some writers. Erikson found that "upon becoming an incumbent, a House candidate gains an additional one percent to two percent of the two-party vote beyond what he would otherwise get."⁷⁰ Fiorina feels the net advantage is much greater, so much so that "expanded constituency service opportunities have given the marginal congressman the ability to capture 5-10 percent of his district's voters who might otherwise oppose him on party or policy grounds."⁷¹ The electoral advantage enjoyed by incumbents is therefore not limited to members of their immediate party, or even Independents. Abramowitz and Cover have both documented the willingness of voters to cross party lines in support of the incumbent. Cover notes that: "Not only are partisan defections becoming more common but they are falling into a heavily pro-incumbent pattern."⁷²

Thus the commonly conceived notion of an incumbent's electoral advantage can be summarized in three major elements. First, voters are more likely to be familiar with the incumbent or to know his name, which for any election other than one of high stimulus, will be a decided advantage.⁷³ Secondly, the campaign apparatus available to

the incumbent through a host of properties associated with office-holding will present a clear advantage over that of the challenger.⁷⁴ Finally, a sizeable portion of the electorate, generally uninformed, may simply approve of the status quo by voting for the incumbent.⁷⁵ The advantage of incumbency can be so electorally decisive that "even the most excessive displeasure with the politics and governing of one party can be overcome partially when that party's candidate happens to be the incumbent officeholder."⁷⁶ In exploring the electoral advantage of incumbency, the survey results will address the respondents' name familiarity with the incumbent as well as their familiarity with his party identification, and the influence of selected factors upon these variables. Those resources available to the incumbent will also be examined, particularly their influence on respondent awareness and opinion formation. The amount and sources of information possessed by the survey respondents will also be compared with their awareness and opinion of the incumbent. The examination of these variables is undertaken to further refine the concept of the incumbency advantage and its impact in the second congressional district.

The final area of study has concerned itself with congressional behavior and constituency influence upon that behavior. The congressman represents his image of the district or of his constituents. His interpretation of "what, from whom and how he hears" depends upon his personality, his background information, his contacts and associations in Washington, and his public image.⁷⁷ The representative's beliefs about constituency preference are therefore functions of the channels of communication and processes of transaction between himself and his constituents.⁷⁸ Thus, a congressman's conception of his district

confirms itself, to a considerable degree.⁷⁹ Miller and Stokes determined that "the Representative's perceptions and attitudes are more strongly associated with the attitude of his electoral majority than they are with the attitudes of the constituency as a whole."⁸⁰ However, the same study also found that congressmen overestimate their visibility and saliency to the local public, reinforcing Dexter's concept that congressmen's perception of their district is heavily biased.

The ultimate constituency influence is reflected in the electoral power of the voters to "throw the rascals out." Turner concluded in his study of party and constituency that "the great majority of congressmen, the great majority of the time, yield to the pressures from their constituencies. . . in casting their votes."⁸¹ Matthews and Stimson have also cited the link which elections provide between congressmen and constituents: a constituency that does not like a member can replace him. "While the outcomes of congressional elections do not often seem to hinge on policy matters, the policy consequences of elections can be substantial."⁸² The ultimate electoral power of the constituents will be explored in the reasons given by respondents for voting for or voting against the incumbent in the next election. Those variables influencing the respondents' opinions will also be considered, as well as the impact of the incumbent upon the respondents' awareness.

This survey will investigate the incumbency effect in Virginia's Second Congressional District through the analysis of survey results of a questionnaire administered to three hundred respondents within the district. After establishing the constituents' level of awareness of

the incumbent, the study will explore those factors which influence the respondents' opinion of the incumbent.

The analysis of the data will be guided by several hypotheses. In order to analyze constituent awareness of the incumbent, four hypotheses have been formulated. The first hypothesis suggests that the level of attention to various information sources increases, the level of awareness of the incumbent will also increase. The level of awareness will also be influenced by the type of information sources available to the respondents; less available sources such as the editorial and opinion pages, or stories dealing with politics and government in the daily newspaper will produce a stronger impact upon constituent awareness than attention to the more available sources of radio or television news. In order to obtain the less available information, more commitment or effort is required of the voter than is necessary to secure less "costly", or more available information. The voter is therefore more inclined to retain the less available information which was more costly to obtain. Previous studies have confirmed that information concerning the incumbent is generally more available to constituents, and that the availability of information does influence awareness levels, with more "costly" information producing higher levels of awareness. This hypothesis will therefore address both the concept of constituent awareness and the impact of information, and its relative accessibility, upon awareness.

The second hypothesis posits that the presence of certain socio-economic factors will influence constituency awareness of the incumbent. Specifically, as the age, income, and educational levels of the respondents increase, awareness of the incumbent will similarly

increase, particularly among white respondents. This hypothesis addresses socioeconomic characteristics similar to those defined by Shannon as influential in determining whether Democrats or Republicans are selected in congressional elections. Since the second congressional district is strongly Democratic in its socioeconomic characteristics, it could be assumed that Democrats would be elected to Congress; however, this is not the case. This hypothesis will determine whether a similar situation exists in regard to constituent awareness, and the effect of selected socioeconomic characteristics upon awareness.

The third hypothesis suggests that party identification will influence the level of constituency awareness. This hypothesis holds that the incumbent's fellow Republicans will display higher levels of awareness than respondents identifying themselves as Democrats or Independents. Previous studies have found that party affiliation has become less prominent as a voting cue in elections, with incumbency as a cue assuming greater importance. This hypothesis will assess the influence of party identification on awareness levels and the respondents' name familiarity with the incumbent. If party identification is indeed used less frequently as a voting cue, the hypothesis will be negated through the reduced impact in name familiarity and awareness.

The fourth hypothesis states that the level of constituency awareness can be affected by the incumbent himself. The impact of the incumbent's activities will be measured through the awareness of those respondents who have met the incumbent or received a newsletter from him. This hypothesis addresses the influence of congressional perquisites, and the advantage incumbents have been found to enjoy over challengers in electoral situations. The electoral advantage of

incumbency has been well documented, as has the name familiarity advantage incumbent's generally possess. Thus, the influence of the incumbent himself upon constituent awareness will be measured through his activities.

An "information" variable, which measures the total number of reasons mentioned for voting for or against the incumbent congressman, was developed to determine the impact of certain variables on the voting behavior of the survey respondents. Rather than simply measuring respondent awareness, this variable attempts to assess the impact of the amount and source of the respondents' information, party identification, socioeconomic characteristics, and certain activities of the incumbent upon the respondents' reasons for voting for or against the incumbent.

The analysis of those factors influencing the respondents' opinion of the incumbent will rest upon the following hypotheses: First, the way in which constituents rate the job the incumbent congressman is doing in Washington will be dependent upon the amount and sources of the constituents' information, party identification and personal political stance, selected socioeconomic characteristics, and certain activities of the incumbent. The less available, and hence more "costly" sources of information will influence constituents to form more positive opinions of the incumbent's job performance. Those respondents identifying more closely with the incumbent's political stance (conservative or middle of the road) will be more positive than "liberal" respondents in their assessment of his job as congressman, as will those respondents who identify with the incumbent's political party (Republican) than will respondents identifying themselves as

Democrats or Independents. As suggested in previous hypotheses, as the respondents' age, income and educational levels rise, their rating of the incumbent's job performance will become more positive, especially among white respondents. The impact of certain activities of the incumbent (as measured by respondents who have ever met the congressman or received a newsletter from him) upon the respondents' rating of the incumbent's job will be analyzed, with those respondents who have been exposed to these activities displaying more positive assessments of the incumbent's job performance.

Based upon the results of previous studies, the variables of leadership ability and experience will emerge as the most significant of four characteristics of the incumbent (honesty, experience, leadership ability and intelligence) rated by the respondents. Finally, the variables of the survey respondents' information, party identification, socioeconomic characteristics and the influence of activities of the incumbent will affect their opinion of the incumbent congressman. As the respondents' information sources become more "costly", their opinion of the incumbent will become increasingly positive. Those respondents identifying themselves with the political party of the incumbent (Republican) will be more likely to form positive opinions of the incumbent than either Democrats or Independents. The respondents' opinion of the incumbent will also become more positive as their age, income and educational levels increase. Finally, certain activities of the incumbent will influence respondents to form more positive opinions of the incumbent.

CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

The second congressional district is composed of "The City of Norfolk, and that part of the City of Virginia Beach not included in the fourth congressional district." That portion of Virginia Beach contained within the second congressional district has an established, urban character as compared to the largely rural area of the city which falls in the fourth congressional district. The land area of the district is 159 square miles, with a 1970 population density of 2,922 persons per square mile. In 1970 the total population of the second congressional district was 464,715 (307,951 in Norfolk and 156,764 in Virginia Beach portion), with 357,466 whites (77%) and 107,269 blacks and other races (23%). The population is relatively mobile: 23 percent of the total 1970 population had lived outside the state of Virginia in 1965, and 58 percent of the population were born outside Virginia.

The number of years of school completed by persons aged 25 years and older in 1970 was somewhat lower in the second congressional district than in the nation as a whole. In 1970, 52 percent of all persons 25 years old and over in the United States were high school graduates, and 48 percent of Virginia's population of 25 years and over were high school graduates. While only 31 percent of all persons 25 years and older in the second congressional district had graduated from high

school, 45 percent had completed between 1 and 11 years of school, with only 1 percent never having attended school. Levels of higher education were more comparable to state and national averages with 11 percent completing some college, 7 percent college graduates, and 4 percent with post graduate work. For the nation as a whole 11 percent of persons twenty-five years and older had completed some college, with an additional 11 percent either graduating from college or pursuing post graduate work. In the state of Virginia 10 percent of persons twenty five years and older had completed some college while 12 percent were college graduates or had completed post graduate work. Household income distribution within the second congressional district is also low; 47 percent of 1970 households had incomes of \$4,999 or less; 28 percent of 1970 households had incomes between \$5,000 and \$9,999; 15 percent of 1970 households had incomes between \$10,000 and \$14,999; 8 percent of 1970 households had incomes between \$15,000 and \$24,999; and 2 percent of 1970 households had incomes of \$25,000 or more. Median family income in 1970 was \$8,733 with a per capita income of \$2,915.

According to the 1970 census, civilian employment in the second congressional district is 55 percent white collar, 30 percent blue collar, and 15 percent service workers. Government workers constitute a significant portion of the work force, as do members of the armed forces.

The second congressional district is dominated by Federal military installations: Norfolk is the headquarters of the Navy's Atlantic Fleet with one of the world's largest naval bases. Other installations and facilities include the Norfolk Naval Air Rework Facility, and the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk; the Naval Amphibious Base, Oceana

Naval Air Station and the Fort Story Army Base in Virginia Beach; and nearby the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, and Langley Field, Fort Monroe and Fort Eustis in Hampton. Other important segments of the local economy include shipping and related port activity, shipbuilding and repair, manufacturing, auto assembly, banking, retail sales, and construction.

When viewed separately, the population characteristics of the two cities within the second congressional district emphasize the urban/suburban nature of the area. While almost 30 percent of Norfolk's population in 1970 was black, less than 10 percent of Virginia Beach residents were black. The median age of the entire population (Norfolk 23.9 years, Virginia Beach, 23.1 years) and of the voting age population (Norfolk 34.1 years, Virginia Beach 35.2 years) was relatively similar in the two cities, as were median school years completed (Norfolk 11.8 years, Virginia Beach 12.4 years). Perhaps the greatest inequities are in the statistics on income; 1970 median family income in Virginia Beach was \$10,551 but only \$7,822 in Norfolk. Moreover, the number of families with incomes of less than \$3,000 was 14.2 percent in Norfolk, 8.1 percent in Virginia Beach; the number of families with incomes between \$3,000 and \$10,000 was 50.5 percent in Norfolk and 38.3 percent in Virginia Beach; and the number of families with incomes of \$15,000 or more was 13.8 percent in Norfolk and 24.3 percent in Virginia Beach.

There are approximately 157,000 registered voters in the district; 86,000 in Norfolk and 71,000 in Virginia Beach, with a median voting age of 34. The majority of the concentration of Naval personnel does not vote in the district, producing characteristically low turnout figures. While the district is traditionally Democratic in its voting

in State and local elections, Republicans have prevailed in some recent Presidential and Congressional races. The 1968 Presidential election was evenly split between Humphrey and Nixon with 38 percent each, with the remaining 25 percent of the vote cast for Wallace. In 1972 the national pattern prevailed as Nixon won 68 percent of the vote, McGovern 32 percent, as it did in 1976 with Carter winning 51 percent of the vote, and Ford 49 percent of the vote. Henry Howell, a native of the second congressional district, twice carried the district as the Democratic candidate in unsuccessful bids for Virginia's governorship in 1973 and 1977.

The incumbent Congressman from the second congressional district is five-term Republican G. William Whitehurst. He was first elected in 1968, following the retirement of the relatively conservative Democrat Porter Hardy, who had served 22 years in the House of Representatives. Since his first election, Whitehurst has easily won reelection.

The 1968 election was the only serious electoral challenge Whitehurst has yet had to surpass - an election which he won by his slimmest margin of 54 percent - 46 percent. The Democratic primary proved to be a bitter and divisive experience for the local party, with Norfolk attorney F. T. (Bingo) Stant winning by 55 percent of the vote over Jack Rixey, also a Norfolk attorney. Stant was unable to unite the Democratic vote in the November election in the wake of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago and the Wallace candidacy, which captured one quarter of the district vote. Thus, Whitehurst entered office with Nixon over a divided Democratic Party in the second congressional district.

In 1970 the Democratic party was still weakened, and produced only two candidates just prior to the primary filing deadline. Joseph Fitzpatrick, then second district Democratic Chairman, won the primary by 71 percent - 29 percent over challenger David I. Levine. However, Fitzpatrick's late start and meager budget were inadequate against the incumbent, and Whitehurst won reelection with 61 percent of the vote.

The second district Democrats were again without a candidate in 1972, and tapped Virginia Beach attorney-businessman L. Charles Burlage, a previously unsuccessful candidate in state and local races. Even George McGovern received more votes than Burlage, who lost to Whitehurst by 73 percent - 27 percent of the vote.

In 1974 the Democrats nominated in convention Robert R. (Bob) Richards, Executive Director of the Norfolk Education Association. Though he was out-spent \$83,545 to \$44,418, Richards managed to win 40 percent of the vote to Whitehurst's 60 percent. Whitehurst's margin was still secure, even as he was involved in an embarrassing venture to establish a highly capitalized commercial bank in the midst of the post-Watergate, anti-Republican trend.

In 1976 the second district Democrats returned to the primary, electing Norfolk architect and two term House of Delegates member Robert E. (Bob) Washington over former Navy Captain and Viet Nam POW James A. Mulligan, Jr., by 70 percent to 30 percent. However, after a campaign characterized by attacks against the incumbent's record, Whitehurst easily won reelection, 66 percent - 34 percent.

G. William Whitehurst was born in Norfolk, Virginia on March 12, 1925, and has maintained a close alliance with his hometown ever since, although he currently makes his home in neighboring Virginia Beach.

He was educated at Washington and Lee University, B.A. 1950, the University of Virginia, M.A. 1951, and West Virginia University, Ph.D. 1962. Whitehurst served in the Navy during World War II, and was Professor of History at Old Dominion College from 1950-68, where he was also Dean of Students from 1963-68. In addition, Whitehurst acted as News Analyst for WTAR-TV in Norfolk from 1962-68, with weekly Sunday night commentaries. Even as a political novice in the 1968 election, Whitehurst had enjoyed a great deal of favorable local exposure through his duties at the College and as a news commentator.

Whitehurst serves on the House Armed Services Committee and on the Military Installations and Facilities and Research and Development Subcommittees, a position vital to a district which receives over \$400 million of defense money annually. During his tenure, Whitehurst has offered very little legislation, and is perhaps best known for the animal legislation he introduces (bills to study the Timber Wolf, Grizzly Bear, etc.). Returning to the district almost every weekend, Whitehurst offers comprehensive constituency service and maintains high exposure through the usual media coverage, speaking events, and newsletters. Whitehurst's political stance could be described as conservative, as evidenced by selected Group Ratings.

The "rating groups" are political interest groups which base their judgments on general ideology, i.e. liberal or conservative; the economic and political interests of the particular group which they represent, such as farmers or consumers; or single issues with which they are concerned, such as defense spending. Legislators are rated on votes which are considered crucial by each individual group, with the legislators' score calculated by dividing the number of "correct" votes by

the total number of votes chosen. The Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) is a liberal group emphasizing "economic legislation designed to reduce inequality, curtail rising defense spending and prevent encroachments on civil liberties."¹ For each of the years 1974-1976, Whitehurst's ADA score was an incredibly low 5 out of 100 possible points.² COPE, the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education, is probably the most effective liberal lobby in Washington. Like ADA, it also ranks Whitehurst conservatively, with scores of 0 in 1974, 9 in 1975, and 19 in 1976.³ At the other end of the spectrum, the pro-defense NSI (National Security Index of the American Security Council) rated Whitehurst at 100 in 1974 and 1975.⁴ The Americans for Constitutional Action (ACA), which stands against "the current movement of our Nation into Socialism and a regimented society,"⁵ rated Whitehurst at 93 in 1974, 82 in 1975, and 84 in 1976.⁶

Another indication of Whitehurst's conservatism is provided by his roll call voting record in reference to the Conservative Coalition, a voting alliance composed of Republicans and Southern Democrats voting against Northern Democrats in Congress. A conservative coalition vote is defined as any vote in the Senate or House on which a majority of voting Southern Democrats and a majority of voting Republicans oppose the stand taken by a majority of voting Northern Democrats. In 1977, Whitehurst voted in agreement with the Conservative Coalition on 81 percent of 156 conservative coalition recorded votes, and in disagreement with the position of the conservative coalition on only 8 percent of the recorded votes.⁷ His Party Unity vote, when he voted in agreement with a majority of the Republican Party, was 77 percent in 1976 and 74 percent in 1977.⁸

The second congressional district is, by most standards, a "typically" Democratic district. Comprised largely of working-class whites in the suburbs, with a segregated core of solidly Democratic blacks in Norfolk's inner city, the district is relatively young, with average educational achievement and a median income in the lower middle class range. Yet, in the face of fairly consistent Democratic victories, a conservative Republican congressman has been easily returned to Washington for five consecutive terms by margins of at least 60 percent. Through an analysis of constituents' level of awareness and opinion of the incumbent congressman, this study will attempt to explain the continued Republican dominance of a congressional seat in a characteristically Democratic district.

CHAPTER II

THE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The instrument used to conduct the survey of Second Congressional District residents was a questionnaire with thirty-eight questions. The questionnaire was administered through the random digit dialing technique by ten volunteer workers who completed 300 interviews to provide the survey data.

The questionnaire was designed following the format of a Primary Election Questionnaire developed and administered at the College of William and Mary. The questionnaire language was standardized, and followed the example of voting behavior questionnaires in use at the University of Michigan Survey Research Center. It was designed to determine the respondents' sources of information, the extent of their familiarity with the congressional incumbent, their opinion of the congressional incumbent, and various socioeconomic characteristics. An initial draft of the questionnaire contained thirty three (33) questions. Following a pre-test, several questions were deleted because of their limited relevance to the survey; other questions were modified to improve the clarity of response and subsequent data analysis; approximately one third of the questions were reworded or placed in a different order to improve the ease of response and the flow of the questionnaire.

The resulting questionnaire was then administered by three volunteers to five randomly selected telephone numbers within the second congressional district, for a total of 15 calls, or 5 percent of the anticipated final survey. The telephone numbers that were used at this time were recorded to insure that they would not be used again in the actual survey. All responses were recorded exactly as they would be during the survey. Each volunteer was asked to note any difficulties with the wording, arrangement or clarity of each question, and any questions which were misunderstood or misinterpreted by the respondents. Following this initial testing of the instrument, the comments of the volunteers were considered and incorporated into a final version of the questionnaire.

The same calling procedure as outlined above was again employed as a final test of the instrument; however the sample was expanded to 30 calls, or 10 percent of the actual survey. At the completion of this test there were no problems encountered with the questionnaire, and it was printed in final form.

The questionnaire was administered over a two week period in May, 1977 (May 9 - 20) by ten volunteer workers, five females and five males. The telephone calls were made from a central location, using six individual telephone lines. The calls were made between 5 PM and 8 PM, Monday through Thursday. Each interviewer was provided with questionnaires, pencils, telephone numbers, and an instruction sheet supplying information on the proper methods of calling and details on the nature of the survey. The interviewer identified himself/herself to the respondent, and stated that they were taking a public opinion poll for a project in the Department of Government at the College of William and

Mary.

After an initial question to determine whether the respondent was of voting age (Are you 18 years of age or older?), or if anyone of voting age was present (Is there anyone 18 or older at home?), the interviewer asked if this was the respondent's permanent place of residence. If the respondent was a permanent resident, the interview proceeded. If either of the initial questions on age or residence produced a negative response the interview was terminated. (For further information on the format and administration of the questionnaire, see Appendix.)

The selection of the sample was achieved through the use of a random digit dialing telephone survey. This survey technique was chosen because it is simple, efficient, accurate, and highly cost-effective. In general, telephone surveys have many advantages over personal interviews and mail surveys, such as high response rates, savings in field expenses, safety and convenience for the interviewer, and confidentiality for the respondent. In 1976, 92.8 percent of all United States households had a telephone available in the housing unit or elsewhere for incoming calls; the comprehensive nature of telephone service thus assures that few persons would be excluded from a telephone survey due to inaccessibility. The use of a telephone survey also facilitates follow-up interviews and allows large geographic areas to be surveyed with ease. In addition to providing the usual benefits of a telephone survey, random digit dialing apparently avoids such sampling biases as the exclusion of households with either unlisted telephone numbers or new listings.

There are, however, potential biases involved in conducting a telephone survey. A 1976 LEAA National Crime Survey found that the most significant differences in characteristics of persons with a telephone available versus all households nationwide were race, age (18-24), and level of educational achievement. Those respondents who were minority members, aged 18 to 24 years, or who had lower levels of educational achievement (8 years or less), were somewhat less likely than the national average to have a telephone available. The differences associated with these characteristics are much smaller than in the past, and continue to improve. In their study of random digit dialing, Alfred J. Tuchfarber and William L. Klecka have determined that even though telephone coverage is not complete "this factor would not put a telephone survey at a special disadvantage compared to traditional interviewing methods," for two reasons.¹ First, the approximately 10 percent of total households without a telephone is not a uniformly poor, black or less educated group, and their exclusion would have a minor net effect upon the representativeness of the sample. Second, the methods of personal interviewing and traditional sampling do not ensure the selection of a perfectly representative sample since these surveys also have difficulty locating black, poor, and less educated persons.

Some difficulties with interaction and rapport between the interviewer and survey respondent may be present during a telephone survey; the legitimacy of the survey or the interviewer's credentials may be questioned by the respondent. However, the ability of the respondent to quickly terminate the call serves to counterbalance somewhat any negative feelings the respondent may have. The fact that the inter-

view is conducted over the telephone rather than face to face also produces two advantages: the interview is less threatening and more conducive to confidentiality, and does not convey nonverbal characteristics of the interviewer which can influence responses.

Before the survey, all the operating telephone exchanges within the second congressional district were determined with the assistance of C&P Telephone Company. Those exchanges in Virginia Beach which fell outside the congressional district boundary limits were excluded, as were exchanges assigned to military installations, businesses, and hospitals. The range of operating four-digit numbers following the exchange was also defined in order to increase efficiency in dialing and assignment of random digits.

A total of twenty-six (26) exchanges were used in the survey, fourteen (14) in Norfolk and twelve (12) in Virginia Beach. Since the city of Norfolk represents the more populous portion of the district, twelve calls were completed within each Norfolk exchange, and eleven calls completed within each Virginia Beach exchange. A table of four-digit random numbers was used to supply the suffix for each exchange. Each interviewer was supplied with a three-digit exchange and a list of random numbers prior to the telephone surveying.

Each random telephone number generated was recorded on the questionnaire. If a number was busy or did not answer, or if the respondent was interested and requested that he/she be contacted later at a more convenient time, two (2) attempts to call back were made on subsequent occasions. If no response was received following the third telephone call, the number was discarded. If a business was reached or if the number was out of service, the telephone number was also

discarded.

Based upon a comparison with 1970 census data for the second congressional district, the socioeconomic characteristics of the survey sample do not appear to represent the actual characteristics of the district as accurately as might be expected. Within the category of age, the youthful nature of the district's constituents is borne out: the 1970 figure of a median voting age of 34 is closely paralleled in the survey results, which show almost 40 percent of the respondents aged 18 to 30, with an additional 24 percent between the ages of 30 and 39. The older age groups appear to be overrepresented, however, with 17 percent of the survey respondents aged 60 and older as opposed to only 6 percent of the 1970 population. A great deal of this variation is probably due to the fact that older persons were more likely to be at home, and thus more available for the survey sample.

The survey respondents appear to be better educated than the 1970 figures indicated for the district as a whole. While the median number of years of school completed in 1970 was 12.1 years, 85 percent of the survey respondents indicated they had graduated from high school, with nearly one-third (27 percent) completing some college, 13 percent graduating from college, and 8 percent completing some post college studies. The respondents' family income was also appreciably higher than the 1970 figures indicated: almost two-thirds of the survey respondents claimed to have family incomes of \$10,000 or more, while only 18 percent of the 1970 families had incomes of \$15,000 or more. However, inflation could account for a great deal of this apparent difference.

White and female respondents were overrepresented in the sample survey. Female respondents made up more than half the sample survey (64 percent), as opposed to 47 percent of the population in 1970. The overrepresentation of females is probably due to the nature of the survey, since female members of a household are generally more likely to answer the telephone, particularly during the traditional "dinner hour" in which the survey was administered. Black respondents made up only 12 percent of the sample, whereas they represented 28 percent of the population in 1970. Since blacks are largely concentrated in the City of Norfolk, particularly in the central areas of the city, the majority of potential black respondents are contained in only several of the possible telephone exchanges.

It may be pointed out that the 1970 figures are somewhat less reliable than even their eight year age might indicate. The City of Virginia Beach is presently one of the ten fastest growing areas in the nation. The phenomenal growth which this city has undergone since the 1970 Census, and the accompanying impact on the neighboring city of Norfolk, will not be accurately reflected until the next decennial census in 1980. Because of this growth and the eight-year span in the data, many socioeconomic characteristics are compared with difficulty, resulting in a disparity between the sample survey and the 1970 data which may not be as dramatic as it appears. However, when the results of the 1976 general election for the second congressional district are compared with the survey respondents' voting behavior, the margins are almost identical. Of the survey respondents willing to identify the presidential candidate for whom they voted in 1976, the results were evenly divided: one-half of the respondents voted for Ford, one-half

voted for Carter. In the second congressional district the results of the 1976 presidential election were very similar to those expressed by the survey respondents, with 52 percent voting for Carter and 48 percent voting for Ford. The similarity of these results serves to further validate the survey results.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF CONSTITUENTS' AWARENESS OF THE INCUMBENT

Of the many advantages enjoyed by congressional incumbents, name familiarity is among the most frequently cited. In their 1958 study, "Party Government and the Saliency of Congress," Donald Stokes and Warren Miller advanced the name familiarity hypothesis as an explanation of "the increment of strength that some candidates, especially incumbents, acquire by being known to their constituents."¹ The information that voters possessed about congressional candidates was found to be meager; however, the incumbent candidate was by "far better known" than the nonincumbent opponent.² Miller and Stokes therefore concluded that, "In the main, recognition carries a positive valence; to be perceived at all is to be perceived favorably."³

Voter awareness of the candidates in an electoral situation is based upon information, the level of which is dependent upon two major factors: the differential returns from, and costs of, the information.⁴ The value or "return" which the voter perceives as likely to accrue from information about the candidate is influenced by the powers of the office, the responsibilities, the leadership potential afforded the incumbent, and the size of the office's constituency.⁵ The "costs" of attaining information are associated with availability; the higher the office, the more "free" (information given to a citizen without any transferable cost) information is available.⁶ As Downs has suggested,

the price of political information is high, and voters' low awareness levels can be attributed to the cost of "obtaining, paying attention to, processing, and retaining political information."⁷ The great value of congressional perquisites thus lies in their ability to enable incumbents to reduce the information costs of constituents.

Since the costs of obtaining information are a function of the relative availability of "free" information, costs will increase as the level of office decreases. It has also been determined that voter concern for the outcome of elections "decreases in the same order as the amount of voter information about the candidates for these offices."⁸ The flow of information to the voters is similarly affected by the structure of the mass media, with the focus of the national media on presidential politics, and of the local media on state (gubernatorial) and congressional politics.⁹ The physical proximity of local or state officials to their constituents likewise represents an advantage when compared to national officeholders.¹⁰

In order to analyze the level of constituency awareness of the incumbent in the second congressional district, four separate but interrelated hypotheses will be tested. The first hypothesis states that as the level of constituency attention to various information sources increases, so does the level of awareness of the incumbent. Specifically, with increased attention to the editorial and opinion pages and stories dealing with politics and government in daily newspapers, the respondents' level of awareness of the incumbent will also increase. Secondly, it is postulated that the presence of certain socioeconomic factors will influence awareness of the incumbent. As the respondents' age, family income, and educational levels increase, awareness of the

incumbent will also be more pronounced, as these factors reduce the cost of information. The third hypothesis states that party identification will influence the constituents' awareness of the incumbent. It is assumed that those respondents identifying with the incumbent's party (Republican) will display higher levels of awareness than either Independents or Democrats, since they will have a greater incentive to obtain information concerning their party's candidate. The fourth hypothesis is that the level of the constituents' awareness of the incumbent is affected by the incumbent himself; specifically, that the incumbent reduces the cost of information to his constituents. The effect which the incumbent exerts upon awareness will be measured by an analysis of those respondents who have met the incumbent, or who have received a newsletter from him.

When asked to name the congressman from their district, 59 percent of the survey respondents correctly named Bill Whitehurst, 3 percent incorrectly named the congressman, and 38 percent of the respondents did not know the name of the congressman. The survey respondents were then asked to name the congressman's party; 55 percent named the Republican party, 8 percent incorrectly named the party, and 37 percent did not know the congressman's party. Finally, when asked if they had ever read or heard anything about Bill Whitehurst, 86 percent of the respondents answered yes, 10 percent answered no, and 4 percent were not sure. Thus, while a majority of the survey respondents were able to identify the incumbent and his party, the overwhelming majority of respondents were familiar with the incumbent by having read or heard something about him.

It has been established that the public's knowledge of congressmen is meager, and that their awareness of congressional members is based on "very slender information indeed."¹¹ The first hypothesis posits that increased awareness of the incumbent is related to the level of constituency attention to information sources. Among the survey respondents who read a daily newspaper, over one half correctly identified the congressman (65 percent) and his party (60 percent), and said they had read or heard something about him (61 percent). However, those respondents that incorrectly identified the congressman or his party also claimed high levels of newspaper readership: 90 percent of those incorrectly identifying Whitehurst read a daily newspaper, as did 75 percent of those incorrectly naming his party. The proportion of respondents who had not read or heard anything about Whitehurst but read a daily newspaper was somewhat lower at 61 percent. The vast majority of respondents who did not know the congressman's name or party, or were not sure if they had ever read or heard anything about him also read a daily newspaper.

When the respondents who read a daily newspaper were asked the regularity with which they read certain sections of the newspaper, a more definite pattern emerged: the majority of respondents reading stories about politics and government "almost every day" were able to name the Congressman and his party. In addition, the percentage of aware respondents (those respondents who were able to name the congressman and his party) reading political and government stories less frequently dropped markedly, particularly among respondents who never read stories dealing with politics or government. The percentage of respondents who did not know the congressman's name and party, or

were not sure they had read or heard something about him rose dramatically as the frequency of readership declined, with a majority of those respondents only occasionally or never reading stories dealing with politics and government unable to name the congressman or his party.

Table 1

Constituent Awareness and Newspaper Readership:
Stories About Politics and Government

	Almost every day	A few times each week	Only occasionally	Never
Name Congressman	77%	51%	50%	14%
Identify Congressman's Party	75	43	40	14
Have read or heard of Congressman	89	89	81	43

A similar pattern emerges in the frequency with which respondents read the opinion and editorial pages, with the majority of those respondents reading these pages on a daily basis correctly identifying the congressman and his party. Yet, the frequency with which respondents read the opinion and editorial pages seemed to have less impact upon their awareness than did the frequency of readership of stories about politics and government, since the ability to name the congressman or his party decreased less rapidly among those respondents reading the opinion and editorial pages less frequently. Again, the majority of respondents who read these pages with less frequency answered "don't know" or "not sure."

When these results are analyzed as a percentage of the total survey responses, a definite trend emerges. In all but two categories, a majority of the survey respondents possessed a greater awareness of the incumbent congressman, and also read political and government stories and the editorial and opinion pages with regularity (either "almost every day" or "a few times each week."). In each category 6 percent or less of the total survey respondents claimed to read these pages regularly and were unable either to name the congressman or his party, or had never read or heard anything about him.

Although the respondents' attention to radio news was high, (65 percent said they listened to radio news "almost every day"), the impact upon respondent awareness was far less significant than that of the newspaper categories. The frequency of attention to radio news appeared to have very little impact upon the respondents' awareness, with nearly a majority (42 percent) of those respondents listening to radio news "almost every day" unable to identify the congressman or his party. The percentage of respondents listening to radio news almost every day who named the congressman (58 percent) or his party (57 percent) was not appreciably different from those respondents who listened a few times each week who named the congressman (68 percent) and his party (56 percent), or even those who listened only occasionally and named the congressman (57 percent) or his party (50 percent). In one case, those respondents claiming to never listen to radio news were more likely to name the congressman than were those respondents who listened to radio news almost every day.

While listening to radio news appeared to strongly influence whether respondents had read or heard anything about Whitehurst, with over 80

percent of all respondents who listened to any radio news having read or heard of Whitehurst, almost as many respondents who never listened to radio news (78 percent) had also heard something about Whitehurst.

A majority of the survey respondents claimed to watch television news "almost every day," yet the regularity of viewing television news for those respondents who named the congressman and his party and those who did not know was not sharply divided. While the impact of watching television news did not appear to dramatically influence awareness, it did appear to be a more influential factor than listening to radio news, with attention to television news increasing awareness more than listening to radio news.

Table 2
Constituent Awareness and Television News

	Almost every day	A few times each week	Only Occasionally	Never
Name Congressman	62%	49%	54%	40%
Identify Congressman's Party	58	47	46	40
Have read or Heard of Congressman	84	90	83	20

The effect of the discussion of politics with family members and friends was similar to that of the variable of selected newspaper readership in its effect upon awareness. While very few respondents (11 percent) discussed politics with family and friends "almost every day," as the respondents' ability to name the congressman or his party

decreased, so did the frequency of political discussions with family or friends. The difference produced by political discussions in the constituents' level of awareness was not great: of those respondents discussing politics with family and friends "almost every day," 70 percent identified the congressman compared with 58 percent of respondents who discussed politics with family and friends "only occasionally," who named the congressman. The discussion of politics with family members and friends appeared to have even less influence on the number of respondents who had ever read or heard anything about the incumbent, with those respondents "never" discussing politics only slightly less likely to have ever read or heard anything about the incumbent than those respondents who discussed politics with others "almost every day."

The survey data shows that awareness of the congressman is influenced by the respondents' attention to certain available information, and that the level of awareness differs according to the source of information. While a vast majority of the respondents read a daily newspaper (82 percent), the percentage of those reading stories concerning politics and government (56 percent) and the editorial and opinion pages (43 percent) on a daily basis are markedly lower. Yet, those regularly reading stories about politics and government and the editorial and opinion pages are significantly more aware of the congressional incumbent than are the remaining respondents. A majority of survey respondents also claimed they listened to radio news (65 percent) or watched television news (73 percent) "almost every day." Since virtually every American household owns at least one television or radio (and almost every one of America's 107 million automobiles are equipped with radios), the high level of attention to these information

is not surprising.¹² It has been said that television is depended upon by Americans as their primary source of news and information, since it is felt to be more believable than any other medium.¹³ In addition, congressmen have at their disposal radio and television studios for the production of tapes made available to local stations. However, when compared to the apparent impact of selective newspaper reading, attention to television and radio news was far less influential in increasing awareness. While the discussion of politics with family members and friends appears to have slightly less impact upon awareness than newspaper reading, it is still noticeably more influential than attention to either radio or television news. It therefore appears that attention to the more costly sources of information produced a higher level of awareness on the part of the survey respondents.

The second hypothesis to be tested states that the level of constituency awareness of the incumbent will be influenced by the presence of certain socioeconomic characteristics of the survey respondents. A very strong positive correlation exists between the length of area residence and awareness: as the length of area residence increases, so does the percentage of respondents who correctly identified the congressman or his party.

While the percentage of respondents who had ever read or heard anything about Whitehurst was higher (83 percent) than the percentage able to name him (59 percent) or his party (55 percent), the correlation between this variable and the length of area residence was nonetheless impressive. One half of the residents who had lived in the area less than one year had read or heard something about Whitehurst, with the percentage steadily climbing to 94 percent of residents of ten or more

years. Only 6 percent of area residents of ten or more years had never read or heard anything about Whitehurst, with less than 1 percent of those respondents replying "not sure." These results indicate the strength of the incumbent's ties with the district, and also mirror the impact of ten years of "advertising" activities on the part of the incumbent.

Table 3
Constituent Awareness and Length of Area Residence

	Less than 1 year	1 - 5 years	6 - 9 years	10 or more years
Name Congressman	14%	41%	56%	76%
Identify Congressman's Party	13	41	58	68
Have read or Heard of Congressman	50	72	88	94

The characteristic of age is also closely correlated with awareness; as the age of the respondent increases, so does the level of awareness. Those respondents aged 60 years or older were twice as likely to name the congressman and his party as those respondents between 18 and 29 years of age. The greatest percentage increase in awareness came between the ages of 30 - 39 years and 40 - 49 years. Again, many more respondents had read or heard something about Whitehurst and among these respondents there still existed an increasing degree of awareness with increasing age. Since the younger population of the district is generally more transient than the older residents,

it may be assumed that this situation explains some of the lower awareness levels witnessed in the younger respondents. Additionally, it may also be the case that many of the younger respondents have not been exposed to the incumbent's activities as have been the older, more permanent residents.

Increasing educational levels were associated with the increasing ability of the respondents to name the congressman and identify his party. For lower educational levels the impact of education was less obvious in the ability to name the congressman than in the ability to name his party: one-half of those with educational levels of eight years of school or less were able to name Whitehurst as opposed to slightly more than one-third who named his party. Yet as the respondents' educational levels increased, the level of awareness also rose. Thus, while it could be assumed that higher educational levels might produce a significantly greater level of awareness than witnessed in the survey results, the pervasiveness of the constituents' awareness of the incumbent is once again obvious. The results of those respondents who had ever read or heard anything about Whitehurst did not follow a similar pattern; the percentage of respondents who had ever read or heard of Whitehurst actually decreased with increasing educational level, and was barely higher for respondents with post college work than for respondents with eight or less years of school.

The respondents' ability to name the congressman and his party also increased as family income rose, with almost twice as many respondents with incomes over \$20,000 as respondents with incomes under \$10,000 naming the congressman and his party. However, the diversity between income levels was far less pronounced when respondents were

Table 4
Constituent Awareness and Educational Level

	0 - 8 years	Some high school	High school graduate	Some college	College graduate	Post College
Name Congressman	50%	45%	51%	61%	79%	74%
Identify Congressman's Party	36	35	52	54	74	74
Have Read or Heard of Congressman	86	72	81	84	92	87

asked if they had ever read or heard anything about the congressman, with 72 percent of those respondents with incomes under \$10,000 having read or heard about Whitehurst, as compared to 93 percent of those respondents with incomes over \$20,000.

While race did not significantly affect the respondents' ability to name the congressman, far fewer blacks identified the congressman's party. Fifty-nine percent of white respondents and fifty-eight percent of black respondents were able to identify the congressman, yet only 36 percent of black respondents named the congressman's party, as opposed to 59 percent of white respondents. Among the respondents who had ever read or heard anything about Whitehurst, whites were somewhat more likely to have read or heard anything about Whitehurst (84 percent) than were blacks (78 percent).

Finally, males were more likely than females to name the congressman and his party, or to have ever read or heard anything about him. Of the male respondents, 68 percent named the congressman compared to 54 percent of female respondents; male respondents were also more likely to

name the congressman's party (66 percent) than were female respondents (49 percent). The percentage of male respondents who had ever read or heard anything about Whitehurst (88 percent) was not significantly greater than the percentage of female respondents (81 percent).

The survey data presented have shown the second hypothesis to be supported: the presence of certain socioeconomic characteristics does influence the level of constituency awareness of the incumbent. As the respondents' length of area residence, age, educational level, and income increases, so does the level of awareness; whites and males were somewhat more likely to name the congressman and his party, and to have read or heard anything about Whitehurst than were blacks or females.

The third hypothesis posits that the respondent's party identification will influence his awareness of the incumbent, with self-identified Republicans more likely to identify the Republican incumbent than either Democrats or Independents. The results, however, do not support the hypothesis. Those respondents labelling themselves as Independents were more likely than either Republicans or Democrats to identify Whitehurst or his party. In fact, Whitehurst's fellow Republicans were least likely to name him or his party. The same pattern holds for those respondents who had ever read or heard anything about Whitehurst: Independents were also more likely to have read or heard about the incumbent than were either Democrats or Republicans.

As Pomper states, the decreasing impact of partisanship on American elections has become "abundantly clear." In answer to standard questions on self-identification, Pomper found that "between one-third and two-fifths of the American electorate now disclaim affective ties to parties ..."¹⁴ Fiorina has also documented the decline in party

Table 5
Constituent Awareness and Party Identification

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Name Congressman	58%	50%	68%
Identify Congressman's Party	58	49	65
Have read or heard of Congressman	79	77	92

identification, and goes on to state that "party identification will be less influential in determining the congressional vote."¹⁵ The increasing tendency of many American voters to identify themselves as Independents has been confirmed by the survey results.

Erikson has concluded that this "increase in the number of Independent voters has allowed the incumbents' visibility to tip the balance in an increasing number of voter decisions."¹⁶ The weakening of partisan cues in voting decisions has also been documented. In his study of the advantage of incumbency, Cover found that "in a sense, partisan identification is now a meaningless cue . . . in congressional elections" for those voters identifying with the challenger's party to desert their party to vote for the incumbent.¹⁷ Similarly, Abramowitz has concluded that "voters whose opinions of the incumbent were inconsistent with their party affiliation defected at a significantly higher rate than voters whose opinions were consistent with their party affiliation."¹⁸ The survey respondents identifying themselves as Independents were



significantly more aware of the incumbent than were either his fellow Republicans or Democrats. From these survey results it may be concluded that party identification appears to exert less influence upon constituent opinion formation than had been anticipated, and that Independents were more knowledgeable about the incumbent than were members of either of the two major parties. Thus, for those constituents who do not identify with either of the major parties, the candidate may represent a more significant voting cue than for either Republican or Democratic constituents.

The final hypothesis attempts to determine the influence of the incumbent on the respondents' level of awareness. Two variables were used to determine the incumbent's effect upon respondents: whether or not the respondent had received a newsletter from Whitehurst, or whether the respondent had ever met Whitehurst. (These questions were posed after the respondents were asked if they could name the congressman and his party, or if they had ever read or heard anything about him.)

The electoral value of congressional incumbency has steadily increased; according to David Mayhew one effect of this increase has been to reduce the number of House members of both parties within the "marginal" electoral range.¹⁹ Mayhew offers several reasons for the phenomenon of "vanishing marginals." First, House members may have become more adept at "advertising" themselves, as seen in the volumes of congressional mail which more than sextupled over the sixteen year period from 1954-1970.²⁰ Secondly, House members may be getting additional political mileage from federal programs which have increased at a rate similar to that of the mail flow.²¹ Thirdly, because of increased use of polling techniques, members may have become more

skilled at assuming a public position on "issues."²² And finally, incumbency may be one of the most available cues for voters.²³ Similarly, Tidmarch argues that "an adequate conceptualization of the 'incumbency advantage' must take into account such benefits as visibility ..."²⁴ Fiorina concurs that "a constant informational advantage may be quite consistent with an increasing incumbency advantage if information about the incumbent has become increasingly noncontroversial in content."²⁵

The amount of information which a voter has is dependent upon the visibility of the office, and the voter's decision will rest upon the information he possesses.²⁶ Since approximately 80 percent of all congressmen publish newsletters, it can be assumed that this medium will provide constituents with some selective information about the incumbents.²⁷ A little over one-half of the survey respondents (57 percent) said they had received a newsletter from Whitehurst. Of that number, 80 percent could name the congressman. However, among those respondents who had not received a newsletter, only 30 percent could name the congressman, with 4 percent incorrectly naming the congressman, and 66 percent replying "don't know." When asked to identify the congressman's party, the results were very similar: 74 percent of those receiving a newsletter named Whitehurst's party, 9 percent incorrectly identified the party, and 18 percent replied "don't know." Of those who had not received a newsletter, only 28 percent named Whitehurst's party, 8 percent incorrectly named the party, and 64 percent replied "don't know." The incumbent's ability to influence constituent awareness is obvious in these findings. Those respondents who had received a newsletter from the incumbent were nearly three times more likely to identify him and his party than were those respondents who had not received a

newsletter. It therefore appears that through "advertising" techniques, an incumbent can significantly influence his constituents' awareness.

Another indicator of the impact of the incumbent's activities can be seen in the number of respondents who had ever met the congressman, and the influence this variable appeared to have upon the respondents' awareness. An astonishing 30 percent of the survey respondents said they had met the congressman. Only 1 percent of the respondents who claimed to have met Whitehurst incorrectly named him as their congressman, with 86 percent of those who had met Whitehurst naming him as their congressman, compared to 48 percent of those respondents who had never met him. Of those respondents who had met Whitehurst, 78 percent identified his party whereas only 44 percent of those respondents who had not met Whitehurst were able to identify his party affiliation.

Table 6

Constituent Awareness and Contact with
the Congressman

	Had met Congressman	Had not met Congressman	Received Newsletter	Had not re- ceived newsletter
Name Congressman	85%	48%	80%	30%
Identify Congressman's Party	78	44	74	28
Have Read or Heard of Congressman	99	76	99	61

Thus, the fourth hypotheses, that the level of the constituents' awareness of the incumbent is affected by the incumbent himself, is supported by the data.

A new "information" variable was created by combining the number of reasons stated by a respondent for voting for or against Whitehurst, resulting in a possible scale of 0 - 4 responses. Almost half of the respondents could not provide any particular reason for voting for or against Whitehurst in the next election. Those respondents reading a daily newspaper were more likely to provide at least one reason (26 percent) than were respondents who did not read a daily newspaper (9 percent).

Only about one third of those respondents reading stories about politics and government or the editorial and opinion pages almost every day were unable to state a reason for voting for or against Whitehurst, as compared with over half of those respondents reading these sections with less regularity. Approximately four times as many respondents reading these sections almost every day were able to give three reasons why they would vote for or against Whitehurst when compared with respondents reading these sections less regularly.

(Table 7)

Nie and Verba have documented an "individuation" in American political life, whereby political behavior can no longer be as accurately predicted from membership in a particular group or political party. They go on to state that the individual voter evaluates a candidate on the basis of information and impressions conveyed by the mass media, and then votes according to that information.²⁸ Based on the findings of this survey, Nie and Verba's hypotheses can be refined to indicate that attention to certain segments of the media will produce a greater number of stated reasons to vote for or against the incumbent congressman on the part of his constituents.

Table 7

Respondents Who Read a Daily Newspaper and the Incidence of Reasons Given for Voting for or Against Whitehurst

Total Reasons Voting for or Against Whitehurst	Did Not Read Daily Newspaper	Did Read Daily Newspaper	Almost Every Day		Few Times Each Week	Only Occasionally		Never		
			Pol. & Govt.	Ed/Op		Pol. & Govt.	Ed/Op	Pol. & Govt.	Ed/Op	
0	68%	45%	35%	30%	55%	56%	52%	49%	100%	75%
1	9	26	26	25	29	24	25	29	0	17
2	15	17	19	25	9	12	19	8	0	8
3	8	9	14	17	4	5	4	6	0	0
4	0	4	6	3	4	3	0	8	0	0
	100%	101%	100%	100%	101%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Listening to radio news produced little impact on the respondents' ability to cite specific reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. There was no appreciable change in the number of reasons cited when related to the frequency with which respondents listened to radio news. Television news appeared to be slightly more effective in influencing the respondents; those who watched television news almost every day were more likely to provide three or four reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. However, those respondents watching television news only occasionally were more likely to provide one or two reasons, and only slightly less likely to provide three reasons than were those respondents who watched television news almost every day.

Party identification significantly affects the ability of respondents to cite reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. Independents were much more likely (65 percent) to provide reasons than were either Democrats (43 percent) or Republicans (39 percent).

Table 8

Party-Identification of Respondents and the Incidence
of Reasons Given for Voting for or Voting
Against Whitehurst

Total Reasons	Democrat	Republican	Independent
0	57%	61%	35%
1	18	16	27
2	16	14	19
3	8	7	12
4	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%

Respondents who claim to be identified with neither of the two major parties were thus more likely to provide particular reasons for voting for or against the congressional incumbent. These findings are in agreement with the continuing decline in importance of party affiliation as evidenced in recent literature. Hinckley has found that the party component is stronger in non-incumbent than in incumbent contests, and that incumbency may substitute for party as a low information cue.²⁹ Fiorina has also stated that "party identification will be less influential in determining the congressional vote."³⁰ Not only has party identification declined, as seen in this study was twice as many respondents identify themselves as Independents than as Republicans, but a related change has taken place as well. As Ferejohn states: "Those people who still identify with one of the parties seem to be using it less and less as a cue in making their voting decisions in congressional elections."³¹ The fact that survey respondents who identified themselves as Independents are more likely to provide reasons for voting for or against the incumbent, and therefore presumably better informed, provides some indication of the strength of the incumbent's continued electoral success. In a district which is predominantly Democratic in both its voting behavior and socioeconomic makeup, a Republican has been returned to Congress for five consecutive terms. Based on the survey findings, it can be assumed that party identification has very little effect upon constituent awareness, and further that Independents are more aware of the incumbent than either Republicans or Democrats.

It may be that those survey respondents who identify themselves as Independents are better educated than other survey respondents. Since

identification with either of the major parties appears to have little influence on constituent awareness and opinion formation, it might also be assumed that Independents rely more upon cues presented by the candidate himself in developing their opinions or voting decisions. If this is so, an incumbent candidate, who by nature of his position can provide greater amounts of information to the voters, should derive greater benefits from his information services, particularly from Independent voters. It has been seen that Independents are more knowledgeable about the incumbent than are members of either of the major parties; therefore it may be assumed that candidate cues are predominant among Independents' voting cues, and serve to strongly influence their voting decisions.

The respondents' length of area residence dramatically influences the ability to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. Residents of ten or more years were substantially more able to provide one or more reasons for voting for or against the congressman than were other respondents.

The respondents' age produced a less consistent influence on the ability to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. Generally, younger respondents were less able to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst than were older respondents, with the 40-49 age group displaying the greatest ability to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. This finding is somewhat different from that in Hinckley's survey, in which she found that "age appears to have little clear effect on attitude structure in sub-presidential voting."³²

Increasing levels of educational achievement produced a similarly increasing ability among respondents to provide reasons for voting for

or against Whitehurst. Hinckley also found that respondents with increased education showed a somewhat stronger inclination toward issue voting and weaker party voting.³³ The income variable showed a parallel pattern: as the income level of respondents increased, so did the ability to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. Increasing education and income levels were also seen to accompany a rise in the respondents' awareness of the incumbent. Therefore it may be determined that increasing levels of awareness are apparently related to the respondents' ability to provide specific reasons for voting for or against the incumbent.

White respondents were more likely than black respondents to provide three or four reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst, and less likely to provide no reason for voting for or against Whitehurst. Male respondents were somewhat more likely than female respondents to provide one or more reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. These variables also produced a similar influence on the respondents' awareness of the incumbent, hence increasing awareness probably accounts for the increase in the "information" variable.

The most significant socioeconomic characteristic influencing the ability of respondents to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst was the length of area residence. The income and education variables were somewhat more influential than the age, race, or sex variables in affecting the respondents' ability to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst.

The ability of the incumbent to influence the constituents' reasons for voting for or against him is clearly seen in the two variables measured. Those respondents who had either received a newsletter or

who had ever met Whitehurst were significantly more able to provide reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst.

Table 9

The Effect of Contact with the Incumbent on the Incidence
of Reasons Given for Voting for or Voting
Against Whitehurst

Total Reasons	Received Newsletter	Did Not Receive Newsletter	Has Met Congressman	Has Not Met Congressman
0	28%	78%	17%	63%
1	32	11	30	20
2	22	9	28	12
3	14	3	19	5
4	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	101%	102%	102%	101%

The foregoing analysis of the survey results illustrates that various factors influenced the respondents' awareness of the congressional incumbent. Of the four hypotheses considered, only one was shown to be invalid for this survey. The amount, as well as type, of information possessed and employed by the respondent determined to some extent his/her level of awareness; the more regular the attention to information sources, the greater the increase in awareness. The "price" of information was also influential, with costly, less readily available information producing the greatest increase in respondent awareness. The survey results indicate that more frequent reading of the editorial and opinion pages or stories dealing with politics and government proved more influential to constituent awareness than the less costly

variables of radio and television news. The presence of certain socioeconomic characteristics also affected the level of awareness. As the respondents' length of area residence, age, educational level and income increased, so did the level of awareness. Through the variables of personal contact and newsletter distribution, the incumbent was seen to impact the level of awareness, which increased as the respondents' exposure to these variables increased. The reasons given for voting for or against the incumbent were also seen to be influenced by the variables of information sources, socioeconomic characteristics, party identification, and activities of the incumbent. Only the hypothesis linking the respondents' party identification with awareness proved to be invalid, with Independents rather than Republicans exhibiting greater awareness of the incumbent. Now that the factors influencing awareness have been established, the relationship of respondent awareness and opinion of the incumbent can be explored.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONSTITUENTS' OPINION OF THE INCUMBENT

In the previous chapter, the survey results were used to analyze the respondents' level of awareness of the congressional incumbent. The respondents' level of awareness was positively correlated with certain information sources and socioeconomic characteristics, Independent party identification, and contact with the incumbent. The present chapter will analyze those factors which influence the respondents' opinion of the incumbent.

The visibility of incumbents has been established through numerous studies which have shown that in electoral situations voters are more aware of incumbents than challengers. Since voters tend to cast their ballots for the candidate with whom they are most familiar, this visibility translates into an electoral incumbency advantage. It has also been shown that the extent to which voters are familiar with an individual congressional candidate depends on a variety of conditions, such as income, sex, educational level, and interaction with friends and neighbors.¹ While the voter's opinion of the incumbent congressman may be positive, that opinion is often based upon a low level of information. Miller and Stokes have offered several reasons for this apparent contradiction. First, because of the pervasive effects of party loyalties, every congressional candidate begins with a large

party "core" of voters, which may only need the addition of some smaller element of the electorate to ensure victory.² The relationship of the incumbent congressman to the voter is complicated by such "intermediaries" as the local party, economic interests, the news media, and the national party organization. Because of these intermediaries, the voter may receive positive or negative cues about his congressman which were originally provoked by legislative actions, but which no longer have any recognizable issue content.³

Various factors which influence constituent opinions of the incumbent will be analyzed in this chapter. The effect of the respondents' sources of information, party identification, socioeconomic characteristics, and evaluation of the incumbent on opinion formation will be detailed. These individual factors are similar to the four variables of a voting behavior model developed by James Wright in his study, Electoral Choice in America.

The first variable, ascribed status, is defined as a "status assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities."⁴ Such statuses may be predicted and trained for from birth, i.e. race, religion or sex. Achieved statuses, the second variable, are "at a minimum those (statuses) requiring special qualities," although they are not necessarily limited to such qualities.⁵ Rather than being assigned to an individual from birth, achieved statuses are left open to be filled through individual effort, such as education, occupation and income. The voter's party identification is the third variable, and according to Wright's concept provides the voter with information sufficient to consistently maximize his interests through party voting.⁶ The final variable, candidate image, "includes all

beliefs and attitudes about a candidate for political office that voters feel are relevant to their decision."⁷

Based upon the results of his survey of presidential, gubernatorial and senatorial elections, Wright also defined four dimensions of candidate image: reference to leadership ability and experience; personal characteristics; candidate position on policy and group benefit issues; and strictly partisan terms.⁸ In the case of senatorial elections, the order of importance of the four dimensions was leadership/experience, party representative, issues, and personal characteristics.⁹ This study will also examine dimensions of the incumbent's image and will assign an order of importance to these dimensions as they were rated by the survey respondents.

Charles Tidmarch has stated that "an adequate conceptualization of the 'incumbency advantage' must take into account such benefits as visibility, accrued good will through ombudsman activities, congressional campaign funds, and other relevant resources."¹⁰ By studying the respondents' opinion of the congressional incumbent as expressed in the survey's two open-ended questions, the components of the incumbency advantage in the second congressional district can be detailed.

In this chapter, two hypotheses will be studied. First, it is proposed that the way in which constituents rate the job the incumbent congressman is doing in Washington will be dependent upon the amount and sources of the constituents' information, their party identification and personal political stance, socioeconomic characteristics, and certain activities of the incumbent. It is hypothesized that as the constituents' attention to information sources increases, their rating of the incumbent's job will be increasingly favorable. In addition, increasing

constituent attention to more "costly" information sources, such as newspaper readership as opposed to less "costly" information, such as radio or television news, will result in more favorable evaluations of the incumbent's job. Whitehurst's fellow Republicans will be expected to provide more favorable job ratings than either Democrats or Independents, as will those respondents more closely aligned with Whitehurst's political stance (respondents labelling themselves as conservatives or middle of the road as opposed to liberal). As the respondents' age, educational level and income rise, their rating of the incumbent's job should become more favorable. Whites are also expected to be more favorable than blacks in their evaluation of the incumbent's job performance. Finally, it is hypothesized that respondents who had met the congressman or received a newsletter from him will be more favorable in rating his job.

It is further hypothesized that of the four characteristics of the incumbent rated by the respondents (honesty, experience, leadership ability, and intelligence), the variables of leadership ability and experience will emerge as the most significant. This assumption is based on the findings of Wright's survey of senatorial elections, where respondents ranked leadership ability and experience as the most important dimensions of candidate image.¹¹ Wright determined that voters' awareness of the candidates was contingent upon two factors: the "voters' differential returns from, and costs of, information..."¹² As the importance of the office at stake increased, the free information available to voters also increased; thus, the nature of the office influenced the availability of information about candidates. Because information about a Senator's policy activities is "not among the first

things that the average voter learns about an incumbent candidate," images of senatorial candidates are more likely based on their leadership and experience qualifications.¹³

The respondents' opinion of Whitehurst is expressed in a variable which combines the positive reasons given for voting for Whitehurst in the next election and the negative reasons given for voting against Whitehurst in the next election, resulting in a variable with possible values ranging from +3 to -3. The final hypothesis posits that the value of the opinion of Whitehurst variable will be dependent upon the variables of the respondents' information, party identification, socioeconomic characteristics, and the activities of the incumbent. Specifically, as the respondents' attention to information (particularly to the more "costly" sources of information) increases, the opinion of Whitehurst variable will become more positive in value. It is also suggested that identification with the Republican party will produce a more positive opinion of Whitehurst. As the age, educational level and income level of the respondents increase, the value of the opinion variable will also increase, with white respondents also more likely to express positive opinions of the incumbent than black respondents. Finally, those respondents who have received a newsletter from the incumbent or met him will be more likely to have a positive opinion of Whitehurst.

The reputation hypothesis states that the incumbency effect is a reflection of the incumbent's reputation among his constituents. In the second congressional district, 59 percent of the survey respondents correctly named the congressman from their district, 31 percent incorrectly named the congressman, and 30 percent replied they did not

know the name of the congressman. The vast majority of the respondents - 83 percent - had read or heard something about the congressman. But when asked to rate the job Whitehurst had done as a Congressman, 38 percent of the respondents could not do so; 18 percent of this group said they could not rate his job and 20 percent felt they did not have enough information to rate his performance. Of the remaining respondents who did rate Whitehurst's job as Congressman, 17 percent felt it was "excellent," 31 percent "pretty good," 11 percent "only fair," and only 2 percent "poor."

The information received from selective newspaper reading apparently affected the way in which respondents rated the congressman's job. The reading of a daily newspaper did not itself increase the respondents' rating of Whitehurst's job; in fact, those respondents who did not read a daily newspaper were more inclined to rate the congressman's job favorably than those who did read a daily paper. At the same time, the frequency with which respondents read stories dealing with politics or government and the editorial and opinion pages did influence their rating. Of those reading stories dealing with politics and government almost every day, 36 percent rated Whitehurst's job as "excellent," and 39 percent as "pretty good." As the frequency of readership fell, the ratings were very heavily concentrated in the "pretty good" category, with the negative categories of "only fair" and "poor" remaining constant. The findings for those respondents' reading the editorial and opinion pages were similar: of the respondents reading these pages daily, 39 percent rated Whitehurst's job as "excellent" and 37 percent as "pretty good," with decreasing frequency of reading again concentrating responses in the "pretty good" category. Thus, it appears

Table 10

Frequency with which Respondents Read Stories about Politics
and Government and the Rating of Whitehurst's Job

	Almost every day	A few times each week	Only Occasionally	Never
Excellent	36%	15%	9%	0%
Pretty Good	39	70	68	100
Fair/ Poor	25	15	23	0

that those respondents who were more attentive to the "costly" information sources (stories dealing with politics and government and the editorial and opinion pages) were also more likely to rate the incumbent's job performance in a positive manner. Since it may be assumed that those respondents reading these particular sections of the daily newspaper on a regular basis would be more familiar with the incumbent, it can be concluded that increasing information concerning the incumbent produces a more positive rating of the incumbent's job performance.

Table 11

Frequency with which Respondents Read Editorial
and Opinion Pages and the Rating of
Whitehurst's Job

	Almost every day	A few times each week	Only occasionally	Never
Excellent	39%	21%	15%	35%
Pretty Good	37	61	61	57
Fair/ Poor	24	19	24	7

The effect of radio and television news on the rating of Whitehurst's job was very similar to that seen in newspaper readership. The majority of respondents who listened to radio news almost every day rated Whitehurst's performance as "excellent" (32 percent) or "pretty good" (48 percent). As the frequency of listening to radio news decreased, the percentage of respondents rating the job as "pretty good" increased. While those respondents watching television news almost every day were slightly more favorable in their ratings, those respondents only occasionally watching television news were noticeably less favorable. Of those watching television news almost every day, 29 percent rated Whitehurst's job as "excellent," 52 percent as "pretty good." When television news was watched a few times each week, those rating Whitehurst's job as "excellent" fell to 18 percent, while the "pretty good" category increased to 59 percent. However, when respondents watched television news only occasionally the "excellent" rating rose to 26 percent, while the "pretty good" category declined to 35 percent, with a greatly increased number of respondents rating Whitehurst's job as "only fair" or "poor" (39 percent).

Table 12

Frequency with which Respondents Watch Television News
and Rating of Whitehurst's Job

	Almost every day	A few times each week	Only occasionally	Never
Excellent	29%	18%	26%	100%
Pretty good	52	59	35	0
Fair/Poor	18	23	39	0

Discussion of politics with family members and friends had little impact on the rating of Whitehurst's job. Again, the majority of responses were in the "excellent" or "pretty good" categories, with the responses in the latter category increasing with decreasing frequency of political discussions, while the negative categories remained constant.

In all but one case (daily newspaper readership), attention to information sources was positively correlated with the rating of Whitehurst's job; as the frequency of attention to the particular information source increased, the job rating became increasingly positive. The survey results therefore indicate that the level of information, as well as the source of information, serves to influence the constituents' opinion. As the respondents' level of information increases, the probability of their exposure to information concerning the incumbent increases as well. Thus with more data concerning the incumbent and the general political situation, the respondents were more likely to positively rate Whitehurst's job performance.

As would be expected, Whitehurst's fellow Republicans were slightly more favorable in their rating of his performance as a congressman. One-third of the Republicans rated Whitehurst's job as "excellent" as opposed to only 23 percent of the Democrats and 29 percent of the Independents. The results in the "pretty good" category were similar: Republicans 53 percent, Democrats 54 percent, and Independents 47 percent. However, Independents were much more likely to rate Whitehurst's job as "only fair" and Democrats to rate it as "poor." The results are again as expected when the political ideology of the respondents is compared with their rating of Whitehurst's job as a Congressman. Those

respondents identifying themselves as "middle of the road" or "conservative" were significantly more apt to rate Whitehurst's job as "excellent" (36 percent and 33 percent, respectively) than were those identifying themselves as "liberal" (9 percent). Almost twice as many "liberals" as "middle of the road" or "conservative" respondents rated Whitehurst's job as "only fair;" and while no respondents from the other two groups rated Whitehurst's job as "poor," 11 percent of the "liberals" did so. Thus, the expectations that fellow Republicans and "middle of the road" or "conservative" respondents would tend to rate Whitehurst's job performance more favorably have been confirmed by the survey results. It is significant, however, that all three groups rate Whitehurst's job performance in a favorable manner, and that he is positively perceived by the overwhelming majority of respondents.

With regard to socioeconomic characteristics, variations in rating Whitehurst's job performance were present but not strongly consistent. Generally, increasing age produced increasingly positive ratings of Whitehurst's job, particularly in the "excellent" category, with younger respondents more apt to rate Whitehurst's job negatively ("only fair" or "poor"). The educational level of the respondents provided a somewhat clearer pattern: generally, the higher the level of educational achievement, the more positive the rating of Whitehurst's job. The two exceptions were those respondents with some college or who were college graduates; these groups tended to be more negative in their ratings, particularly the college graduates. Those respondents with middle class incomes (\$10,000 - \$ 20,000) were slightly more negative in their rating of Whitehurst's job than were lower or upper income respondents. Again, while noticeable, this trend was not significant.

The characteristic of race had a more discernible effect: blacks were less apt to rate Whitehurst's job as "excellent" (17 percent) than were whites (33 percent). Yet blacks were not more negative than whites; 17 percent of black respondents rated Whitehurst's job as "only fair" or "poor" as opposed to 22 percent of white respondents. Thus, blacks were less likely than whites to have an opinion of Whitehurst's job performance. The most consistent pattern evident in the rating of Whitehurst's job was in the category of sex: women were decidedly more positive than were men. While the proportion of respondents rating Whitehurst's job as "excellent" was similar (27 percent male 30 percent female), significantly more women rated Whitehurst's job as "pretty good" (58 percent) than did men (39 percent). Men were somewhat more than twice as likely to rate Whitehurst's job as "only fair" or "poor" than were women. The survey's female respondents were less likely than male respondents to know Whitehurst's name, party, or stance, or to have read anything about him. It can be assumed that the lower information level exhibited by female respondents accounts for the more positive opinions which they expressed about the incumbent. Thus, while general trends or patterns emerged in the rating of Whitehurst's job when compared to certain socioeconomic characteristics, these trends were neither persistent or continuous.

Contact with the incumbent did seem to influence the rating of Whitehurst's job by respondents. The greatest impact was apparently exerted upon those respondents who had received a newsletter from the incumbent. Of those respondents receiving a newsletter, one-third rated Whitehurst's job as "excellent," as opposed to only 6 percent of those who had not received a newsletter. A positive effect on the job

rating was also evident among those respondents who had ever met Whitehurst; of this group, 38 percent rated Whitehurst's job as "excellent" as opposed to 20 percent of those that had never met Whitehurst. The final variable of contact with the incumbent produced a less positive impact upon the respondents' rating of Whitehurst's job. While the same percentage of respondents who had ever written Whitehurst rated his job as "excellent" as those respondents who had not written Whitehurst, the percentage rating him "pretty good" declined among those who had written him; 45 percent as compared to 51 percent. Only 1 percent of those respondents who had never written Whitehurst rated his job performance as "poor," whereas 8 percent of those who had written Whitehurst rated his job performance as "poor." Thus, it appears that those activities initiated by the incumbent produced a more positive effect upon the respondents rating his job performance than did those activities initiated by the respondents.

In his study of presidential, gubernatorial, and senatorial candidates, James Wright found that "Images of senatorial candidates are more likely based on . . . their leadership and experience qualifications."¹⁴ Assuming that a similar relationship exists for congressional candidates, and that the importance of the variables is expressed through positive evaluation of the variables, experience and leadership ability should emerge from the survey results as the most favorably rated of the four characteristics presented to the respondents. This, however, was not the case: when the two responses "excellent" and "pretty good" of those respondents expressing an opinion are combined, the variables were ranked: intelligence (81 percent), experience (80 percent), honesty (69 percent), and leadership ability (69 percent).

When only the "excellent" responses are considered, another ranking emerges: intelligence (50 percent), honesty (40 percent), experience (36 percent), and leadership ability (30 percent). Thus, in neither ordering of the variables do Wright's findings prevail; in fact, experience and leadership ability are least consistently rated as "excellent" as compared to intelligence or honesty. This situation is probably a consequence of the "imperfect information" about incumbents which constituents possess. It has been claimed that the changing quantity or quality of information from congressional offices has altered the public's evaluation of congressmen.¹⁵ Because of inadequate information, voters do not form firm policy preferences, and when voting rely on personal cues or characteristics rather than issues.¹⁶ The result of such increasingly noncontroversial information about the incumbent is that "a constant informational advantage may be quite consistent with an increasing incumbency advantage."¹⁷

The two open-ended questions of the survey (Can you think of anything in particular about Bill Whitehurst that might make you want to vote for him (and against him) in the next election?) produced ninety-nine reasons for voting for Whitehurst, and forty-one reasons for voting against him. (See Appendix) Similar to Miller and Stokes findings, the statements were primarily generalized judgments with little substance, such as "he has done a good job so far," "he is a good man," etc. The congressman's image does indeed consist of a "mixed bag of impressions," usually devoid of issue or policy content.¹⁸ The last hypothesis to be tested deals with the reasons given by the survey respondents for voting for or against the incumbent.

As V.O. Key has pointed out, the best information a voter has about future political behavior is past political behavior. Thus, it is the tendency of those who perceive little difference among electoral candidates to vote for the incumbent.¹⁹ In a low information setting, voters must turn to cues like past performance or the candidate's personality rather than future policy stands.²⁰ The final hypothesis will attempt to assess the impact of the variables of the respondent's information sources, political stance, party affiliation, the socio-economic characteristics of age, income, race, and sex, and the activities of the incumbent upon the respondents' opinion of the incumbent.

A new variable, "opinion of Whitehurst," was created to represent the total of positive (reasons voting for Whitehurst) and negative (reasons voting against Whitehurst) responses to the survey's two open-ended questions. The possible value of the variable ranges from -3 to +3, with 0 representing no opinion or offsetting positive and negative responses.

The respondents' opinion of Whitehurst does not appear to be greatly influenced by the reading of a daily newspaper. Although respondents who did not read a daily newspaper were more likely to have a 0 value opinion of Whitehurst than were those respondents who did read a daily newspaper, they were only slightly less likely to have +2 or +3 value opinions of Whitehurst. When the results for respondents reading stories about politics and government are reviewed, a somewhat different pattern emerges. Those respondents who read stories about politics and government almost every day were more likely than most other respondents to possess strongly negative opinions of Whitehurst, and were as likely as those respondents reading these stories only

occasionally to possess positive opinions of Whitehurst. However, those respondents reading the editorial and opinion pages only occasionally were more likely to express negative opinions of Whitehurst, while those respondents reading these pages almost every day were increasingly positive in their opinions of Whitehurst. The only clearly discernible pattern is that reading a daily newspaper, stories about politics and government, or the editorial and opinion pages on a more frequent basis results in a decreased number of cases where a respondent has no opinion of Whitehurst. The frequency of readership has no apparent consistent impact on the positive or negative qualities of the respondents' opinion of Whitehurst; rather it must be assumed that more frequent reading merely provides the respondent with additional information upon which to base his opinion of Whitehurst, be it positive or negative.

The two other media sources of information, radio and television news, likewise produces little effect on opinion formation. While those respondents who listened to radio news almost every day were slightly more likely to express negative opinions of Whitehurst, they were less likely to provide moderately positive opinions. In addition, daily radio news listeners were as likely as other respondents to express no opinion of Whitehurst. Those respondents watching television news almost every day exhibited a similar pattern: while somewhat more likely to express strongly negative or positive opinions of Whitehurst, they were still almost as likely as other respondents to express no opinion of Whitehurst. In fact, almost 70 percent of those respondents expressing no opinion of Whitehurst claimed to watch television news almost every day. It must again be assumed that whatever information is gathered by the respondents from radio or television news cannot be said

to produce a strong, identifiable impact on the respondents' opinion formation.

A more consistent information effect can be seen in the discussion of politics with family members and friends: the increasing frequency of discussion produces increasingly negative opinions. Those respondents discussing politics with family members and friends almost every day were somewhat more likely to express moderately positive opinions of Whitehurst, and only slightly more likely to express every positive opinions of Whitehurst. Thus, for the survey respondents, political discussions with family members and friends appear to have a recognizable effect on opinion formation, although the impact is not as hypothesized. The increased amounts of information available to respondents who engaged in political discussions most frequently seem to provide more cues for opinion formation, as seen in those respondents who read newspapers. The effect of the information is probably enhanced because of the fact that political discussions represent the only information source evaluated where the respondent had any direct input.

DeVries and Tarrance have found that the ticket-splitter relies heavily upon the media for information on the candidate and his issue stand. Those information sources cited as "very important" by ticket-splitters were television news, newspaper, discussions with family and friends, and contact with the candidate.²¹ In the second congressional district, ticket-splitting is a common occurrence, and the results of this study have verified the importance of these information sources in the formation of opinions by the survey respondents. Although it has been shown that increased attention to information sources did not provide a consistently negative or positive pattern of opinion

formation, it did nonetheless encourage opinion formation, which is significant in itself.

While information supplied through contact with the incumbent seemingly proved both beneficial and detrimental in the respondents' opinion formation, the large majority of opinions formed were positive. Those respondents who had received a newsletter from Whitehurst were significantly less likely to have no opinion of Whitehurst (32 percent) than were those respondents who had not received a newsletter from Whitehurst (80 percent). Those respondents who had received a newsletter from Whitehurst were also much more likely to express positive opinions of Whitehurst, and somewhat more likely to express negative opinions of Whitehurst than those respondents who had not received a newsletter from Whitehurst.

Table 13

The Effect of Contact with the Incumbent: Respondents
Receiving Newsletters and Opinion of Whitehurst

Opinion of Whitehurst	Received Newsletter	Did Not Receive Newsletter
Negative opinion	13%	3%
0	32	80
Positive opinion	<u>56</u>	<u>20</u>
Total	+43	+17

A similar pattern emerges for respondents who had met Whitehurst: they were not only less likely to express no opinion of Whitehurst, they were much more likely to express positive opinions, and slightly more likely to express negative opinions, than were those respondents who had never met Whitehurst.

Table 14

The Effect of Contact with the Incumbent: Respondents
Who had Met the Congressman and
Opinion of Whitehurst

Opinion of Whitehurst	Have Met Congressman	Have Not Met Congressman
Negative Opinion	11%	7%
0	22	66
Positive Opinion	<u>67</u>	<u>28</u>
Total	+56	+21

The pattern differs somewhat for respondents who had ever written Whitehurst: they were about as likely to express negative opinions of Whitehurst, and more likely to express positive opinions of Whitehurst than were those respondents who had never written Whitehurst. This finding differs from the way in which respondents who had written Whitehurst rated the job he was doing. Those respondents who had written Whitehurst were as likely to rate Whitehurst's job performance as "excellent," less likely to rate his job performance as "pretty good," and much more likely to rate his job performance as "poor" than were respondents who had never written him. It appears that while those

respondents who had written Whitehurst were generally less favorable in their rating of his job performance than were respondents who had never written Whitehurst, they still did not possess sufficient information to relate specific reasons why they would not vote for him in the next election.

Table 15

The Effect of Contact with the Incumbent: Respondents who had Written the Congressman and Opinion of Whitehurst

Opinion of Whitehurst	Had Written Congressman	Had Not Written Congressman
Negative Opinion	8%	8%
0	35	55
Positive Opinion	<u>58</u>	<u>37</u>
Total	+50	+29

The incumbent himself as produced a noticeable effect on the respondents' opinion formation. Although the effect is occasionally negative, it is strongly positive in a majority of cases. The visibility of the incumbent can influence opinion formation, and the incumbent can likewise control this visibility. By providing positive, non-issue related information, the incumbent can present himself as "leader, statesman, or state champion," and reap the benefits at the polls.²²

The respondents' political stance produced the expected influence upon their opinion of Whitehurst. Those respondents labelling themselves as "liberals" were most likely to express negative opinions of Whitehurst, followed by "middle of the road" and "conservative" respondents.

Party identification produced a similar effect on negative opinion formation: only Democrats and Independents expressed negative opinions of Whitehurst, whereas none of his fellow Republicans did so. However, Independents were surprisingly more positive in their opinions of Whitehurst than were either Republicans or Democrats, and were also more likely to have an opinion than were either Republicans or Democrats.

Table 16
Respondent Party Identification and
Opinion of Whitehurst

Opinion of Whitehurst	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Negative Opinion	11%	0%	9%
0	60	63	41
Positive Opinion	<u>29</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>50</u>
Total	+18	+37	+41

There has been a dramatic rise in the number of voters identifying themselves as Independents in recent years. The decreasing importance of partisanship is clear in that between 30 and 40 percent of the American electorate now disclaim affective ties to either party.²³ The change is apparent not only in voter identification but behavior as well, as seen in ticket-splitting, defection from the self-identified party, and in vote switching from one election to the next.²⁴ Incumbents can benefit from the decline of partisanship through the reduction of the impact of partisan identification for voters still aligned

with a party.²⁵ Weak partisan ties also increase the propensity for defection in congressional elections; defections which are not only increasingly common but are heavily pro-incumbent as well.²⁶

Evidence of the increased impact of Independent voters upon elections is supplied through the survey responses on presidential voting in 1976. Although the responses were recorded in May, 1977, approximately six months after the election, some inferences may be drawn from the results. While the vote for Carter and Ford was evenly divided among the respondents, those respondents who voted for Carter gave more negative evaluations of Whitehurst than those respondents who voted for Ford. Nevertheless, respondents who voted for Carter were as likely to express favorable opinions of Whitehurst as were those respondents who voted for Ford, except in the most positive (+3) category. Since over one-third of the survey respondents identified themselves as Independents, it cannot be assumed that party identification of Carter supporters produced the negative evaluations of Whitehurst, or the virtual lack of negative opinions from Ford voters. Not only did the Independent voters swell the ranks of those respondents voting for Ford, but those respondents voting for the Democratic presidential candidate defected to the Republican congressional candidate as well.

Table 17

1976 Presidential Vote and Respondent Opinion of Whitehurst

	Ford	Carter
Negative Opinion	6%	17%
0 Opinion	39	36
Positive Opinion	55	47

The respondents' age did not produce a consistent effect upon their opinion of Whitehurst. Generally, younger respondents were somewhat more negative in their evaluations, but the pattern was not predictable. Those respondents in the 40 - 49 age group were the most positive in expressing opinions of Whitehurst; those in the 50 - 59 age group were least positive. The relationship between the respondents' educational level and opinion of Whitehurst was more obvious; as educational level increased, so did the expression of opinions of Whitehurst, both positive and negative. Since it can be assumed that increasing attention to political information is a function of educational achievement, this finding is not surprising.

While those respondents in the highest income category (over \$20,000) were more negative in their opinions of Whitehurst, they were also more likely to express very positive opinions about Whitehurst than were respondents in lower income categories. Middle-income respondents expressed more negative opinions than did lower income respondents, who were most likely to express no opinion about Whitehurst. Black respondents were more likely to express either no opinion or a negative opinion of Whitehurst than were white respondents. White respondents were more favorable in their opinions of Whitehurst, particularly in the most positive categories. Negative opinions about Whitehurst were more often expressed by male respondents than female respondents, with both groups expressing identical proportions of no opinion about Whitehurst.

The decomposition of party affiliation and identification, and the inadequate information most voters possess about congressional candidates have increased the advantage of incumbency.²⁷ Not only has the

behavior of voters changed, but the way in which voters decide on a candidate has also undergone revision. Prior to 1960, voters relied upon party, group affiliation, the candidate, and the issues as voting cues.²⁸ The order, and significance, of voting cues has changed considerably; voters now evaluate the candidate's personality and ability to handle the job, the issues, (and the candidate's stand), party, and group affiliation.²⁹ The information received by voters is not only imperfect, in most cases it can be controlled by the incumbent, with the consequence that "most voters know that he is currently serving in that office and is apparently doing a good job."³⁰

Because of the scarcity and costliness of information, most voters in congressional elections must rely upon cues such as party affiliation, presidential performance and incumbency in deciding how to cast their votes.³¹ With the deterioration of party affiliation, voters are increasingly turning to incumbency as a decision rule in voting.³² As Cover has stated: "Voters dissatisfied with party cues could be reaching for any other cues that are available in deciding how to vote. The incumbency cue is readily at hand."³³ Incumbency can therefore have a considerable effect on congressional elections, apart from the influence of party identification.³⁴

The influence and advantage of incumbency has been apparent in the examination of the respondents' opinion of the incumbent. The majority of respondents feel that the incumbent is doing a good job as congressman; their rating of his job is not substantially altered by any individual variable. Only half of the respondents could supply specific reasons why they might vote for or against Whitehurst in the next election, and very few could supply more than one reason. Again,

the ability of respondents to supply reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst was not dramatically influenced by any individual variable. Contact with the incumbent, by receiving his newsletter or actually meeting him, proved to be the most significant influence on the respondents' development of reasons for voting for or against Whitehurst. It therefore appears that the voters depend, to a great extent on the information provided by the incumbent himself.

Of the information possessed by the respondents of this survey, only the fact of Whitehurst's incumbency was known by each respondent. Contact with the incumbent, or receiving a newsletter from the incumbent have been shown to produce the most significant effect on the respondents' opinion of the incumbent. It must be concluded that Miller and Stokes were indeed correct: "to be perceived at all is to be perceived favorably."³⁵

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have strongly supported some of the stated hypotheses concerning congressional incumbents, somewhat weakly supported several of the hypotheses, and failed to support only one of the hypotheses. In Chapter III, the level of constituency awareness of the incumbent was explored. The analysis of the survey results showed that the respondents' awareness of the incumbent congressman was influenced by attention to various available information, and that the level of awareness differed according to the source of information. Generally, increased attention to more costly sources of information produced an increased level of awareness on the part of the survey respondents. The presence of certain socioeconomic factors was also shown to influence the level of constituency awareness. As the frequency with which respondents relied upon the less available, and therefore costly, information sources of stories dealing with politics and government and the editorial and opinion pages of the daily newspaper rose, the awareness level also rose. Increased respondent attention to the less costly information sources of radio and television news had less impact on respondent awareness. As the respondents' length of area residence, age, educational level and income increased, the respondents' level of awareness likewise increased, with white and male respondents somewhat more likely to exhibit higher levels of awareness. The incumbent was shown to influence the constituents'

level of awareness through the variables of personal contact and newsletter distribution, with the respondents' level of awareness increasing as did their exposure to these variables. The one hypothesis not supported by the survey results posited that party identification would influence constituency awareness levels. Rather than supporting this hypothesis, the analysis of the data showed Independents, rather than the expected Republicans, exhibiting higher levels of awareness of the incumbent. Previous studies have confirmed that the importance of party identification in opinion formation, and subsequent voting behavior, has decreased. Through the lack of a significant relationship between identification with the political party of the incumbent (Republican) and awareness of the incumbent, the survey results support these earlier findings.

Chapter IV analyzed the survey data to determine those factors which influenced the respondents' opinion of the incumbent. The relationship of selected variables to the opinion of Whitehurst's expressed by the respondents was evident, but not always strong. Those respondents who were willing to rate the incumbent's job as congressman were overwhelmingly positive in their assessment. The opinion of the incumbent, as measured by the value assigned to the respondents' reasons for voting for or against the congressman was influenced, to some extent, by certain information sources, socioeconomic characteristics, party identification, and contact with the incumbent. As the respondents' attention to costly information sources increased, the opinion of the incumbent became increasingly positive. An increase in the socioeconomic characteristics of age, income and educational level was also more likely to produce positive opinions of the incumbent.

The incumbent's fellow Republicans were also more likely to state positive reasons for voting for or voting against the incumbent. The strongest relationship emerged between contact with the incumbent and the respondents' opinion of the congressman; as the respondent's level of contact with the incumbent increased, their opinion of the congressman became increasingly positive.

The impact of the incumbency advantage upon congressional elections has been established by previous studies, with various explanations offered for the incumbency phenomenon. The name familiarity hypothesis has been forwarded by several authors as producing a decided advantage for incumbents in an electoral situation. Although this study did not address the actual voting choices of respondents, the ability of the survey respondents to name the incumbent congressman was measured. As has been shown, 59 percent of the respondents were able to identify the congressman, with 53 percent supplying the congressman's party affiliation. The respondents' ability to correctly name the incumbent and his party were also seen to be influenced by various information sources and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as by activities of the incumbent himself. Again, as the respondent's age, income and educational level increased, the ability to identify the incumbent also increased, particularly among white respondents.

The respondents' ability to name the congressman and his party was increased by regular attention to information sources, and by attention to more costly information, such as stories about politics and government or the editorial and opinion pages of the newspaper. As the socioeconomic factors of length of area residence, age, educational level and income rose, the respondents' ability to name the incumbent also

rose. Those respondents who had received a newsletter from the incumbent or met the incumbent also demonstrated increased proficiency in naming the incumbent. If name familiarity does indeed influence electoral outcomes, the incumbent has an added advantage in the second congressional district: based on the survey results, the incumbent's activities can significantly increase constituents' name familiarity levels.

A closely allied hypothesis holds that the incumbent's reputation will determine the electoral value derived from incumbency. The survey results showed that the respondents' appraisal of the incumbent's performance was resoundingly positive, with over half the respondents (59 percent) rating his job as "excellent" or "pretty good." Again, certain variables were seen to influence the rating of the incumbent's job performance by the respondents. As the frequency of attention to information sources increased, the rating of Whitehurst's job became increasingly positive. Party identification and personal political stance also affected the respondents' rating of the incumbent's job; Whitehurst's fellow Republicans were more likely to assess his performance positively, as were those respondents identifying their political stance as "middle of the road" or "conservative." The presence of certain socioeconomic characteristics produced little impact on the rating of the incumbent's job; the effect of these variables was neither strong or consistent. However, contact with the incumbent did appear to influence the respondents' rating of the incumbent's job. Those respondents who had ever met the congressman or received a newsletter from him were significantly more likely to rate his job performance in a positive manner. Thus, while the pattern

of influence produced by certain variables upon the respondents' rating of the incumbent's job is not as pervasive as it was in the area of name familiarity, it is present nonetheless. Most importantly, the incumbent enjoyed a positive reputation among the survey respondents.

The increasing use of the institutional advantages of incumbency and the subsequent impact on voting behavior has been detailed by several authors. This study has shown that the information available to constituents consistently affects their awareness of the incumbent, their assessment of his job performance, and their opinion of him. Additionally, the variables measuring incumbent activities were among the most significant in their impact upon the respondents' opinion formation and job performance ratings, with increased exposure to the incumbent producing increasingly positive responses. Further support for the institutional advantage of incumbency theory is also present in the survey results. Among the specific reasons given for voting for or voting against the incumbent in the survey's open-ended questions, constituent services accounted for 17 percent of the total responses. Thus in the second congressional district, those institutional resources available to incumbents have apparently influenced the respondents' opinions of the incumbent in a positive manner.

The increased use of incumbency rather than issues or party identification as a cue in voting decisions has been documented in the literature. While this survey did not examine voting behavior, it did show a low level of party identification and issue orientation. A greater number of the survey respondents identified themselves as Independents (39 percent) than as either Republicans (19 percent) or Democrats (33 percent), and a majority of those labelling themselves

as Independents said they did not feel closer to either the Republican or Democratic party. Even among those respondents identifying themselves as partisans, only slightly over one-third identified themselves as "strong" partisans, while over half said they were "not very strong" partisans. Very few of the survey respondents identified specific issues in their reasons for voting for the incumbent (only 9 percent), with three times as many (27 percent) respondents citing issues as the reason they would vote against the incumbent. Therefore, as seen in earlier studies, while the positive opinions of the incumbent tend to be vague and generalized, the formation of negative opinions appeared to be more influenced by specific issues. While a vote for the incumbent is often interpreted as support of the status quo, clearly those respondents with negative opinions of the incumbent are more inclined to reject the status quo on the basis of particular issues or problems. It may be concluded that the formation of negative opinions of the incumbent is influenced by attention to specific issues.

While a significant number of survey respondents were willing to rate the incumbent's performance, some without being able to even identify the incumbent, far fewer were able to cite one reason for voting for or against the incumbent in the next election. Based on this apparent lack of specific information concerning the incumbent on the part of the survey respondents, it can be assumed that much of the favorable nature of their job performance rating is based on the status quo. Many of the respondents' opinions of the incumbent were based upon such general statements as "he's doing a good job," "I like his stand," or "he is good for our area," which is typical of previous

findings where past performance was most frequently cited by respondents concerning their opinion of the incumbent. Since it has been shown that voters who possess little information concerning candidates tend to vote for the candidate already in office, based on the survey data it can be assumed that in the second congressional district this is likely. The low level of specific information as well as the positive reputation the incumbent enjoys have certainly been established among the survey respondents, and the incumbent's increasing electoral success has provided him with five uninterrupted terms in Congress.

A final explanation of the incumbency advantage holds that the incumbent may simply be the strongest or most appealing candidate. The findings of this study and Representative Whitehurst's continued electoral success do not negate this hypothesis; yet it is difficult to divorce the personal appeal of the congressman from the incumbency effect. The increasing length of area residence was seen to significantly influence the level of awareness and opinion of the incumbent. However, this relationship could be interpreted as resulting either from increased opportunity for exposure to information about the incumbent or actually knowing the incumbent personally. Over one-fourth of the survey respondents cited personal characteristics or traits of the congressman in their reasons for voting for or against him, with many of the respondents mentioning personal contacts or friendships with the incumbent. As it has been shown, very few respondents were aware of the policy stands, specific issues or actual performance of the incumbent. In the absence of such substantive cues, it can be assumed that personal characteristics and the fact of

incumbency itself will be increasingly relied upon in voting decisions.

The ability of the incumbent to influence the voters' awareness, and consequently opinion, of him emerges as perhaps the most significant finding of the study. The advantage of incumbency has been documented in recent electoral behavior, with numerous reasons offered for the occurrence of this phenomenon. The survey results have emphasized particularly the value of those resources available to incumbents, and the impact upon voter awareness and opinion produced by the skillful manipulation of these resources. In the second congressional district, the incumbent's ability to monopolize the information available to voters through the distribution of newsletters, personal contact and influence with the media has produced a significant impact upon the respondents' awareness and opinion of the incumbent.

The fact that Representative Whitehurst is perceived in a positive manner is evident both in the survey results and in his tenure in Congress. The survey data analyzed in this study has shown that an incumbency effect exists in the second congressional district, and that this effect can be influenced by certain variables. Moreover, the impact of the incumbency effect is clear: Representative Whitehurst has won each election since he first entered Congress by a plurality of at least sixty percent of the vote. It can thus be safely assumed that both his personal strength as a candidate and the incumbency effect have combined to provide Representative Whitehurst with a significant electoral advantage.

Notes for Introduction

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ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

After an initial question to determine whether the respondent was of voting age (Are you 18 years of age or older?), or if anyone of voting age was present (Is there anyone 18 or older at home?), the interviewer asked if this was the respondent's permanent place of residence. If the respondent was a permanent resident, the interview proceeded. If either of the initial questions on age or residence produced a negative response, the interview was terminated. The next question determined the respondent's length of residency in the area. The following four questions defined the respondent's sources of information, and the regularity with which each source was used. The respondent was then asked if he/she could identify the congressman from the district, and which political party he belonged to.

The respondent was next asked whether he/she had ever read or heard anything about Bill Whitehurst; if the answer was positive the interviewer proceeded with questions concerning the respondent's opinion of certain characteristics of the congressman (honesty, experience, leadership ability, and intelligence), and their exposure to the congressman. If the response was negative, the interviewer deleted these questions. The next series of questions required that the respondent identify his/her political stance; whether he/she was currently registered to vote; whether he/she had voted in the 1976 election, and if so, how; and which party he/she identified with. The final questions identified selected socioeconomic characteristics of the respondent.

CONGRESSIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

STATUS OF INTERVIEW

- () Completed
- () Partial Interview
- () Refusal
- () No Response
- () Call back at _____

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: _____

ID CODE: _____

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm taking a public opinion poll for a project in the Department of Government at the College of William and Mary. I'd like to ask you some questions that will only take a few minutes of your time.

A. ASK IF NECESSARY: Are you 18 years of age or older?

Yes ()
GO TO QUESTION B

No ()
Is there anyone 18 or older at home?
Yes () No ()
GO TO QUESTION B TERMINATE INTERVIEW

B. Is this your permanent place of residence?

Yes ()
CONTINUE INTERVIEW

No ()
Is there anyone 18 or older who lives here?
Yes () No ()
CONTINUE INTERVIEW TERMINATE INTERVIEW

1. How long have you lived in this area?

- 1. Less than 1 year ()
- 2. 1 to 5 years ()
- 3. 6 to 9 years ()
- 4. 10 or more years ()

2. We're interested in how people find out about things that are happening in the nation and in their community. One source of information is the newspaper. Do you read any daily paper?

1. No ()
SKIP TO Q. 3

2. Yes ()
ASK Q. 2a

2a. Of course different people prefer different sections of the paper. How often would you say you read news stories dealing with politics and government -- almost every day, a few times each week, only occasionally, or never?

- 1. Almost every day ()
- 2. A few times each week ()
- 3. Only Occasionally ()
- 4. Never ()
- 8. Not sure ()

1							7

2b. How often would you say you read the editorials and opinion columns -- almost every day, a few times each week, only occasionally, or never?

- 1. Almost every day ()
- 2. A few times each week ()
- 3. Only occasionally ()
- 4. Never ()
- 8. Not sure ()

3. Another source of information is radio. How often do you listen to radio news -- almost every day, a few times each week, only occasionally, or never?

- 1. Almost every day ()
- 2. A few times each week ()
- 3. Only occasionally ()
- 4. Never ()
- 8. Not sure ()

4. Another source of information is television. How often do you watch television news -- almost every day, a few times each week, only occasionally, or never?

- 1. Almost every day ()
- 2. A few times each week ()
- 3. Only occasionally ()
- 4. Never ()
- 8. Not sure ()

5. Friends and family members are another source of information. How often would you say that you discuss politics with friends or family members -- almost every day, a few times each week, only occasionally, or never?

- 1. Almost every day ()
- 2. A few times each week ()
- 3. Only occasionally ()
- 4. Never ()
- 8. Not sure ()

6. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about the Congressman from this District. Do you happen to know the name of the Congressman from this District?

- 1. Correct ()
- 2. Incorrect ()
- 8. Don't know ()

7. Do you happen to know which political party the congressman from this district belongs to?

- 1. Correct ()
- 2. Incorrect ()
- 8. Don't know ()

8. Have you ever read or heard anything about Bill Whitehurst?

- 1. No ()
SKIP TO Q. 9
- 2. Yes ()
ASK Q. 8a
- 8. Not sure ()
SKIP TO Q. 9

8a. How would you rate the job that Bill Whitehurst is doing as the representative in Congress from this district -- excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor, or do you not have enough information to rate his performance?

- 1. Excellent ()
- 2. Pretty good ()
- 3. Fair ()
- 4. Poor ()
- 5. Not enough information ()
- 8. Not sure ()

8b. There are several characteristics which people look for in a Congressman. For the following characteristics, please rate Bill Whitehurst as excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor.

How would you rate Bill Whitehurst in terms of honesty?

- 1. Excellent ()
- 2. Pretty good ()
- 3. Fair ()
- 4. Poor ()
- 8. Not sure ()

8c. How would you rate Bill Whitehurst in terms of experience?

- 1. Excellent ()
- 2. Pretty good ()
- 3. Fair ()
- 4. Poor ()
- 8. Not sure ()

8d. How would you rate Bill Whitehurst in terms of leadership ability?

- 1. Excellent ()
- 2. Pretty good ()
- 3. Fair ()
- 4. Poor ()
- 8. Not sure ()

8e. How would you rate Bill Whitehurst in terms of intelligence?

- 1. Excellent ()
- 2. Pretty good ()
- 3. Fair ()
- 4. Poor ()
- 8. Not sure () .

8f. Can you think of anything in particular about Bill Whitehurst that might make you want to vote for him in the next election?

Can you think of anything else?

8g. Can you think of anything in particular about Bill Whitehurst that might make you want to vote against him in the next election?

Can you think of anything else?

8h. Have you ever received a newsletter from Congressman Whitehurst?

- 1. Yes ()
- 2. No ()
- 8. Not sure ()

8i. Have you ever met or spoken with Congressman Whitehurst?

- 1. Yes ()
- 2. No ()
- 8. Not sure ()

8j. Have you ever written or contacted Congressman Whitehurst on a matter of concern to you?

- 1. Yes () ASK Q.a
- 2. No () SKIP TO Q. 8k
- 8. Not sure () SKIP TO Q. 8k

a. How satisfied were you with Congressman Whitehurst's response -- would you say you were very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

- 1. Very satisfied ()
- 2. Fairly satisfied ()
- 3. Not very satisfied ()
- 4. Not at all satisfied ()
- 8. Not sure ()

8k. How would describe Congressman Whitehurst's political stance -- liberal, middle of the road, or conservative?

- 1. Liberal ()
- 2. Middle of the road ()
- 3. Conservative ()
- 8. Not sure ()

9. How would you describe your own political stance -- liberal, middle of the road or conservative?

- 1. Liberal ()
- 2. Middle of the road ()
- 3. Conservative ()
- 8. Not sure ()

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

10. Are you currently registered to vote?

- 1. Yes ()
- 2. No ()
- 8. Not sure ()

11. In the last general election in November, 1976, the Republican candidate for Congress was Bill Whitehurst and the Democratic candidate was Bob Washington. Do you happen to recall whether you voted in that election?

- 1. Didn't vote ()
SKIP TO Q. 12
- 8. Not sure ()
SKIP TO Q. 12
- 2. Voted ()
ASK Q. 11a

11a. Did you vote for the Republican candidate Bill Whitehurst or the Democratic candidate Bob Washington?

- 1. Whitehurst ()
- 2. Washington ()
- 3. Refused ()
- 8. Not sure ()

11b. In that same election the Republican candidate for President was Gerald Ford and the Democratic candidate was Jimmy Carter. Do you recall which of the two candidates you voted for?

- 1. Ford ()
- 2. Carter ()
- 3. Refused ()
- 8. Not sure ()

12. In politics do you generally think of yourself as a Democrat or a Republican?

- 1. Democrat ()
SKIP TO Q. 12b
- 2. Republican ()
- 8. Not sure ()
SKIP TO Q. 13

3. Independent ()
SKIP TO Q. 12a

12a. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?

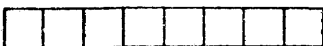
- 1. Democrat ()
- 2. Republican ()
- 3. Neither ()
- 8. Not sure ()

12b. Would you call yourself a strong Republican/Democrat or a not very strong Republican/Democrat?

- 1. Strong ()
- 2. Not very strong ()
- 8. Not sure ()

13. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself. What is your approximate age -- 18 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, or 60 or older?

- 1. 18 to 29 ()
- 2. 30 to 39 ()
- 3. 40 to 49 ()
- 4. 50 to 59 ()
- 5. 60 or older ()



THE SURVEY DATA

The following review of the survey data is included as a means of identifying the general trends of the survey responses.

The mobility of residents in the second congressional district can be seen in the responses to the first question dealing with length of area residence. While 55 percent of all respondents had lived in the area ten or more years, 37 percent had lived in the area for five or less years, 10 percent for less than one year, with only 8 percent citing area residence between five and ten years. The concentration of responses at the lower and upper ends of the scale probably indicates the impact of the military presence in the district, coupled with the tendency of natives to remain in the area.

When asked if they read a daily newspaper, 18 percent of the respondents said no, while 82 percent replied yes. Of the 82 percent reading a daily newspaper, 56 percent read articles concerning politics and government "almost every day," 22 percent "a few times each week," 19 percent "only occasionally," and 3 percent "never." The editorial and opinion pages were read with less frequency: 43 percent "almost every day," 26 percent "a few times each week," 26 percent "only occasionally," and 5 percent "never."

Television news ranked as the second most important source of information among respondents; 73 percent said they watched television news "almost every day," 13 percent "a few times each week," 12 percent "only occasionally," and 2 percent "never." Respondents relied less upon radio news than upon television news: 65 percent listened to radio news "almost every day," 9 percent "a few times each week," 18 percent "only occasionally," and 9 percent "never."

The discussion of political matters with family members or friends provided the most infrequent political information. Only 11 percent of the respondents discussed politics "almost every day" with others, 32 percent "a few times each week," 44 percent "only occasionally," and 12 percent "never."

When asked to name the congressman from their district, 59 percent of the respondents did so correctly, 3 percent did so incorrectly, and 38 percent replied they did not know. These findings indicate a somewhat higher awareness present in the second congressional district than cited in previous studies. Erikson and Luttbeg found that only half the citizens questioned in a 1970 survey could name their congressman,¹ while Gallup readings show the share of adults who could name their congressman rose from 46-53 percent between 1966 and 1970.² The 1974 study of an Oregon congressional district found that pre-election incumbent name recall was only 34 percent, and only 41 percent after the election.³

The number of respondents who could correctly identify the congressman's party was similar to the portion who could name the congressman; 55 percent correctly cited the Republican party, 37 percent did not know the incumbent's party, and 8 percent were incorrect. The number of persons responding incorrectly to Whitehurst's party affiliation was nearly three times the number which incorrectly named their congressman, emphasizing perhaps the underlying importance of candidate rather than party cues in voting decisions.

One of the most striking findings of the survey is the proportion of respondents who had read or heard something about Whitehurst - 83 percent. In their 1958 study of constituency influence on Congress,

Miller and Stokes found that only 49 percent of all respondents had read or heard something about the incumbent.⁴ In the same study, Miller and Stokes found that 59 percent of people who lived in districts where the House seat was uncontested in 1958 had neither read nor heard anything about either candidate.⁵ However, Abramowitz found in his 1974 study that while only 34 percent of the persons interviewed recalled the incumbent's name, 95 percent said they had read or heard something about him.⁶

Despite the large number of respondents who could correctly identify Whitehurst, or had read or heard something about him, almost 40 percent could not rate the job he had done as congressman. This finding represents a decrease compared to Abramowitz's results, where 27 percent felt they did not have enough information to rate the congressman's performance.⁷ Within the group that did rate Whitehurst's job as congressman, 21 percent felt it was "excellent," 38 percent "pretty good," 14 percent "only fair," and only 2 percent "poor," with 25 percent of the survey respondents unable to rate Whitehurst's job. On the whole, Whitehurst was rated more favorably than the incumbent in Abramowitz's survey, where 11 percent rated the incumbent's performance as "excellent," 43 percent "pretty good," 37 percent "only fair," and 10 percent "poor."

The next four variables measured the respondents' views on the characteristics of honesty, experience, leadership ability and intelligence in the congressman. One-fourth of the respondents felt they could not rate Whitehurst on these characteristics, and 10 - 15 percent remained "not sure" on each characteristic. Overall, intelligence and experience received the highest ratings, followed by honesty and

leadership ability. Of those responding, 37 percent rated the congressman "excellent" in terms of intelligence, 23 percent "pretty good," and only 5 percent "only fair" or "poor;" 27 percent rated him as excellent" in terms of experience, 33 percent "pretty good," and only 5 percent as "only fair" or "poor." For the characteristic of "honesty," 30 percent of those responding rated the congressman as "excellent," 22 percent as "pretty good," and 8 percent as "only fair" or "poor." Finally, in terms of leadership ability, 22 percent of those responding rated the congressman as "excellent," 30 percent as "pretty good" and 10 percent as "only fair" or "poor."

The only two open-ended questions of the survey, "Can you think of anything in particular about Bill Whitehurst that might make you want to vote for him (and against him) in the next election?" produced ninety nine reasons to vote for Whitehurst, and forty-one reasons to vote against him. (see variables list) In order to simplify the analysis of the responses, the variable lists of reasons voting for or against Whitehurst were subdivided into five categories: personal characteristics and traits, job performance, issues, constituent services, and miscellaneous. (see variables list)

Of the reasons given for voting for Whitehurst, 35 percent were in the job performance category, 27 percent dealt with personal characteristics or traits, 17 percent mentioned constituent services, 12 percent were general, and 9 percent identified specific issues. However, it should be pointed out that 28 percent of those responding to this question said there were no particular reasons why they would vote for Whitehurst. An additional 28 percent of the respondents who had indicated that either they did not have enough information about White-

hurst to rate him, or had never heard or read anything about him and were not asked the question. Of the ninety nine individual responses, only one (he is doing a good job) was mentioned by more than ten respondents. These results are similar to those of Hinckley, et al. who found that reference to the "political record" of the incumbent is the most frequent response given when people are asked what they "like" about political candidates, and that most responses were very general.⁹

There were far fewer responses to the question "Can you think of anything in particular that might make you want to vote against Bill Whitehurst in the next election?" Over half of the respondents (54 percent) said they could not think of any particular reason, and 31 percent were either not asked the question or were not sure. Again, job performance characteristics were cited most often (32 percent), followed by issues (27 percent), miscellaneous (20 percent), personal characteristics and traits (17 percent), and constituent services (5 percent). It is interesting to note that although the reasons given for voting against Whitehurst are fewer in number than the reasons given for voting for him, they are much more specific and detailed than the latter, and indicate a higher level of information on the part of the respondents.

More than half (57 percent) of the respondents indicated that they had received a newsletter from Whitehurst, with almost one-third (30 percent) stating that they had met the congressman. Only a small percentage (13 percent) of the respondents indicated that they had ever written the congressman; of these respondents, two-thirds (66 percent) were "very satisfied" with his reply (17 percent); 10 percent were

"not very satisfied," and only 7 percent were "not at all satisfied."

When asked to describe Whitehurst's political stance, 10 percent of the respondents labelled him as a "liberal," 35 percent of the respondents felt he was "middle of the road," 32 percent of the respondents identified him as "conservative," and 24 percent of the respondents were not sure of Whitehurst's political stance. In identifying their own political stance, 22 percent of the respondents answered liberal, 42 percent middle of the road, 26 percent conservative, and 10 percent were not sure.

Over two-thirds (70 percent) of the respondents indicated that they were currently registered to vote; however, because of the military concentration in the area, not all of those registered to vote are registered in the second congressional district. Probably because of this fact, there was a high proportion of "missing cases" on the voting questions in the survey. When asked if they had voted in the 1976 general election ("In the last general election in November, 1976, the Republican candidate for Congress was Bill Whitehurst and the Democratic candidate was Bob Washington. Do you happen to recall whether you voted in that election?"), 58 percent of the respondents answered yes, 21 percent no, and 21 percent were "missing cases." (Respondents who were unable to answer the question, refused to answer the question, or answered "not sure.") However, when asked "Did you vote for the Republican candidate Bill Whitehurst or the Democratic candidate Bob Washington?," 44 percent of the responses were "missing cases," as distinguished from 7 percent who refused and 3 percent who were not sure. The vast majority of those responding to the question (76 percent) indicated that they had voted for Whitehurst, while only

14 percent indicated they had voted for the challenger Washington. A great deal of the variance between these responses and the actual vote in 1976 (Whitehurst 66 percent, Washington 34 percent) is probably due to the six month time lag between the election and the administration of the questionnaire, as well as the fact that the majority of respondents are more likely to identify with the "winner." The same number of missing cases emerged when the respondents were asked which presidential candidate they had voted for, with only 1 percent not sure and 7 percent who refused to answer. The vote between Carter and Ford was evenly divided among those responding to the question, 43 percent - 43 percent. In addition to the military population another factor contributing to the high proportion of "missing cases" could have been the lapse of six months between the election and the survey.

A larger proportion of the respondents identified themselves as Independents (39 percent) as opposed to Republicans (19 percent) or Democrats (33 percent), with 8 percent not sure. Almost two-thirds (60 percent) of those labelling themselves as Independents stated that they did not feel closer to either the Republican or Democratic party, with 17 percent identifying with each party, and 8 percent not sure. Of those respondents identifying themselves as either Republicans or Democrats, 39 percent called themselves "strong" Republicans/Democrats, 57 percent called themselves "not very strong" Republicans/Democrats, and only 5 percent were not sure.

The remainder of the survey data identified selected socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. In the age category, 37 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 29 years, 24 percent between the ages of 30 and 39 years, 11 percent between the ages of 40

and 49 years, 11 percent between the ages of 50 and 59 years, and 17 percent 60 years of age and older. Only 5 percent of the respondents indicated they had completed eight or less years of school; 10 percent had completed some high school; 37 percent were high school graduates; 27 percent had completed some college, with 13 graduating from college, and 8 percent completing some post college studies.

When asked their religious preference, 64 percent of the respondents indicated they were Protestant, 14 percent Roman Catholic, 4 percent Jewish, 3 percent other, and 15 percent none of these. Less than one-third (28 percent) of the respondents estimated their family income before taxes to be under \$10,000; 42 percent estimated between \$10,000 and \$20,000; 20 percent estimated over \$20,000; and 10 percent were not sure of their family's income. Only 7 percent of the respondents were currently members of a labor union, with an additional 7 percent indicating that someone else in the household belonged to a labor union. The racial breakdown of the respondents was 86 percent white, 12 percent black, and 1 percent other. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents were females (64 percent, with 36 percent males.) The fact that females make up the majority of the respondents is best explained by the nature of the survey: the female members of a household are generally more likely to answer the telephone, particularly during the traditional "dinner hour" in which the survey was administered.

NOTES FOR SURVEY DATA

¹ Benjamin I. Page, "Elections and Social Choice: The State of the Evidence," American Journal of Political Science XXI (August 1977): 651.

² David R. Mayhew, "Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals," Polity VI (Spring 1974): 311.

³ Alan I. Abramowitz, "Name Familiarity, Reputation, and the Incumbency Effect in a Congressional Election," The Western Political Quarterly XXVII (December 1975): 672.

⁴ Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, "Constituency Influence in Congress," American Political Science Review (March 1963): 54.

⁵ Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, "Party Government and the Saliency of Congress," Public Opinion Quarterly (Winter 1962): 540.

⁶ Abramowitz, p. 673.

⁷ Ibid.,

⁸ Ibid.

VARIABLES LIST

Length of Area Residence (AREARES)
Read daily newspaper (NWSPAPER)
Read Stories about Politics and Government (POLGOVT)
Read Editorial and Opinion Pages (EDITOP)
Listen to Radio News (RADNEWS)
Watch Television News (TVNEWS)
Discuss Politics with Family and Friends (FAMFRNDS)
Know the Congressman's Name (CONGNAME)
Know the Congressman's Party (CONPARTY)
Have you ever read anything about Bill Whitehurst (EVERREAD)
How rate in terms of honesty (HONESTY)
How rate in terms of experience (EXPERNCE)
How rate in terms of leadership ability (LEADERAB)
How rate in terms of intelligence (INTELL)
Reasons to vote for Whitehurst in next election (VOTEFOR)
Reasons to vote against Whitehurst in next election (VOTEAG)
Received a newsletter (NEWSLTTR)
Ever met Congressman (METCONG)
Ever written congressman (WRITCONG)
How satisfied with congressman's response (CONGRESPO)
How describe congressman's political stance (WHSTANCE)
How describe personal political stance (PRESTANCE)
Are you registered to vote (REGVOTE)
Did you vote in 1976 (VOTE76)
Congressional vote in 1976 (CONGVOTE)
Presidential vote in 1976 (PRESVOTE)
Party identification (PARTYID)
Independent identification with major parties (INDEP)
Party identification - strength (PARTYSTR)
Age (AGE)
Educational achievement (EDUCAT)
Religious preference (RELPREF)
Income (INCOME)
Union Member (UNIONI)
Family/Union Member (UNION2)
Race (RACE)
Sex (SEX)

VARIABLES LIST - REASONS VOTING FOR WHITEHURSTPersonal Characteristics/Traits

Honest
Forthright
Interest in Young People
Christian
Ethical stance
Intelligent
Character
Like the man
Fair-minded
Able man
Know him personally
Took class under him
Well-versed
Knowledge
Television appearances
My Man
Interest in constituents
Personal
Integrity
Straightforward
Open
Young
Professor
Trust
Objective
Newspaper coverage
Not a lawyer

Job Performance

Doing a good job
Like his stand
Share his views
Helps the little man
No misuse of influence
Keeps promises
Like his work
Votes democratic
Previous record
Responsive
Visit to work
Experience
Earns his keep
Diversification

(Job Performance cont'd)

Performance
Satisfied with him
Dedication
Like what he is doing
Good comments about him
Accomplishments
Before public eye
Trying
Open Door policy
Speeches
Knowledge of system
Rely on him
Communicate
Opinions
Conduct
Does Homework
Seniority
Interest in affairs
Legislative impact
Potential for change
Committee assignments.

Issues

Naval support
Military support
Good legislation
Timberwolf bill
NATO
Public Health Hospital
Elderly
Right to work bill

Constituent Services

Looks out for best interests of area
Good for this area
Helped with problems
Assistance
Reports back
Provides good information
Good Comments
Newsletter
Will help constituents
Brought work to area

(Constituent Services cont'd)

Veterans help
Public relations
Attention
Supported area
Retired military assistance

General

Saw name in last election
Never voted
Always voted for him
Only one I know
Bad alternatives
Best candidate
All of above
Good as we will get
Not much choice
Stick with him
Everything about him
Has it together

VARIABLE LIST - REASONS VOTING AGAINST WHITEHURSTPersonal Characteristics/Traits

Attitude
Know Him
Methods
Lack of trust in him
Don't like him
Political
For himself
Politician

Job Performance

Not distinguished in career
Poor performance
Not representative
National politics emphasis
Obscure
Lack of action
Not kept promises
Sits on laurels
Sloppy work
Stand
Stale
Philosophy
Conservative

Issues

Hirschfeld Bank
Revenue sharing
Waterfront Development
Schools
Economics
Platforms
Against Armed Forces
Congressional pay raise
Defense stand
Defense spending

Constituent Services

Doesn't listen
Loses touch with constituents
Doesn't treat constituents as individuals

General

Better Opponent

In Congress too long

Low Opinion of Congress

Don't vote

Need change

Party identification

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VITA

Mary Catherine Dunn

Born in Norfolk, Virginia, October 2, 1949. Graduated from Granby High School in that city, June, 1967, B.A., Old Dominion University, 1971. M.A. candidate, College of William and Mary, December, 1978. The author is the Information Planner with the Southeastern Virginia Planning District Commission in Norfolk, Virginia.