Title
Downs' Revenge: Elections, Responsibility and the Rise of Congressional Polarization

Author
Henderson, John Arthur

Publication Date
2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Downs' Revenge: Elections, Responsibility and the Rise of Congressional Polarization

by

John Arthur Henderson

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Eric Schickler, Co-chair
Professor Jasjeet S. Sekhon, Co-chair
Professor Gabriel S. Lenz
Professor Robert J. MacCoun
Professor Robert P. Van Houweling

Fall 2013

Downs' Revenge: Elections, Responsibility and the Rise of Congressional Polarization

John Arthur Henderson

Abstract

Downs' Revenge: Elections, Responsibility and the Rise of Congressional Polarization

by

John Arthur Henderson

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Eric Schickler, Co-chair

Professor Jasjeet S. Sekhon, Co-chair

Over the last forty years, Members of Congress (MCs) have grown increasingly polarized in their legislative behavior, while representing electorates that are much more moderate in their policy views. This lack of anchoring by median preferences highlights a central puzzle in American politics: How do polarized candidates run and win elections based on legislative records that are increasingly 'out of step' with their districts and states?

Existing research points to two potential electoral sources for this representation disconnect. A predominant view is that this polarization process is the result of a changing balance of electoral forces that favor the demands of partisan and ideological voters over those expressed by centrists. The growing importance of primary elections, campaign cash, and clarified party brands, for example, may all create incentives for candidates to tack to the extremes as a precursor to successfully running in the general election. Alternatively, this dissertation argues that polarization is being driven, at least in part, through legislative 'shirking' by policy-motivated MCs who aim to pass their preferred policies while securing electoral insulation through communication effort in the campaign.

To address these competing accounts, this dissertation examines over forty years of campaign advertising to examine how candidates discuss their legislative records during elections and whether these campaign communications influence the way voters decide. In doing so, the project collects and analyzes 12,692 television commercials from House and Senate races between 1968 and 2008 in the *Congressional Ads Project* (CAP), the largest dataset ever assembled on campaign advertising in U.S. elections. The CAP dataset offers the first-ever glimpse into the political communication strategies developed by House and Senate candidates over multiple decades, including measures of the issues, positions, character appeals, partisanship, and other information candidates present to voters in the campaign. In ad-

dition to these data, the CAP data includes the transcribed positions taken by candidates across a number of issues in each of their ads. Finally, the project also examines additional survey, election, and campaign data, including ads from the 2008 election linked to the vote choices and attitudes of voters in order to evaluate position taking in more recent campaigns.

In analyzing this new dataset, this dissertation finds that candidates are increasingly discussing issues in their campaign advertisements. This increase is especially stark relative to the decline evident in candidate efforts to communicate their characteristics, seniority, leadership or other personal qualifications for office. Additionally, in discussing issues, candidates are also increasingly portraying themselves as moderates on policy, while characterizing their opponents as extremists through a process of *issue distancing*. In this process, candidates use issue-based strategies to confuse voters over which of the two competing candidates is most extreme by tacking to the center in elections, potentially providing an electoral boost to advantaged candidates and incumbents on non-policy grounds.

Further, this dissertation develops and implements a research design that exploits the disjuncture between media markets and electoral jurisdictions to identify the causal effects of position taking in campaign advertising. Due to the way markets are designed, candidates cannot efficiently target all voters in their districts and states, thus some ad messages are 'wasted' on certain voters. The design uses this inefficiency to draw comparisons across otherwise similar voters exposed to different kinds of issue positions. In doing so, this dissertation finds consistent evidence that distancing in the campaign helps candidates win votes, and can help mitigate the fallout from their polarized records.

Overall, this project provides additional support for the elite-driven account of a representational disconnect in American politics, suggesting fundamental limits to the ability of voters to hold their representatives accountable in contemporary elections. Moreover, the process of issue distancing may be an additional mechanism that can help sustain polarization in Congress in spite of the growing dissatisfaction of voters, and concerns over the well-functioning of America's majoritarian and divided powers system colliding with strong and (ir)responsible parties.

To my parents, Vincent and Sherry Henderson, for the many sacrifices they made so we could reach unimaginable heights, and to Kim, whose friendship and wisdom keeps me ever grounded.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Acknowledgments

Over the span of my time at Berkeley, I have collected numerous debts. I owe an immense amount of gratitude to my co-chairs Eric Schickler and Jas Sekhon, both of whom have had an indelible impact, by both guidance and example, on my understanding of what makes for truly great social science. Eric helped guide this project from the very beginning, and along the way provided countless hours sharing his wisdom, knowledge and insight about the inner-workings of Congress and the congressional parties. More than this, Eric taught me so much about American politics, and inspired (as well as trusted!) me to take risks to answer big questions, even if this meant vanishing off to states unknown. As an advisor, Jas constantly challenged me to be better, to work harder, and think more creatively and clearly in conducting research. As coauthor, Jas has given me a much deeper appreciation for the craft of scholarship, and the commitment to research design. And as a teacher and mentor, Jas entrusted in me the role of helping teach political methodology to his students, an opportunity for which I am truly grateful. I could not have asked for a better team of advisors. Rob Van Houweling helped deepen my understanding of the motivations that drive politicians. And Gabe Lenz helped connect these insights to a greater appreciation of the limitations of voters. Both Rob and Gabe were instrumental in my training as a political scientist, and invaluable in honing my own intellectual message in the job search and beyond. I also am grateful for the support of Rob MacCoun, whose work on biases in learning and decision-making was an early inspiration on my own thinking about political persuasion.

I am immensely grateful to Jack Citrin who provided continued intellectual, institutional, and financial support throughout my graduate studies (including my own office!) and for my dissertation project. Jack has cultivated a culture of academic and public engagement as Director at IGS that has been the center of gravity for all of us, and that has made it a truly exciting place to be working. I thank the faculty, staff and friends at IGS, and count myself lucky to have been a member of this great community of scholars. More generally, I thank all the many participants in the RWAP and methods seminars at Berkeley for the many inspirations over the years, and all the staff in the Political Science department whose hard work and assistance made graduate life a little easier. I also thank Terri Bimes and the Mike Synar Fellowship for providing funding support for my field research in Oklahoma. It could not have been a more fitting honor to study campaign ads made by Congressman Synar to understand bipartisan compromise (or its lack) in Congress, something he so passionately championed in office. I thank the National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant and the Graduate Research Fellowship for generous financial support throughout my time at Berkeley. I also am immensely indebted to the affiliated faculty and staff in the Department of Communications and the Julian P. Kanter Political Commercials Archive at the University of Oklahoma, and specifically Glenn Hansen, Terri Jordan, David Bass, and Lisa Henry. Without their expertise, knowledge, and assistance this project could never have materialized. I would also like to thank my student coders at OU: Sophie Garrison, Dawid Grzybowski, Cassandra Howard, Brittany Sanger and Natalie Seguin.

There are many others at Berkeley and elsewhere to whom I am greatly indebted. David Karol provided early and crucial guidance in my graduate career, as well as exposed me to such a rich array of American political arcana and esoterica. Jonathan Wand gave me the privilege of being able to see book writing of the highest caliber in action, and volunteered immeasurable support during my job search. I thank Henry Brady for convincing me to come to Berkeley, and for giving great advice about how to study the returns to education. Additional thanks goes to Laura Stoker, Sean Gailmard, Merrill Shanks, Paul Pierson, Taeku Lee, Jason Wittenberg, Bob Powell, Pat Egan, Jon Woon, Rob Mickey, Drew Linzer, and Matt Levendusky, for the many helpful comments and suggestions across various projects, papers and presentations. And I thank Allen Hicken for providing the inspiration for my dissertation title. Special thanks is due to Bob Pastor as well, for introducing me to the world of policymaking and inspiring me to pursue a career in political science.

I owe countless debts to many friends and coauthors: Sara Chatfield, for her intellectual partnership and indefatigable friendship; Peter Ryan, for sharing his passion for elections and all the many sojourns through California; Devin Caughey, for his enthusiastic and unqualified support both as a friend and fellow scholar; Rocío Titiunik, for teaching me methods as a student and even still as coauthor; Alex Theodoridis, for the many engaging discussions about social identities and social oddities; Sara Newland, who possesses both sheer intelligence and uncommon wisdom; Kristi Govella, who is one of the most impressive and productive scholars I know; Allan Dafoe, who has and will continue to be an excellent and insightful colleague; Ellie Powell, for being so gracious in welcoming us to New Haven; Devin Earthman, for sharing many terrible puns and wonderful times; and John Brooks, who might be my biggest fan, and vice versa. I also thank Erin Hartman, Adrienne Hosek, Danny Hidalgo, Jason Anastasopoulos, and Mark Huberty, each of whom possesses an enviable creativity in research and methodology. Many other friends deserve recognition as well: Stephen Goggin, Josh Green, John Hanley, Peter Hanson, Iris Hui, Travis Johnston, Andrew Kelly, Benjamin Krupicka, Loan Le, Beth Neitzel, Mark Oleszek, Jay Purcell, Mark Rosenberg, Eva Seto, Abby Wood, Mark Goh, Shauna Lahore, Kim Heak Tong, and Eric Jwo.

My greatest debts are to my family, Mom, Dad, Martha and Vincent. Thank you for supporting me over the many years, and having faith that indeed there would be light at the end of the laureled tunnel. Thank you Mom and Dad for all the sacrifices you made to help get me here, and for cultivating an equal interest in education and politics. Martha: I am looking forward for you to join the ranks with me as Doctor. And Vincent: thank you for exposing me to the more civilized things in life. Thank you Homer for the many needed distractions in my odyssey to complete the dissertation. Finally, Kim, thank you for all the love and support you have given me these last few years. I would not have been able to do this without you, and I am truly blessed that you have chosen to brighten my life and spend yours in adventure with me.

An acknowledgment is very much like a confession. So for those included above, and all my friends and family at Berkeley and beyond not mentioned, I thank you.

Chapter 1

Issue Distancing in Congressional Elections

> "Democrats control congress and our economy is in trouble. Democrats gave us the highest gas prices in history. They've tried to raise our taxes. They've blocked every effort to regulate subprime lenders. And these same liberal Democrats are supporting Jim Martin. Our economy is in crisis, and while Jim Martin offers criticisms, Saxby Chambliss is working to get our economy back on track, protect taxpayers and homeowners, and put an end to Wall Street abuses."
>
> — Saxby Chambliss (R), "Democrats", 2008 Campaign Advertisement

> "Who says Gordon Smith helped lead the fight for better gas milage and a cleaner environment? Barack Obama. He joined with Gordon, and broke through a twenty year deadlock to pass new laws which increase gas milage for automobiles. Governor Ted Kulongoski praised their bipartisan partnership on this critical issue. Gordon Smith, bipartisan leadership for energy independence."
>
> — Gordon Smith (R), "Truth", 2008 Campaign Advertisement

The 2008 election did not look promising for the Republican Party. Following the unpopular presidency of George W. Bush, the loss of congressional control in the 2006 midterm elections, and the nomination of a relatively uninspiring presidential candidate in John McCain, the prospects of the Party seemed dim. In contrast, the future of the Democratic Party appeared blindingly bright. The Democrats nominated Barack Obama, a charismatic candidate whose star was rising swiftly within the Party's ranks, to be the first African-American President. Perhaps sensing the historic moment, the Democrats managed to outcompete their partisan opponents in candidate recruitment, fundraising, and voter mobilization. When it all was over, the Democrats went on to gain 28 seats in the House and the first filibuster-proof majority in over thirty years with a 9-seat pick up in the Senate.

Rather than avoid talking about policies that might alienate dissatisfied voters, however, many Republican incumbents devoted considerable time and money in their advertising to clarify issue differences between themselves and their opponents. The campaigns run by two Senators in particular, Gordon Smith and Saxby Chambliss illustrate the kinds of issue-based strategies many Republicans ran in 2008 to stave off electoral defeat. Smith, a moderate in a liberal state, won a sizable reelection victory in 2002, campaigning in part on his success in working with President Bush on water management issues in Oregon. Yet, in the 2008 election, Smith exclusively touted his bipartisanship in promoting his own candidacy, often mentioning his work with Democrats and Republicans, as well as his 'independence' in taking the 'middle ground' on issues. In his campaign ads, Smith presented numerous images and statements of Obama, and not McCain, alongside his own photos or messages, in what might be described as an attempt to run on the coattails of the opposing party's presidential candidate. In fact, in nearly every one of his advertisements, Smith left out any references to his Republican affiliation, and effectively ran as a bipartisan ally to Democratic causes and their candidates.

This strategy stands in stark contrast to that employed by Saxby Chambliss in his attacks on his Democratic challenger in 2008. In that election, Chambliss aired numerous ads attacking the Democratic Party, its congressional leaders and presidential candidates, as well as its positions on key issues, all the while tying these figures and images to his opponent Jim Martin. For instance, the visuals in the ad titled "Democrats" shows menacing photos of Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi, and Barney Frank, politicians unpopular across much of Georgia, staring down at Jim Martin as a faceless voice criticizes the Democratic Party. However, in his positive campaign messages, Chambliss depicted his own "bipartisan efforts to fix the economy" through his support of the bailout, and emphasized his "commitment to helping the middle class and Georgia's working families" through efforts to fight pension fraud.

In combination, these two campaigns developed by two vulnerable Senators are representative of a broader feature of modern congressional electioneering. Over the course of polarization and the rise of strong parties in Congress, candidates appear to be increasingly portraying their own policy records as much closer to the center of political opinion than those of their opponents in a process called *issue distancing*. In this dissertation, I show that these moderating efforts in the campaign can have meaningful impacts on the way voters evaluate competing candidates. Perhaps more provocatively, issue distancing strategies may also allow polarized incumbents to win elections in spite of being out-of-step on policy with their districts and states.

1.1 A Growing Disconnect in Congress

A now-classic finding in American politics is that Members of Congress (MCs) who compile relatively partisan or extreme roll call records tend to lose votes and seats in subsequent elections (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010; Canes-Wrone et al. 2002; Carson et al.

2010). Indeed, this result may be seen as the culmination of over fifty years of scholarly effort, originating with the work of Anthony Downs at mid-century, to provide evidence of a fundamental control exercised by electorates to direct and moderate the legislative actions of politicians (e.g., Downs 1957; Kingdon 1989).

Yet, in spite of this moderating pressure, over the last four decades, MCs have grown increasingly polarized and extreme in their legislative behavior, while representing persistently centrist electorates (Ansolabehere et al. 2001*b*; Bafumi and Herron 2010; Fiorina et al. 2005; Levendusky 2009; McCarty et al. 2006).[1] This divergence is often cited as strong evidence against Downs's (1957) median voter prediction that office-motivated politicians will converge to the center of opinion in their representation choices. If being out-of-step diminishes the chances for reelection, politicians seem increasingly willing to court electoral defeat. On the other hand, if centrist voters are unwilling or unable to punish their extremist representatives, then this suggests either that they paradoxically prefer extremist policies or that there is an important limit to their ability to control their representatives' actions.

This growing representational disconnect – polarized politicians representing centrist voters – points to one of the most fundamental puzzles in American politics. How do congressional candidates run and win elections on the basis of legislative records that are increasingly 'out of step' with their districts? The answer provided in this dissertation is that candidates are increasingly moderating the *messages* they communicate to voters, instead of closely attending to the policy demands of their more centrist electorates. Turning the Downsian prediction on its head, politicians are responding to electoral pressure to converge to the preferences of the median voter in their campaign statements, thus imparting the appearance of responsiveness that alleviates the pressure to moderate during the lawmaking process.

To address this theoretical puzzle, in this dissertation I look at forty years of congressional campaign behavior. In particular, I analyze the positions candidates take in their advertisements to assess the degree to which representatives run on their legislative records in elections. Electoral competition is the primary means through which voters hold their representatives accountable. Moreover, for voters who normally pay little attention to politics, the campaign may be a prime opportunity to learn about the actions of their incumbents, when they most widely communicate their priorities and values to seek reelection. If candidates provide voters with meaningful information about their records, then this suggests that electoral pressure may constrain politicians in ways that facilitate their accountability. In the context of polarization, this might also suggest a more complex explanation for why candidates would legislate or campaign out-of-step with their districts. However, if candidates distance themselves from their records, this may highlight a fundamental limitation to representation in democratic government, and could also point to a potential electoral mechanism that could sustain polarization in Congress.

[1]Electorates may be increasingly 'sorting', so that average opinion *across* each congressional district has become more polarized, but there is little evidence that opinion *within* districts has become polarized. See Abramowitz (2010), however, for a dissenting view on the lack of polarization within the electorate.

Surprisingly little scholarly attention has been given to studying position-taking during congressional elections as a way to understand the changing representational link between legislative behavior and vote choices, especially prior to the 1990s. In part this is due to a lack of data available from previous congressional campaigns, but also to a view in political science of minimal campaign effects (e.g., Berelson et al. 1954; Finkel 1993). As a result, previous research on position-taking has largely focused on legislative behavior in Congress (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Fiorina et al. 2005; McCarty et al. 2006; Rohde 1991), the effects of representation on spatial voting (Alvarez 1999; Brady and Ansolabehere 1989; Jessee 2012) and election outcomes (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010; Canes-Wrone et al. 2002), or issue agendas in campaigns (Petrocik 1996; Vavreck 2009).[2]

Some of this research highlights the growing importance of policy-demanding partisan or primary voters (Aldrich 1983; Fiorina et al. 2005) or the electoral value of having distinct party 'brands' (Grynaviski 2010; Snyder and Ting 2002), which both predict polarized candidates would faithfully emphasize their more extreme records, at least in some elections. An important alternative is that candidates may have incentives to 'shirk' in representing their constituents, enacting policies they or their supporters most prefer (Bawn et al. 2012; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Van Houweling 2012), while devising strategies to insulate themselves from electoral pressure (Fenno 1978; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1996). In light of these conflicting predictions, studying position-taking in the campaign, where candidates have the best opportunity to mediate the information voters have available about their records, can provide new insights about the electoral forces incumbents must balance in Congress.[3]

A central aim of this dissertation is to extend much of this previous focus on position-taking into the campaign environment. However, an important difference is that I argue candidates may be pursuing different goals (or may be appealing to different subsets of the electorate) when taking positions in Congress versus in the campaign. To assess this claim, I collect new data and examine position-taking over four decades to uncover whether candidates reliably communicate their records during elections, and to see if these campaign communications have any effect on the attitudes or choices of voters. In doing so, I find that candidates cast their polarized records in a much more moderate light, and that these efforts have meaningful, if modest effects in advancing their (re)election goals.

Overall, these findings provide additional support for the growing, elite-driven account of polarization in the U.S., and suggest that candidate-centered competition between sorted party candidates may indeed yield poor representation outcomes overall. Moreover, these findings join others in pointing to legislative shirking as a possible source for congressional polarization. This study also uncovers evidence for an important electoral mechanism (*is-*

[2]There is a considerable amount of scholarship on issue agendas in campaigns and elections, and particularly so for presidential races. These studies typically identify *which* issues candidates discuss, but only rarely examine *how* candidates talk about them. See Petrocik (1996), Hillygus and Shields (2009), Sides (2006), and Sulkin (2005) for examples of this type of approach.

[3]In fact, campaign messaging may be one the few things candidates have control over when trying to impart a particular impression of their candidacy to voters.

sue distancing) that may sustain polarized parties in spite of their growing unpopularity and potentially troublesome effects on governance in America's anti-majoritarian system. More generally, the findings have significant consequences for congressional representation, and may shed new light on the informational challenges that voters face in contemporary elections.

1.2 The Argument

A typical view of congressional elections sees the campaign as an effort to define the issues at stake, as well as to control the flow of available information to influence voter choices and attitudes (e.g., Franz et al. 2007; Petrocik 1996). In doing so, candidates could compete by defending, attacking, or ignoring a political record formed from prior votes or positions taken on bills, as well as by emphasizing or impugning specific characteristics that appeal to voters' beliefs about what makes for effective representation. One common prediction is that candidates have incentives to avoid talking about issues, especially those that polarize the parties, since doing otherwise might divide and demobilize supporters (Page 1978). Instead, candidates are expected to focus on personal characteristics or other non-policy or *valence* appeals that tend to resonate universally with electorates (Stokes 1963).

Contrary to this issue avoidance view, the argument advanced here is that polarized candidates, and perhaps most notably incumbent politicians, will craft campaign messages to convey a moderate impression of their positions to voters in order to secure electoral insulation for their growing immoderation. Rather than defining elections as about personal qualities, candidates competing in a polarized context then have incentives to increasingly battle over issue positions. I argue they do so by fighting for the political center during the campaign, using a combination of issue-based strategies to influence the way voters weight or perceive a politician's legislative record. In two-candidate elections, winning office-seekers need only convince enough pivotal voters that they are the more proximate of the two competitors. By focusing squarely on issues in the campaign, candidates can have an important influence on the ability of voters to make 'correct' inferences about the relative extremity of competing politicians.

Incentives for Challengers and Incumbents

The bulk of voters in most districts are relatively centrist in their issue attitudes (Fiorina et al. 2005). For this reason, electorates are likely to prefer politicians who also advance the more centrist set of policies in two candidate competition. Yet, voters pay only limited attention to politics and have little information about the positions of incumbents, and less still about the positions taken by challengers (Zaller 1992). This limited attention gives politicians some room to influence the impressions voters have about their prior records relative to the positions of their opponents. Further, incumbents have a particular advantage in this regard since voters tend to report seeing their incumbent representatives as more

moderate and proximate to themselves on the issues than they do challengers (Van Houweling 2012). In addition to this, incumbents also are given a 'valence advantage' by voters who typically see them as more experienced and better qualified to hold office, if for no other reason than because of having done so previously (Stone and Simas 2010). Incumbents certainly accrue liabilities from holding office over time, for example by compiling potentially controversial positions or sharing the partisanship of the President or congressional majority. Yet, it seems that either because of the campaign or in spite of it, incumbents are capable of mitigating these shortcomings to profit from voters' capacity to (mis)take them for the more moderate competitor even when they are not.

Given these electoral advantages, incumbents may do well to avoid discussing their polarized positions on issues, and to try to differentiate themselves from their opponents on the basis of their character or ability. However, challengers clearly have asymmetrical incentives. Fighting an election over personal qualities or experience may be a steep battle for untested challengers with a more limited background in office. And unless the incumbent is facing a personal or political scandal, character appeals may not be enough to unseat her. Challengers then have much stronger incentives to attack an incumbent on the issues, and to point out the latter's extreme positions. Moreover, partisan polarization may heighten the saliency or effectiveness of these issue-based strategies, since it potentially opens up more lines of attack where an incumbent may potentially be more extreme. Finally, rather than needing to challenge a sitting office-holder on the basis of their effectiveness, admitting that the incumbent is effective *but* out-of-step perhaps can even turn a valance advantage into a liability. Such a strategy may highlight the special harm that an effective extremist may unleash on policy outcomes if elected to office.

The core argument made here is that incumbents must respond to these challenger attacks or else risk conceding the point. Failing to respond on the issues allows the challenger the room to define the election around an incumbent's extreme positions. If voters come to accept this impression of their representative, this may weaken her position in the current election or in future ones. Overall then, I argue that incumbents also have powerful incentives to engage in issue strategies in the campaign, both to mitigate the potential fallout of being depicted as extreme, as well as to fight fire with fire and attack the challenger as off-center. Because campaigns are not set-piece affairs but are dynamic events, incumbents and challengers may both be expected to converge on the same kinds of strategies to fight for center ground when promoting themselves, and differentiate their opponents as extreme when going on the attack.

Political Insulation in the Campaign

While politicians likely devise a number of strategies in Congress to get political 'cover' in anticipation of the fallout from taking unpopular or controversial positions (e.g., Arnold 1990; Fenno 1978; Van Houweling 2012), it may be difficult to know which set of issues eventually need insulation in the next election. Candidates also have limited ability, time and

attention during the lawmaking proces to devote to communicating or explaining thousands of legislative actions to constituents to mitigate the potential for backlash later on. Finally, politicians may also be somewhat uncertain ahead of time about the attitudes voters have about certain issues (Arnold 1990). Politicians then may find it necessary to devote significant effort during the campaign to craft messages about their record to voters or to position themselves on the issues. In fact, until the materialization of an opponent or the realization of sour voter opinion, candidates may not be able to develop the most effective communication strategies for reelection, and thus may have to wait for the kick-off of the campaign to do so. As a consequence, I argue candidates will use the campaign, in particular, to try to influence voters' impressions given the emergent electoral demands of the post-legislative environment.

I focus on three ways that candidates seek to moderate their polarized records during the campaign: *issue selection*, *repositioning* and *rhetorical bipartisanship*. Issue selection is about emphasizing parts of a political record that is more moderate, (Geer 1998; Vavreck 2009), whereas repositioning is about taking new or different positions (or 'flip-flopping') in the midst of the campaign (Karol 2009; Tomz and Van Houweling 2012). Finally, rhetorical bipartisanship is the process of communicating issues or positions in a way that resembles the language used by members of the other party, that is, adopting the language or issues of a partisan opponent to appear more centrist or bipartisan. Each communication strategy varies in the way that issues are discussed, as well as in the costs and benefits or insulation provided. For example, repositioning may be a riskier strategy since there could be costs to getting caught, though it may allow the candidate to reset the record on an issue. Alternatively, just emphasizing moderate positions may avoid such a reputation loss, but may alienate more ideological supporters. While issue selection and repositioning have been the focus of some previous work, albeit in an isolated and limited fashion, this study is the first to look at efforts to adopt bipartisan appeals that allow polarized partisan to effectively 'hide in plain sight'.[4]

Lastly, I argue that each of these strategies allows candidates to obtain insulation for their polarized records by influencing the information voters have or use to make decisions. In particular, I suggest that candidates effectively 'signal jam' the efforts of their opponents to send information about their extreme positions, which has the effect of confusing voters about which of the two candidates is the most extreme (Minozzi 2011). In doing so, politicians can loosen the constraint that binds them to their prior legislative positions at least for some voters.

[4]See discussion below on the previous work on issue selection and repositioning in political science.

1.3 Linking Campaign Strategy to Congressional Behavior

Though the focus is on campaign communication, the findings from this dissertation have important implications for the study of lawmaking and position-taking in Congress. Most research on legislative behavior in the U.S. sees Congress as the main stage in which candidates position themselves for electoral effect (e.g., Mayhew 1974). Although electoral pressure clearly has an impact on how representatives position on floor votes or bills (and vice versa), the campaign itself is seen as a largely marginal (and in some cases entirely epiphenomenal) force in translating this pressure into political action (Campbell et al. 1960; Erikson and Wlezien 2012). This view of the campaign originated from the stream of classic findings that pointed to minimal effects, suggesting that candidates should avoid discussing issues and that voters ignore such policy statements anyway when deciding. These twin conclusions bolstered the view amongst congressional scholars that understanding campaign dynamics would provide little additional insight into the legislative process, and for election scholars that legislative policymaking would make up relatively little of the substance fought over in the campaign. This, perhaps more than anything else, has led to the independent development of these two, now somewhat disconnected, bodies of research on Congress.

One aim of this dissertation is to bridge this gap in the study of Congress, both as an institution and in terms of the political behavior of individual legislators. For example, studying campaign communication can help draw new insights into the way parties or MCs organize the policymaking process, and in particular provide opportunities to highlight or obscure votes taken by friends and enemies. More generally, understanding the extents or limits to constituent control is central to the way the electoral connection drives MC behavior, as well as inter-chamber or inter-branch conflict under divided and polarized government.

Moreover, rather than seeing the campaign as devoid of policy, the claim made here is that candidates are indeed fighting over legislative positions. Yet, this effort is not aimed at persuading voters about competing visions of good government. Instead, I argue that candidates aim to direct public opinion in order to reconcile the difference between perceptions of their legislative records and the center of opinion in the electorate. In this way, policy disputes spill over into the electoral arena, but do so in a way that may not help, and may actually hurt voters' abilities to form correct judgements about candidates and their policy positions. This suggests that contemporary politicians may be able to adapt to changing electoral conditions, perhaps even insulating themselves from much of the control exerted by democratic electorates that proved somewhat dyspeptic to the nation's constitutional founders.

1.4 Implications for Representation and Responsible Party Government

The landscape of American politics across the latter half of the 20th century has witnessed a significant change in the rise of strong national parties in Congress. A series of reforms in the mid-1970s offered party leaders greater organizational power over the congressional policy-making process. This growth of party influence may have heightened the collective incentives for co-partisan politicians to function as a team and enact policies that benefit the party membership as a whole (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 1993; Jones and McDermott 2010). However, in reflection of the inertia in American politics, the changes that brought about this strengthening of parties necessarily were built upon an existing institutional and electoral framework that strongly encouraged party-independent, candidate-centered behavior (Fenno 1978; Mayhew 1974; Schickler 2001). This sedimentary institutionalization has had important consequences for the way in which party government has expanded and operated (Schickler 2001). Yet, many of these consequences have not been fully appreciated, especially as they pertain to the politics of congressional elections.

Another aim of this dissertation will be to elucidate the competing incentives that politicians face as members of a collective party organization empowered to run in candidate-centered elections. In particular, the dissertation will study the kinds of campaign strategies that candidates develop over time as the parties strengthen and polarize in Congress. Looking at candidate campaign behavior will help draw inferences about the way politicians believe their electoral prospects will be improved or diminished as a result of party polarization. For example, many predominant theories of Congress argue that the expansion in party-centered government and the growing policy differences between incumbents of each party can provide an electoral boost that helps all members wearing the party label (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Grynaviski 2010; Snyder and Ting 2002). If so, this would suggest that partisan collective incentives might tame or even supplant MCs' entrepreneurial efforts to seek office on an independent basis, and help voters direct national policy by rewarding MCs who help enact a clear and distinct party program (Fiorina 1980).

Instead, I argue that the rise of polarized representation can be electorally costly for politicians (or at best provide mixed electoral benefits), especially from the standpoint of winning the bulk of pivotal and relatively centrist voters in their districts. Polarized representation may help politicians win key electoral resources from the party faithful or from extreme policy-demanding groups, or alternatively may reflect a non-electoral shift in the policy-motivations of winning incumbents. Nevertheless, if candidates run to the center and away from their extreme records in the general election campaign, this would provide new and critical evidence that office-seekers believe that running on the basis of polarized party brands may be a losing electoral gambit.

There are at least two important consequences of such a finding for representation in an era of polarized party government. First, rather than seeing polarization as an indication

of responsible party government in Congress, extremist politicians running in candidate-centered elections may be actively thwarting constituent control (APSA Committee on Political Parties 1950). As such we may be witnessing the advent of party irresponsibility, compounding other pessimistic views about the well-functioning of strong parties in a super-majoritarian and divided government system.[5] By providing extremist incumbents electoral insulation, issue distancing election strategies may also weaken the connection between partisan actions in Congress and party electoral tides, which ironically may embolden party members to more readily confront their partisan opponents across chambers and branches.

Further, instead of offering voters clear alternatives on policies during elections, candidates may influence how voters see the policy positions of candidates and perhaps even the parties. Perhaps then it is less surprising that voters have a difficult time holding parties and candidates accountable. The information available may not be reliable indicators of future legislative activity. Even when the parties offer avenues for voters to hold their members to account, individual candidates appear both willing and able to strategically use the campaigns to influence the degree to which this kind of collective responsibility is ultimately effective. This outcome might also then influence the amount of information voters choose to compile, or the kinds of voters who get involved in politics or elections, reinforcing the polarization process.

1.5 Congressional Ads Project, 1968 – 2008

A major difficulty in assessing the degree to which candidates are tied to their legislative records in elections is that there is remarkably little data available about position-taking from the campaign environment, and especially for congressional contests. As a result, most previous research on the effects of positioning stem from analysis of legislative behavior in Congress. However, the strategic constraints driving lawmaking may not be the same forces at work in elections. For example, party leaders or colleagues may use procedural rules, whipping or suasion to get legislators to vote for or cosponsor particular bills. While electoral concerns indeed matter a great deal for politicians choosing which positions or bills to support, the ability to influence these electoral forces will have ramifications for what kinds of positions politicians will subsequently take. In order to understand the fuller constellation of forces that drive legislative behavior, we must turn to the study of campaign strategy.

I argue that studying election campaigns is crucial to uncovering the representational forces that bind MCs to their records. Elections are the primary opportunities for candidates to fight over an incumbent's prior record, as well as to define Congress' future priorities. Lacking a well-defined electoral opponent during the legislative session, incumbents may feel freer to discuss policy matters with voters, even as they anticipate the potential effects of their representation. Yet, in the heat of the campaign, the singular focus of candidates is

[5]See Mann and Ornstein (2012) for a recent assessment of failings of the U.S. government under polarized parties and divided government. But, see Mayhew (2011) for an opposing view.

on reelection. Moreover, in the contexts where scholars have considerable data to evaluate position-taking choices, such as cosponsorship or constituent communications during policy debates, similar strategic considerations may exist that diminish the leverage such comparisons would provide. On other hand, behavior in the campaign can help illustrate the way politicians see their reelection prospects at home given their polarized legislative records in Washington. Yet, scholars have previously lacked data covering a large portion of election campaigns, including those as recent as the mid-1990s. Thus, studying election competition should best reveal the constraints that representatives face in compiling and running on a policy record. Consequently, new data is needed to make progress in addressing this question. In this dissertation, I introduce a new dataset of political advertisements, the *Congressional Ads Project* (CAP), that may allow many new insights into the study of representation, congressional politics, and elections in the U.S.

The way in which candidates communicate their representational activities to voters has long been a central concern in the study of congressional behavior (Fenno 1978; Mayhew 1974). In spite of this focus, we know remarkably little about the issue positions candidates actually take in elections, or more generally about the qualities or messages campaigns communicate to voters. In significant part, this is due to a fundamental lack of data available to researchers, but also to a view of minimal effects in the study of campaigns (e.g., Berelson et al. 1954; Finkel 1993). Virtually no sustained effort exists at analyzing campaign position-taking prior to mid-1990s, especially as this behavior has changed over time. The majority of findings about campaigns from this period come from surveys of campaign managers (Goldenberg and Traugott 1978; Kahn and Kenney 1999), analyses of issue content from samples of races or elections (Kahn and Kenney 1999; Sulkin 2005), or more frequently from national opinion surveys (Brady and Ansolabehere 1989).

Perhaps the most significantly reason for this limited body of findings is that most of the available campaign data come from recent elections after the onset of congressional polarization, that is, from 1998 on. Some recent scholarship has sought to work around this data limitation by focusing on a wider variety of position-taking activities beyond floor voting in Congress, for instance by looking at cosponsorship of legislation (Van Houweling 2012), participation in caucuses or committees (Hall 1996), or statements made in floor debates and congressional mailers (Grimmer 2011; Lipinski 2004). Yet, it is not clear that these activities provide much additional information above roll call voting about the types of positions candidates emphasize in their elections.[6] There has also been some significant progress made through direct surveys of candidates' positions, most notably with the National Political Awareness Test (NPAT). However, the NPAT surveys do not extend before the 1992 election, and have the unfortunate feature of seriously under-sampling competitive races.[7] Finally, the

[6]For instance, many of these communications are aimed at mustering popular support to help accomplish legislative goals of MCs. These accomplishments will likely help reelection efforts, but are clearly distinct from campaigning.

[7]The average rate of response is roughly 30% of House and Senate candidates, and response rates have declined over time. Also, there is evidence that the sample is dominated by weak challengers and strong

collection of campaign advertisements by the Wisconsin Ads Project (CMAG) has offered scholars an unparalleled opportunity to uncover important findings in recent campaigns. Unfortunately, there is no CMAG data for any congressional races prior to 1998.

To measure campaign behavior across the period of polarization, I analyze forty years of position-taking and issue information in congressional elections, drawn from a new dataset: *The Congressional Ads Project* (CAP). The data come from 12,692 congressional television commercials housed at the Julian P. Kanter Political Commercial Archive, randomly sampled from their collection of ads covering the 1968 to 2008 elections.[8] From these ads, I transcribed over 60,000 issue positions taken in the ads, both in advocating supported candidates and in attacking opponents. I also coded the ads on over 50 summary items, including partisan, issue, home style, and character content, resulting in nearly 500,000 data points. (See Appendix A for more details about the items collected from the ads and the specific ad data sampling frame.) The transcribed position statements form the centerpiece of much of the analysis in this dissertation, as do items that measure the amount and kind of policy content found in the ads over time. Notably, this study is the first comprehensive analysis of any multi-year advertising data from House and Senate elections prior to 1998. Moreover, the CAP dataset offers a never-before-seen glimpse into the strategies candidates develop when seeking political offices, and especially about the way these strategies vary across jurisdictions and change over time.

Finally, to replicate and extend the findings, I also analyze television ads from the 2008 congressional cycle collected through CMAG. One worry in using CAP is that the data only include content from ads produced by the campaigns, but do not have information on how frequently these ads were actually aired. The CMAG data will help assess whether the frequency of ad airings affects the overall images candidates portray to voters in the campaign. All of these data are augmented by analyses of congressional roll call and cosponsorship behavior, which provide insight into the way incumbents are positioning themselves across issues in legislative settings over the course of polarization (Fowler 2006; Poole and Rosenthal 1997). I also utilize election results, as well as opinion data from the American National Election Survey (ANES) and the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES) to measure voter attitudes and the effects of candidate campaign positions on electoral outcomes and choices.

1.6 Overview of Chapters

In the following chapters, I outline the main theoretical contributions of the dissertation to the study of parties, candidates and campaigns. I also provide evidence for the emergence of issue distancing in elections, and the effects these strategies have on vote choices. In Chapter 2, I present evidence of the representation disconnect in Congress as seen in the

incumbents.

[8] I present results here from 10,458 ads from the 1968 to 2000 election period in this study.

polarization of both MC roll call voting and cosponsorship behavior. I also examine the mass preferences of voters through an analysis of survey and election data. In Chapter 3, I present the first-ever examination of the changing representational style of candidates through thirty years of congressional campaign behavior collected in CAP. In particular, this analysis looks at the kinds of representational information candidates discuss in their ads over time, including information about issues, character, seniority, and tone, among other items. Chapter 4 extends the analysis of the CAP data to look at the issue positions candidates emphasize in their campaign communications to voters, and in particular at the ways these positions may be portraying the more polarized legislative records of incumbents in the House. Chapter 5 turns to a novel research design and data from the 2008 election to identify the causal effects of campaign position-taking on incumbent vote choices. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes.

Chapter 2

Polarization and the Representation Disconnect

One of the most remarkable changes in American political life over the last forty years has been the resurgence and polarization of parties in Congress. Following key procedural reforms in the mid-1970s, party leaders were able to wrest considerable influence over the congressional policy-making process from powerful committee Chairs who had managed to thwart legislation preferred by party (and especially Democratic) majorities for much of the post-war period (Rohde 1991; Schickler 2001). The most important of these reforms in the House had the effect of weakening the autonomy and gate-keeping powers of congressional committees, allowing party leaders greater ability to shepherd bills to the floor for final consideration, and even bypass committees altogether.[1] On the whole, these changes strengthened the role for party leaders to set the legislative agenda and advance policies preferred by a majority of its member, and perhaps even provided the foundation for a more active and muscular party-centered legislature (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Rohde 1991).

The rise of strong parties also appears to have opened the floodgates for partisan action during lawmaking. Over the last few decades, Members of Congress (MCs) have become increasingly partisan and ideologically polarized in the way they represent their district and state constituencies (McCarty et al. 2006; Theriault 2008). MCs in both the House and Senate frequently find themselves unified in voting on amendments and bills as a party, with consistent majorities from each party taking opposing positions on most major legislative battles. There are also decreasingly few centrists willing to cross party lines to pass legislation through bipartisan compromise. Both parties today are far more homogeneous in the positions their members take, and now fall distinctly into liberal or conservative camps, where before self-described conservatives and liberals could be found in both party cau-

[1] The Senate experienced similar but less extensive reforms to its committee system, including many of the sunshine laws that make its deliberations more open to the public. However, the historical trajectory of the Senate has differed markedly from the House, in the retaining of its supermajority rules governing the scheduling of votes on the floor. See Hartog and Monroe (2011) and Wawro and Schickler (2007).

cuses. In a significant way, the congressional parties of today bear little resemblance to their forerunners from only a half-century ago.

While Congress has polarized, however, most voters in the U.S. have not. When asked, voters typically express moderate opinions about the types of actions the government should take on a wide range of important issues. In addition, voters today are no more likely to give extreme responses on such issue items than they were at mid-century. Notably, many of these issues that draw moderate views from voters include those that consistently split the parties in Congress or take center stage in elections (Fiorina et al. 2005; Levendusky 2009). In spite of recent concerns about partisan redistricting (Carson et al. 2007; McCarty et al. 2009) or geographic sorting (Abrams and Fiornia 2012; Bishop 2008), states and legislative districts, in the aggregate, have also polarized very little if at all. Remarkably, districts that favored Republican (or Democratic) candidates for president in the 1970s, did so at roughly the same rates as they do now forty years later.

A number of observers, most notably Morris Fiorina, point to these findings as evidence of a fundamental disconnect and breakdown in representation (Fiorina et al. 2005; Fiorina and Abrams 2009). According to this view, the centrist preferences of average voters and citizens are being ignored by political elites, and distorted into immoderate policies that as a whole do not reflect what most Americans say that they want. As such, the legislative priorities that parties and MCs advance today increasingly are out of touch with the demands of voters, and much more reflective of the more extreme preferences held by the political class of party donors, activists, and officials. While Fiorina's work emphasizes what he calls a decline in "collective" representation, arguing that the overall output of policy in Congress does not reflect the views of the public in general, other scholars point to deficits in the responsiveness or "dyadic" representation of legislators and the voters in their districts. For example, Ansolabehere et al. (2001*b*) show that House members over the later half of the twentieth century have declined in their correspondence with district preferences, and Bafumi and Herron (2010) show that when incumbents leave office via retirement or defeat, they are replaced with new politicians who "leapfrog" over median voters, representing their new districts as or even more extremely than the vacating incumbents.

This representation disconnect highlights important limitations to the well-functioning of elections as a means of securing democratic accountability. Yet, in spite of its importance, researchers have only a limited understanding of how and why it has emerged. How is it that polarized incumbents have managed to sustain this representation disconnect? And why do moderate voters in centrist districts allow their representatives to compile increasingly partisan and polarized records in Congress without exacting electoral punishment? A great deal of previous research has sought to address these questions, largely by examining the changing electoral incentives that candidates face. Though no doubt electoral pressure can be a significant force, the central argument in this project is that the campaign can play a dampening role in temporing the electoral fallout from polarized representation helping sustain this disconnect in representation.

2.1 Spatial Voting and Election Competition

The ability for incumbents to sustain the representation disconnect is especially puzzling given the expectation that in elections with two competing candidates, each should try to offer centrist positions on policy to appeal to the most voters. This expectation originates from the classical spatial model developed by Anthony Downs, that links the policy actions of politicians tightly to the issue preferences of voters through the crucible of election competition (Downs 1957).

In the model, competing candidates are free to take positions on some issue along a liberal-conservative continuum. Once elected the winning candidate is assumed to faithfully implement the policy, and is only concerned with being elected rather than in promoting any particular policy end. Assuming voters prefer the candidate with the policy position closer to their own ideal policy, know the competing candidates' positions with some sufficient certainty, and believe the candidates will follow through on their proposals, optimal candidates should take the position of the most centrist, median voter, in order to maximize the chances of electoral victory (Downs 1957). Well-known as the *Median Voter Theorem* (MVT), candidates proposing the median voter's policy can never do worse than winning at least half the electorate, while any deviation from this position gives her opponent an opportunity at victory. In the model, this threat embodies the core electoral constraint voters possess over the policymaking actions of their representatives.

One of the central assumptions of the Downsian model is that candidates (or their collectivity as parties) are not fundamentally driven by the desire to implement public policy, or by broader ideological commitments over the appropriate direction of governmental action. This means that the positions or platforms that politicians develop are strategic instruments aimed at appealing to voters for the sole purpose of electoral success. Though quite unrealistic, this assumption does have some bite. According to MVT, politicians unwilling to budge on their policy preferences will lose to candidates who happen to hold a position closer to or the same as the median voter (assuming it is possible to find such a contender). Candidates unwilling to moderate their views thus will sit on the sidelines unable to effect their desired policy change.

Three additional features of the model are noteworthy. First, candidate positions must be seen as credible indications of what they will do in office. Though voters are unlikely to demand slavish adherence to campaign pledges, if politicians consistently fail to keep their promises, any positions taken in the campaign would be viewed as "cheap talk" and disregarded. In this case, constraint is assured only to the degree there is a limit to how much shirking a candidate can get away with before suffering a penalty, typically seen as a reputation cost for "flip-flopping" (Alesina 1988; Tomz and Van Houweling 2012). Next, voters must have enough information to know which candidate is offering the more proximal position to their ideal. And finally, voters must have meaningful preferences about policies that essentially determine their preferred choices between competing candidates (Tomz and Van Houweling 2008; Jessee 2012). If voters are unsure of who the closer candidate is, or are

willing to use other considerations beyond proximal policy when deciding, optimal candidates can win without converging to the median (Enelow and Hinich 1984; Longregan and Romer 1993).

Congruence Without Convergence

Many scholars have argued that the MVT prediction made by Downs is too strong, and offer alternative accounts or revisions of the theory that predict *congruence* rather than strict *convergence* between the actions of politicians and the preferences of voters (Ansolabehere et al. 2001*b*; Miller and Stokes 1963; Powell 1982). On one reading, the prediction of congruence admits there may by slack in the relationship between voters and MCs. Nonetheless, constituencies are capable of directing the actions of representatives through electoral punishment for drifting too far out-of-step with voters (Canes-Wrone et al. 2002).

The most influential work in this line of research is Miller and Stokes (1963), who in their seminal study, examined the degree to which the stated views of constituents agreed with the views of their elected representatives and other politicians over a range of issues, rather than exclusively on a single dimension. The authors found that on some issues there was a strong association between the attitudes of voters and representatives (most notably civil rights), while on other issues there a much weaker correlation (economic policy) or none at all (national defense). Subsequent work also has shown a correspondance between the positions legislators take in Congress, and the views of their constituents on certain issues taken separately (Powell 1982) or using summary scores across issues (Jessee 2012; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013). One interpretation of this finding is that politicians face a variety of pressures when deciding how to represent their districts (e.g., party forces, personal views, and constituent demands) that may vary across different types of issues (Kingdon 1977). Yet, overall this evidence is cited in support of the view that elections are an important, albeit imperfect device at providing constituency control over the actions of representatives in Washington.

Taking a different tack, an entire cottage industry in formal theory has emerged from efforts to catalogue the variety of equilibrium results that emerge from relaxing the assumptions (e.g., full information, credible platforms) of the original MVT model (Alesina 1988; Enelow and Hinich 1984; Grofman 2004). For example, Enelow and Hinich (1984) explore the consequences of limited voter information about candidates' likely positions in office. A canonical result is that risk averse voters may prefer more extreme candidates that they have more information about, than potentially more moderate ones with greater uncertainty about their likely future actions – better to trust the devil you know, than the devil you don't (Enelow and Hinich 1984). The presence of such uncertainty, limitations over the ability to make credible promises, and the prevalence of non-policy factors driving elections, amongst others, all tend to increase the resulting distance between the median voter and competing candidates acting optimally. Overall congruence rather than strict convergence then seems the more plausible prediction given the messiness of politics. Yet, both accounts agree that

there are fundamental limits to the degree of extremity candidates can sustain, limits that are driven powerfully from anticipation of electoral defeat at the hands of dissatisfied voters (Grofman 2004).

2.2 Evidence of a Representation Disconnect

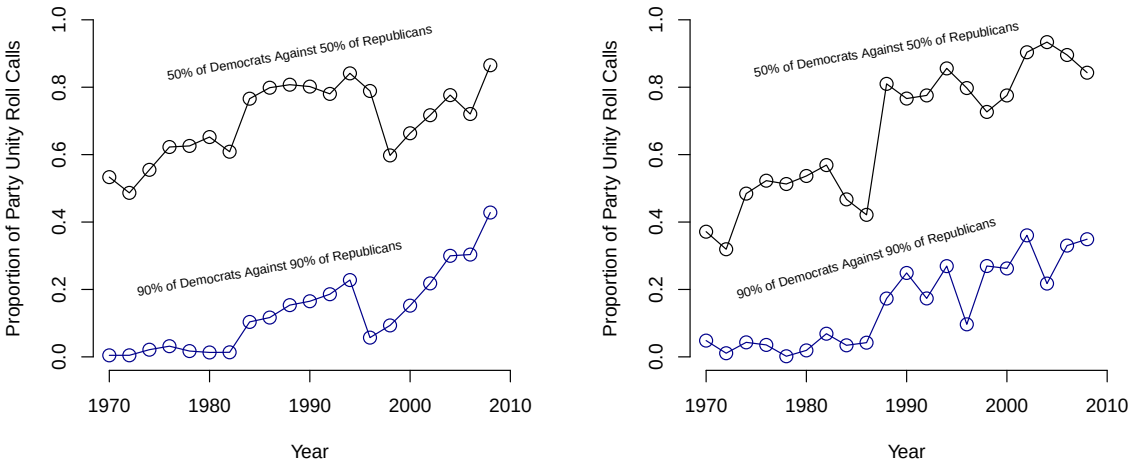
A clear expectation from the work on representation and elections is that politicians should take positions on bills or roll call votes in Congress that reflect the preferences of voters in their districts. Though the level of convergence at any given time between voters and representatives may be somewhat limited, the conventional theoretical view in political science is that electorates should have substantial control over the legislative actions of politicians, leading to a congruence on policy. By implication, if the way MCs represent their districts on policy is changing, we should expect that the preferences of voters are also changing in similar ways. From a theoretical perspective, the lack of such congruence would raise the possibility that the strength of constituent control is receding relative to other forces that may drive legislators' actions, and highlight a potential representational deficit in American politics.

Indeed, in the U.S., there is strong evidence that candidates and parties are changing the way that they represent voters, becoming more consistently polarized in the positions they take, the bills they pass, and the statements or attacks they unleash on their opponents. In contrast, voters and electorates have remained much more centrist in their attitudes and opinions. The following section presents evidence of this representation disconnect.

Members of Congress Have Polarized

Some of the strongest evidence for elite polarization comes from the study of legislative behavior in Congress, and especially roll call voting on the floor (McCarty et al. 2006; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Theriault 2008). Over the last forty years, MCs' voting behavior has become increasingly partisan and divided. A straightforward measure of polarization is the percentage of roll calls that pit at least 50% of one party voting against 50% of the other. These roll calls are typically called *party unity* votes, and the frequency of such rolls are displayed in Figure 2.1 for the House and Senate. As can be seen in Figure 2.1(a), the rate of party unity voting changes from about 0.60 of the roll call votes in the House being split in such a way along party lines in 1970 to over 0.80 by 2008, as illustrated by the top line in red. A notable change in the rate of party unity voting can also be seen in the Senate that largely mirrors the change in partisanship observed for the lower chamber as shown in 2.1(b). An even stronger measure of partisanship can be constructed by examining the change in the frequency of roll calls pitting 90% of the Democrats against 90% of the Republicans in the House (Van Houweling 2012). While virtually no rolls in 1970 were so controversial to elicit such partisan differences in the House or Senate, by 2008 almost 0.25 of roll call votes nearly-perfectly divided the parties as Figure 2.1 demonstrates.

Figure 2.1: Rise of Party Unity Voting on Roll Calls: 1970 to 2008



(a) House

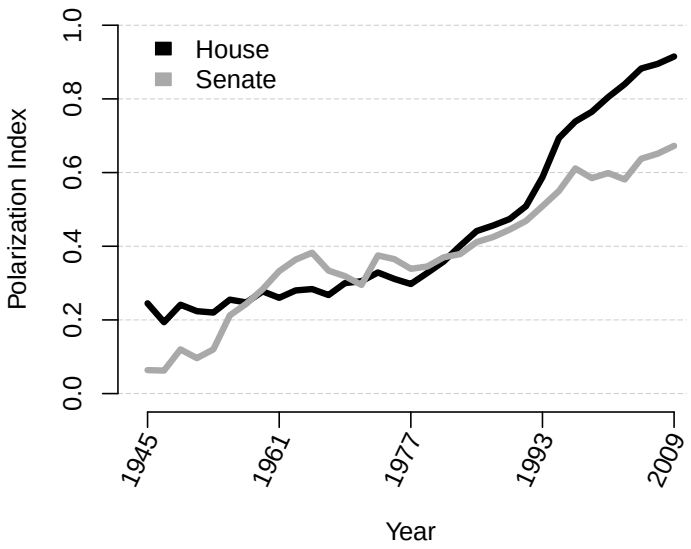
(b) Senate

Another way to measure polarization is to produce a summary score of the positions each legislator takes across a large number of roll calls, and to compare the average scores compiled for members of each party. Poole and Rosenthal (1997) were one of the first to develop such a method called NOMINATE, which scales all MCs on a common liberal-conservative ideological space. The method works by classifying MCs based on where they lie on a series of "cutting lines" that depict the coalition of those voting *yea* on one side and *nay* on the other for each roll call taken. MCs consistently on one side of all of these lines are scaled as much farther away than MCs consistently on the other side, with MCs falling on either side of these lines placed in the middle. With enough cutting lines drawn from a large number of roll calls, MCs can be reliably ranked from most liberal (-1) to most conservative ($+1$), accounting for relatively small disagreements that differentiate MCs from their nearest neighbors on either side of the ideological space.

Evidence of polarization can be clearly seen after scaling MCs in both the House and Senate using NOMINATE as displayed in Figure 2.2. The figure shows the average differences between Democrats and Republicans in their liberal-conservative NOMINATE scores in the House and Senate from 1945 to 2009. At around mid-century there is indeed some non-convergence in the average positions of the two partes. However, these differences remained relatively constant until the 1970s, at which point polarization appears to have precipitously taken off. By the end of the 2000s, the differences between the parties in their roll call voting have become quite stark, more than tripling the degree of party differences recovered from the 1950s and 1960s.

As a result of this polarization, simply knowing the party label of a MC will provide enough information to almost perfectly predict their roll call voting behavior on a wide

Figure 2.2: Polarization in Average NOMINATE Scores, by Chamber: 1945 to 2009



range of votes, and especially the most salient held in each chamber. Something that is unclear, however, is whether this polarization is a consequence of the strategic actions of parties or party leaders using their agenda-setting or whipping powers to elicit partisan agreement, or alternatively a description of the ideological differences (either electorally induced or personally held) that demarcate those willing to affiliate with each party (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Krehbiel 1998, 1993). If largely the former, than at least some of this polarization could be about parties enforcing or constraining their own membership to behave more consistently as a team in order to advance the collective goals of the party (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Grynaviski 2010). Acting in a more consistent or extremely partisan way may or may not cohere with the desires of an electorate. Yet, if MCs are no more ideologically *extreme* now than forty years ago, but are merely more *partisan*, than this alters the way we should interpret growing polarization in comparison to changes in the electorate.

Party Consistency in Floor Voting and Cosponsorship

One way to see if this polarization is being driven by growing party constraint is to examine legislative behavior in venues that are less likely to be subject to collective incentives demanding team-like behavior from the party-membership by party leaders (Harbridge 2012; Van Houweling 2012). Much of the research on strong parties in the House sees the positive and negative agenda-setting powers of the parties as perhaps the most important feature defining party control in Congress (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Rohde 1991). By keeping divisive issues off the agenda, and using party-oriented procedural rules to advance party legislation (or sidestep recalcitrant committees), the parties may have considerable influence

in shaping the bills their membership gets to vote on. The incentives for the majority party then may lead their leaders only to advance legislation to the floor that is sure to obtain the support of the median of the majority party, and to either split the minority party or elicit their opposition (Cox and McCubbins 2005). This might induce behavior amongst MCs that looks more extreme simply by virtue of party leaders shaping a floor agenda that excludes roll calls where there might be bipartisan support in the chamber.

Initially, polarization in Senate voting is somewhat enigmatic from the perspective of growing party procedural constraint. Unlike the House, where party leaders and especially the Speaker have considerable influence over the use of rules and procedures to limit the floor agenda, lawmaking in the Senate is driven not by majoritarian power, but by avoiding or overcoming minority or median obstruction (Krehbiel 1998; Wawro and Schickler 2007). In the Senate, party leaders have few of the powers afforded in the House that may facilitate discipline or constraint.[2] Bills make it the floor, or not, through unanimous consent, and can be stopped in their tracks through individual "holds", which provide each individual Senator with veto power over the chamber and majority party. Senate party leaders have little ability to restrict amendments on the floor (and can generally do so only by invoking cloture), and floor debate can continue until 60 votes agree to end it via cloture. Committee membership is governed by seniority, with violations virtually unheard of in the upper chamber. As a consequence, the capacity of party leaders to induce partisan behavior in the Senate is exceedingly limited, the metaphorical equivalent of herding cats (Baker, Jr. 1998). By implication, the rise of polarized representation in the Senate is not likely being driven by the use of procedures aimed at enforcing party discipline or the result of formal changes in the policymaking process, and is more plausibly the consequence of Senators pursuing reelection or personal policy goals.[3]

Beyond roll call voting, MCs in both the House and Senate may be less constrained to communicate positions on policies through other outlets, and especially so in their choices to draft and cosponsor legislation. As a result, MCs can use cosponsorships to take a much wider array of positions on legislative proposals than would otherwise be possible just through voting on the floor. Moreover, in the context of rising partisanship, individual MCs

[2]Party leaders in the House largely decide which votes will take place on the floor, and whether or not any amendments or alternatives will be allowed (Cox and McCubbins 2005). The parties determine who is nominated for positions in committee, including the Chair, and periodically violate seniority norms to punish disloyal partisans (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rohde 1991). And finally the parties wield considerable distributive resources largely through control of the budgetary and appropriations process, which can be used to reward loyal partisan MCs (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Though see Krehbiel (1993, 1998) for an important critique of the strong parties view. For example, the median legislator must agree to allow the parties in the House to wield these powers.

[3]There is some work though that argues that first mover advantages give party leaders the ability to preempt minority party proposals, which could advantage the majority's position when competing over proposal alternatives (Hartog and Monroe 2011). This could structure partisan voting by pitting more extreme alternatives against each other. Also, some structure from policymaking in the House could spill over into the Senate, since inter-chamber bargaining would constrain the range of options the Senate considers.

and party leaders may have incentives to engage in *lesser* rather than greater partisanship in cosponsorship behavior. For instance, enforcing floor control through party agenda setting in the House may not advance the interests of every member of the majority party equally. Some MCs, and especially those with moderate preferences or representing moderate districts, may want to vote on legislation that is liable to split their party, or would like to join the opposition in voting against their own party on certain issues. Being unable to do so may hurt these more centrist members lacking an alternative means of taking positions to mollify voters in their district or to advance their more centrist policy goals. One way to take such positions is to sponsor or cosponsor legislation.

In a party-dominant Congress, party leaders have much less incentive to try to discipline MCs to enforce particular choices over which bills to cosponsor, and are generally unable to do so even if they were so incentivized (Harbridge 2012; Van Houweling 2012). Unlike floor votes, there is no minimum cosponsorship threshold set to advance bills through committee or to be scheduled for floor consideration. And while getting more cosponsors or crafting a particular cosponsorship coalition may improve the chances for bill passage, principally by signaling a potential coalition of support on the floor, party leaders and MCs often strive for bipartisan, rather than strictly partisan, coalitions (Kessler and Krehbiel 1996). Another reason party leaders may have incentives to encourage rather than discourage bipartisan cosponsorship behavior, is that it might help their members get political "cover" for controversial positions on floor votes (Van Houweling 2012). More generally, cosponsorship decisions allow incumbents to take positions on issues that may have little chance of reaching the floor for a vote. These positions can signal important policy activity to district voters, including credible information about how hard an incumbent is working to advance particular policies (Cambpell 1982; Hall 1996). Finally, MCs often see cosponsorship as opportunities to advance those policies they most agree with, and would like to see enacted (Kessler and Krehbiel 1996; Koger 2003; Thomas and Grofman 1993). Overall, the kinds of party constraint seen in floor voting should be minimal in driving cosponsorship behavior.[4]

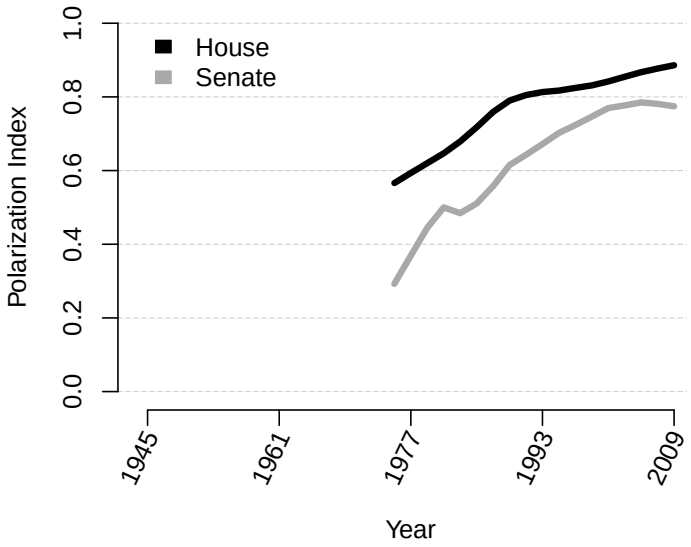
Have MCs polarized in their cosponsorship choices? In order to address this question, I scale MCs on an ideological dimension based on their propensity to cosponsor legislation alongside similarly liberal or conservative legislators. The analysis utilizes Fowler's (2006) cosponsorship network data to link individual MCs to the bills they sponsored or cosponsored across the 93rd to the 110th Congresses. Rather than classify based on cutpoints, the model used to scale MCs takes the following form

$$Pr(c_{ik} = 1) \quad = \quad \Phi\left\{-(\alpha_i - \rho_k)^2 - q_k - \delta_i\right\} \tag{2.1}$$

where c_{ik} is a binary measure for whether or not the ith legislator cosponsored the kth bill, α_i is the member's ideological position on a liberal-conservative scale, ρ_k is the ideological

[4]Though party constraint should be relatively low as a function of procedural structure, it is more difficult to discern whether or not partisanship is being driven by electoral signaling that promotes more polarized cosponsorship, or whether MCs are simply becoming more ideologically extreme and partisan.

Figure 2.3: Polarization in Average Cosponsorship Ideal Points, by Chamber: 1974 to 2008



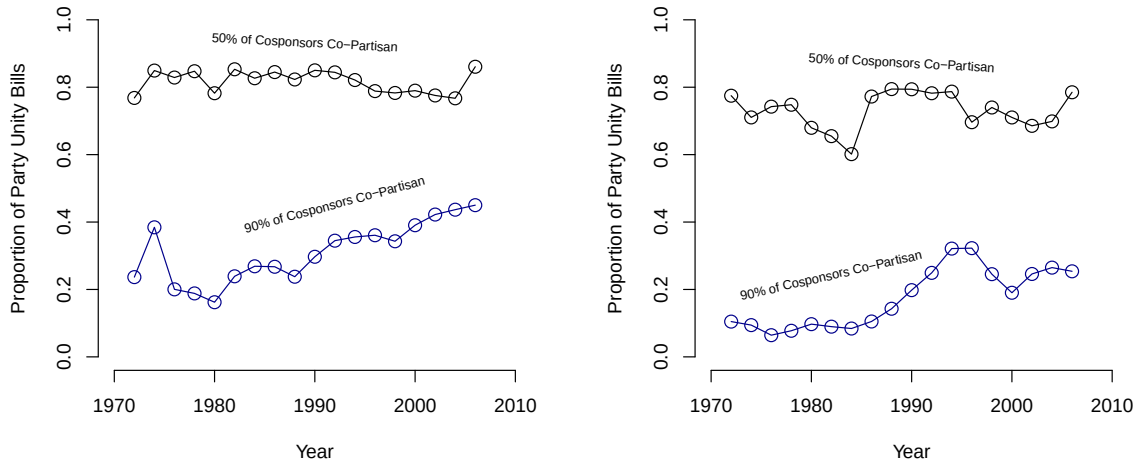
content of each bill, and Φ is the logit cumulative density function (CDF) for a binomially distributed outcome. In addition, q_k and δ_i are bill and legislator fixed-effects that account for how popular each bill is in soliciting cosponsors, and how avid each member is in cosponsoring bills.[5] This approach is driven by an underlying model of behavior where the probability of cosponsoring a bill is a function of how "far away" it is on some space from the MC's ideal point over bills. Being closer increases a member's probability of cosponsoring a bill, but avid cosponsorers are less sensitivity to proximity when deciding which bills to endorse, and certain bills are better able to draw cosponsors regardless of how far away it is from MCs.

After scaling MCs using their cosponsorship choices, again the common pattern of polarization emerges. Turning to Figure 2.3, we see that the there is a growing difference in the types of bills that Democrats and Republicans are willing to cosponsor across both the House and Senate. Democrats are increasingly unwilling to cosponsor bills drafted or cosponsored by Republicans, and similarly Republicans are much less likely to support bills emerging from the other side of the aisle. Moreover, according to this measure, Democrats increasingly are endorsing more liberal and more exclusively liberal bills, compared to Republicans endorsement of more conservative ones. Given the context of cosponsorship, in which the parties have relatively little incentive to impose party constraint on their memberships' actions, this pattern of position-taking suggests that ideological change (and not just growing partisan consistency due to the rise of strong parties) is a central driving force behind polarization in Congress.[6]

[5]The model is estimating using JAGS, with standard normal priors for each of the four parameters. See (Peress 2010) for a similar approach to scaling cosponsorship alongside roll call voting

[6]An electoral account for party consistency not driven by party procedural constraint is that parties get

Figure 2.4: Modest Increase in Partisan Cosponsorship Coalitions: 1974 to 2008



(a) House

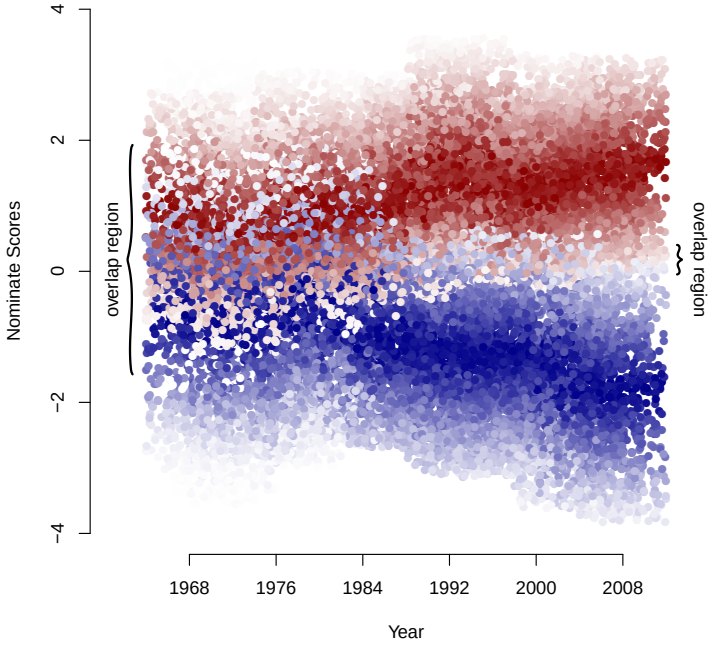
(b) Senate

The scaling approach summarizes MCs increasingly polarized cosponsorship behavior on a broad range of bills. However, this analysis somewhat obscures two important features that may differentiate polarization on the floor and polarization in endorsing bills. First, party unity in cosponsorship (measured as the proportion of cosponsors from the same party as the original sponsor) has not increased as quickly or consistently as has party unity voting on the floor. Secondly, there remains considerable bipartisan overlap amongst MCs in their cosponsorship choices, though this bipartisanship has almost entirely collapsed in roll call voting. Figure 2.4 shows a measure of party unity in cosponsorship for both the House and Senate over the same period as unity in roll call voting discussed above. As can be seen, there is a substantial increase in the proportion of bills that have obtained at least 10 cosponsors and for which at least 90% of the cosponsors are of the same party as the original sponsor. Across both chambers the proportion of such bills changes from around 0.20 in 1972 to 0.40 by 2008. However, while the vast majority of bills have at least 50% of their cosponsors from the same party as the sponsor, the frequency of these types of bills have remained largely constant over time, suggesting a wide range of variation in cosponsorship.

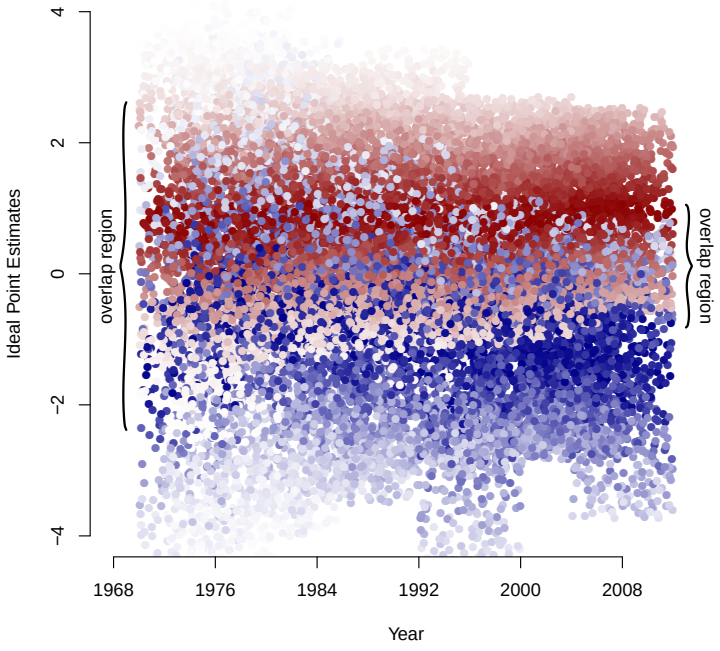
Finally, another noticeable difference between the two legislative activities is that, in spite of their polarization, MCs are much more willing to engage in bipartisanship when cosponsoring, than they are in contesting votes in the floor. Figure 2.5 displays the distribution of scaled MC positions in the House from 1968 to 2008, scaled using procedures that

a reputation advantage for clarifying differences between themselves and their partisan opponents on policy. While the polarization in cosponsorship choices and roll call voting overall are consistent with this view, the degree of bipartisan overlap amongst cosponsorship coalitions would seem to undermine politicians' ability to clarify a consistent party reputation, unless this behavior is dismissed as non-credible and generally ignored.

Figure 2.5: Receding Center in the House: 1968 to 2008



(a) Roll Call Scores



(b) Cosponsorship Scores

fix individual ideal point estimates over time. The top of Figure 2.5(a) shows a scaling of roll call voting using DW-NOMINATE, with ideal point estimates jittered in order to visually smooth the point densities across each year. The y-axis displays scores which are rescaled from -4 (most liberal) to 4 (most conservative), with Republicans in red and Democrats in blue. The darker colors indicate a higher density of MCs located around a particular score, with lighter or white indicating a boundary with relatively few or none MCs with that score. The general pattern of partisan polarization again can be seen in this figure. But, perhaps most remarkable is the change in the degree of overlap between the two parties' set of positions over time. In 1968, over half of the ideological space (with overlap at even the highest densities for both parties) could be considered an area of overlap indicating a sizable proportion of MCs willing to cross-party lines on votes. Yet, in 2008 this overlap has essentially vanished, pointing to remarkably little bipartisan cooperation in the House.

In comparison, MCs are much more willing to cosponsor bills in bipartisan coalitions even at the end of the 2000s. Figure 2.5(b) displays the distribution of cosponsorship ideal points taken from the model in Equation 2.1 above. In 1972, the region of bipartisan overlap spans nearly the entirely ideological space. Three decades later, although clearly in decline, there is still substantial overlap. Quite interestingly, cosponsorship choices have indeed polarized alongside roll call voting, but have so far retained at least some of the bipartisanship that characterized the classical view of the legislative process at mid-century (Shepsle 1989).

One interpretation of this evidence is that polarization reflects a meaningful change in the representational activity of individual House and Senate members in ideological terms, and not just a result of the leadership's heightened effort at structuring policymaking to facilitate majority party success on the floor.[7] As such, the evidence from polarization in the Senate and in cosponsorship over both chambers would suggest an important shift is underway in the manner that politicians are representing their districts in Congress. There indeed could be party or procedural constraint that is driving much of the polarization going on in roll call voting, but this evidence is suggestive that this is not the sole force driving the greater differences observed between the parties. Indeed, there are reasons to suspect that cosponsorship choices differ substantially in the incentives that MCs and parties face, and in particular in revealing information about MCs positions on issues that legislators especially care about or perhaps are important to voters that may help their reelection to office.

Voter Attitudes Remain Centrist

Although a number of explanations have been offered to account for this non-convergence, the most straightforward would be that elected politicians have been polarizing in response to the changing preferences of voters in their districts (Abramowitz 2010; Rohde 1991). The convergence and congruence results discussed above suggest that candidates should locate their positions proximal to the center of voter attitudes in an electorate. If the preferences

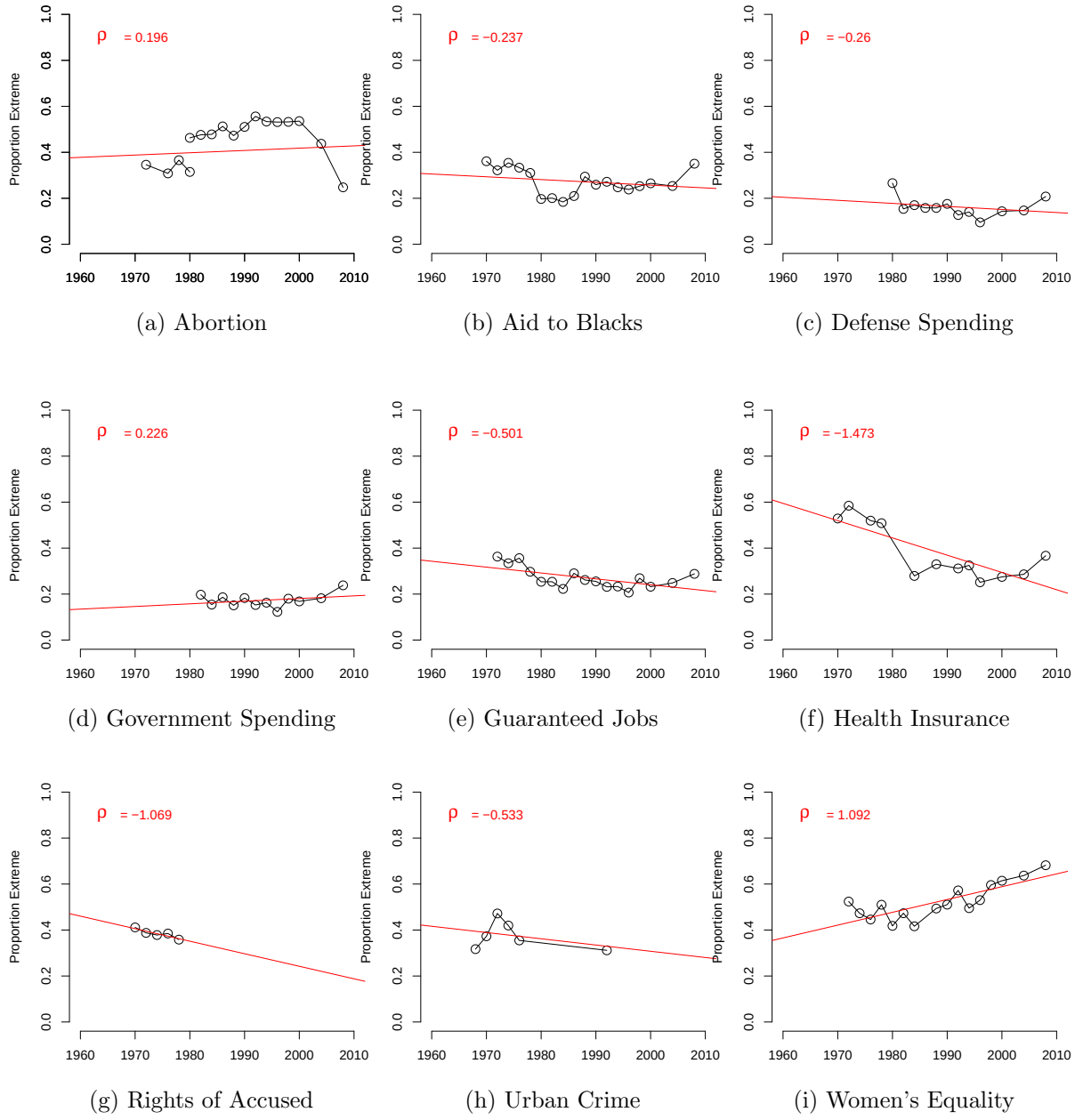
[7]This would still be a meaningful change, albeit one that points to rising partisan consistency and not ideological change that depicts the representation disconnect.

of median voters across districts are also polarizing it would be reasonable for strategic candidates to offer increasingly polarized positions since these would be congruent with their respective electorates, highlighting a form of dyadic representation (and perhaps constituent control) that may hold even if at the expense of national preferences (Fiorina and Abrams 2009). Additionally, partisan identifiers within a district might increasingly be polarizing by becoming more ideologically homogenous and distinct from each other. While the classical Downsian model predicts candidates will converge even with such bimodal issue preferences, under slightly different assumptions, each party candidate might be expected to give greater weight to the preferences of their co-partisan constituencies (Jessee 2012). If party identifying voters are polarizing within districts, then again we might see reasonable candidates taking more extreme positions in response to voter demand in the general electorate.

Following this line of reasoning, the work of Alan Abramowitz has made the most sustained effort to provide evidence that voters have become indeed more ideologically consistent and extreme in their issues preferences (Abramowitz 2010, 2008; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Saunders and Abramowitz 2004). Abramowitz (2010) is the most systematic treatment of this research, which culls thirty years of survey data on attitudes and engagement from the American National Election Survey (ANES), in additional to recent large sample surveys in the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES). The main empirical analysis involves building a summary 'Conservatism' score constructed from sixteen issue items in the ANES and twelve questions from the CCES. With this measure, Abramowitz traces the changing correlation between Conservatism and party identification, and also looks at static differences on this score across Republican and Democratic identifiers, pooling over all respondents and subsetting by participation categories (e.g., not-voter, voter, activist). From these data, Abramowitz shows that party identification and conservative attitudes are increasingly correlated over time, and that partisan voters appear to be more polarized than non-partisans and non-voters. According to Abramowitz, the American electorate is growing increasingly ideological, and ideologically polarized across party camps. Further, he argues that the largest change in attitudes has occurred amongst the political participants, including voters, activists and campaigners, who have not only become more polarized, but also more politically engaged in elections. Therefore, engaged citizens are exerting greater influence on political actors, leading to polarized policymaking in Washington.

Similar analyses of ANES and other survey data conducted by Fiorina and Abrams (2009) and Fiorina et al. (2005), however, uncover very different results. Rather than analyzing a combined scale of multiple issues, these scholars examine change in issue attitudes on items separately, and by issue area (e.g., economic, social, defense). The authors also show some polarization amongst the most participating group of citizens on self-placement scores, but these differences appear more subdued in comparison to the analogous findings made by Abramowitz (2010). Overall, Fiorina et al. (2005) argue that voters have largely sorted and not polarized, that is they are no more extreme now than thirty years ago, but have followed elite cues to line up their ideological affinities more closely with their partisan affiliations (Carsey and Layman 2006; Fiorina et al. 2005; Levendusky 2009).

Figure 2.6: Extreme Responses on Nine Issue Items in the ANES, All Respondents: 1970 to 2008



(a) Abortion (b) Aid to Blacks (c) Defense Spending

(d) Government Spending (e) Guaranteed Jobs (f) Health Insurance

(g) Rights of Accused (h) Urban Crime (i) Women's Equality

Which view is correct? Is there a disconnect in representation, or are politicians being responsive to the increasingly polarized attitudes of the engaged public? In the following section, I conduct a brief reanalysis of the ANES survey data following the basic research

designs outlined by Abramowitz (2010) and Fiorina et al. (2005). While I find some evidence for polarization in attitudes amongst the most politically engaged, especially activists and donors, voters and the broader electorate appear to have polarized very little if at all. Most notably, while there are some differences in the distribution of attitudes across Democratic and Republican identifiers, these attitudes have changed very little over time. Finally, district median voters have scarcely changed as well, as measured by presidential vote and ANES liberal-conservative measures. Overall a balanced reading of the evidence supports the theory of voter sorting rather than voter polarization in attitudes, following elite polarization underway in Congress.

Initially, one way to see if attitudes are changing is to look at the opinions of eligible voters on salient issues with repeat measures on the ANES. I look at nine such issues that offer respondents the opportunity to place their ideal views on each item from a scale roughly most liberal (−3) to most conservative (+3) on that issue.[8] For example one question asks:

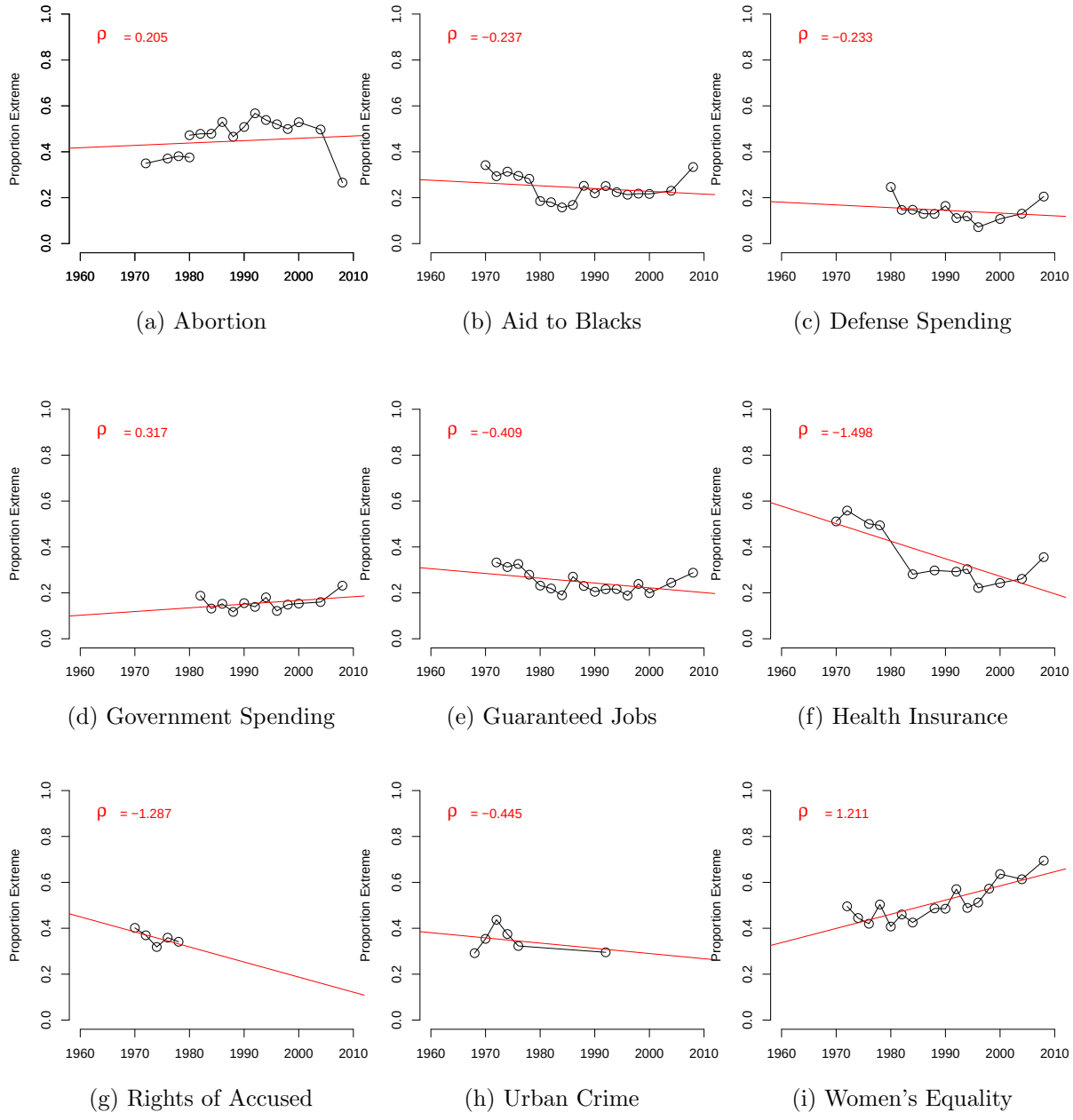
> "There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical and hospital expenses for everyone. Others feel that all medical expenses should be paid by individuals, and through private insurance plans. And of course, some people have opinions somewhere in between. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?"
>
> −3. Government insurance plan
> −2.
> ...
> +2.
> +3. Private insurance plan

To measure issue extremity, I look at the proportion of valid responses on each item that take the most extreme options on the scale at ±3. Then I track how the frequency of these extreme responses changes over time.[9] The results of this analysis are presented in 2.6. Out of the nine issues, only for three (*abortion, government spending*, and *women's equality*) has there been any increase in respondents' willingness to report extreme opinions. On the other six issues, respondents appear to be decreasingly willing to take extreme positions, including on *defense spending, government health insurance*, and *guaranteed jobs*. Moreover, with the exception of *women's equality*, the issues with increasing extremity exhibit the weakest

[8]The nine issue questions in the cumulative file are: abortion (VCF0837/8), aid to blacks (VCF0830), defense spending (VCF0843), government spending (VCF0839), guaranteed jobs (VCF0809), health insurance (VCF0806), rights of accused (VCF0832), urban crime (VCF0811), and women's equality (VCF0834). Note the abortion question is structured somewhat differently, only allowing four categories based on more specific policy information for each option.

[9]I also replicate this for extreme responses defined as ±2 or ±3 as shown in the appendix in Figure **??**. These results confirm the decline in issue extremity across each of these item.

Figure 2.7: Extreme Responses on Nine Issue Items in the ANES, Just Voters: 1970 to 2008



(a) Abortion (b) Aid to Blacks (c) Defense Spending

(d) Government Spending (e) Guaranteed Jobs (f) Health Insurance

(g) Rights of Accused (h) Urban Crime (i) Women's Equality

change in attitudes over time. Finally, unlike every other item where the trend is parallel for the extreme liberal or extreme conservative responses, the growing extremity in *women's equality* is driven entirely by a intercept shift in the scale – conservative opinion is on the decline, though less rapidly than the quick ascent of liberal attitudes on the issue. Thus,

on these survey items taken separately, there is remarkably little evidence that people are becoming more polarized or extreme in their attitudes on important issues.

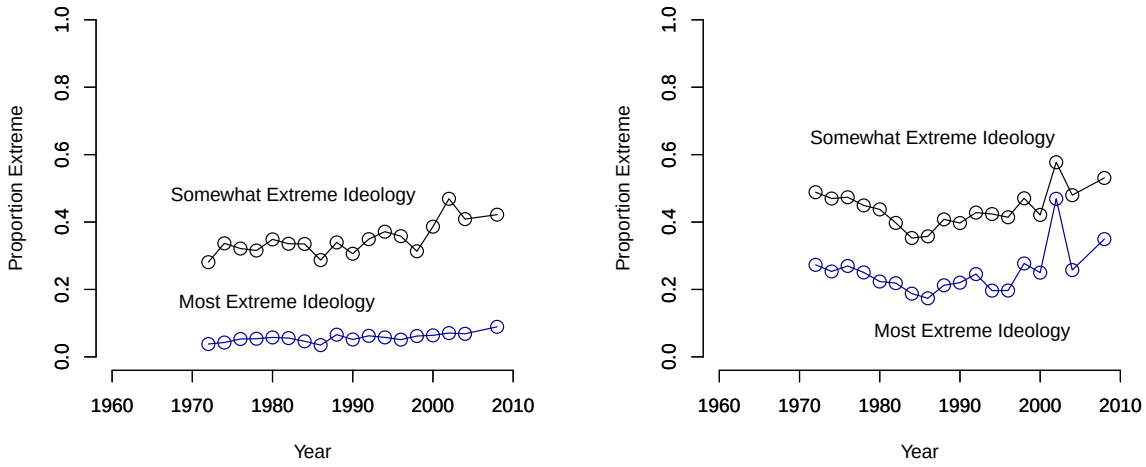
A central debate between Fiorina and Abrams (2009) and Abramowitz (2010) is whether the *politically engaged* have polarized relative to those disengaged in elections and politics. While both sets of scholars agree that the activist class (those who participate in numerous political activities) has polarized, a key difference between them is the degree to which everyday voters also exhibit increasingly extreme or polarized opinions in line with changes amongst elites. Abramowitz (2010), for example, argues that non-participants' attitudes remain centrist and unchanged, yet the opinions of those likely to vote have polarized significantly.[10] In replicating the above analysis excluding non-voters, however, there is a remarkably similar pattern of little positive change in attitude extremity. Figure 2.7 presents these results, and shows that both non-voters *and* voters have generally become less extreme (or not more extreme) in their attitudes on many important issues over the period. If the expectation is that politicians should be responding to the *changing* attitudes of voters on important issues, then this evidence suggests that a responsive or congruent Congress, if anything, should be becoming *less* and not more polarized, at least along these issues.

The substance of political disagreement though is not defined just along nine questions. People are likely to care about and have opinions on a wider range of different issues. Rather than looking at issues individually, perhaps it is more relevant to look at whether people's attitudes have changed in terms of the broader direction of government activity. In this vein, I follow Abramowitz's (2010) analysis and construct a scale of attitudes that combines responses from the nine issues above into an overall measure of *policy liberalism*. I also examine respondents' self-placement on a liberal-conservative dimension, similar to the issue questions above. The *self-reporting* measure can capture the degree to which respondents' see themselves as increasingly extreme on a liberal-conservative dimension. The *summary score* can reveal how consistent people's attitudes are over time, that is, how frequently people who provide a liberal response on one issue, will provide liberal responses on the others.

Figure 2.8 displays the change in the proportion of respondents in the ANES placed at the extremes of the two measures: (a) liberal-conservative self-placement and (b) combined liberalism scale over nine issues. On the self-placement measure in Figure 2.8(a), we can see a fairly small increase in the proportion of people placing themselves as the most extreme (± 3) liberal or conservative on the scale. Comparatively, there is a more apparent increase in the frequency of somewhat extreme placements at ± 2 or ± 3. Though the change overall is somewhat modest, respondents are increasingly describing themselves as more extreme on an ideology measure that may capture a better summary of attitudes on a broader range of policies. In comparison, the summary scale over nine issue positions in 2.8(b) shows a

[10] This is setting aside the point that strategic parties or candidates could position in ways that affect whether or not moderates versus extremists decide to participate. If the population of voters are increasingly extreme *because* extreme candidates are demobilizing moderates, this strongly implies that elites are driving any apparent correlation between engagement and attitudes. This may also mean that moderate candidates could successfully mobilize the center in elections if so desired and given the chance.

Figure 2.8: Extremity in Self-Placement of Party ID and Ideology



(a) Ideology Self-Placement

(b) Ideology Policy Scale

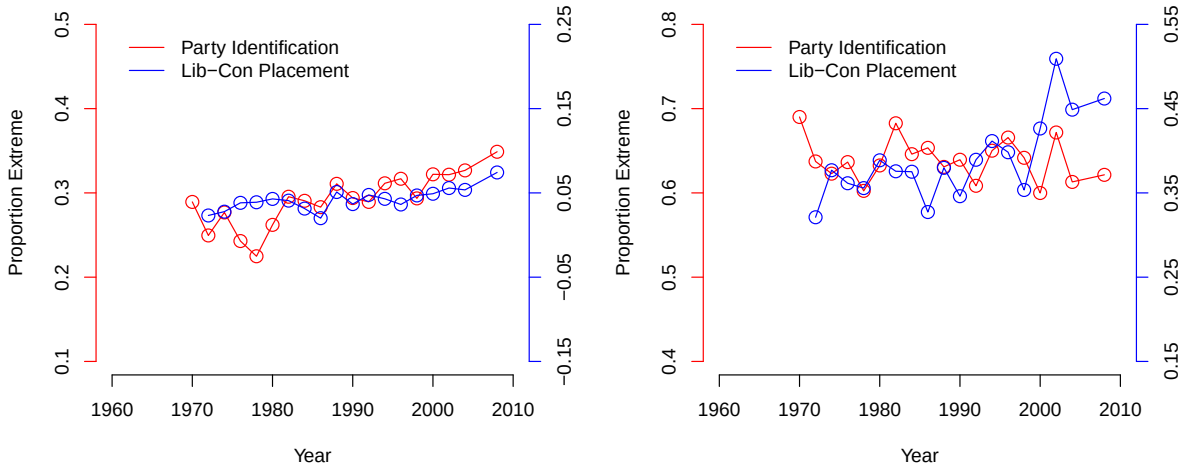
decline in extremity from the 1970s through the 1980s, with a subsequent rise in extremity across the 1990s and later. In spite of the lack of change on the individual issue items, when averaging over them we recover measures of extremity that do increase, albeit modestly over time.

The fact that respondents are not polarizing on individual issue items, but appear to do so when summarizing over multiple items suggests that people are becoming more consistent in their attitudes (Abramowitz 2010; Ansolabehere and Jones 2010; Levendusky 2009). In other words, people are now less likely to have divergent attitudes that cut across the way elites package these positions in ideological terms – 'liberal' issues go along with other 'liberal' issues, and people are increasingly in accord with this political ordering (Converse 1964). Abramowitz (2010) argues that this constraint signifies mass polarization and is the driving force behind polarized representation in Congress. Yet there are a number of reasons to be skeptical of this view.

First, this change in constraint seems to lag behind the process of polarization going on amongst elites, suggesting it is more likely to be a consequence rather than a cause of changes in elite behavior. Further, these changes in mass attitudes appear to correspond to changes in the strength of partisan identification (PID). Due to the stability and historical standing of America's party system, people in the U.S. are prone to identify as members of one of the two major parties, an affiliation that often takes on the proportion of a deeply held social identity (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002; Theodoridis 2012). There is some evidence that PID may be responsive at least in part to the policy reputations of the parties (Carsey and Layman 2006; Fiorina 1981). But, a great deal of research in political science has shown that that voter attitudes on issues are more pliable, and prone to change

in line with their PID (Carsey and Layman 2006).

Figure 2.9: Correspondence Between Increasing Strength of PID and Self-Placement Extremity



(a) Most Extreme

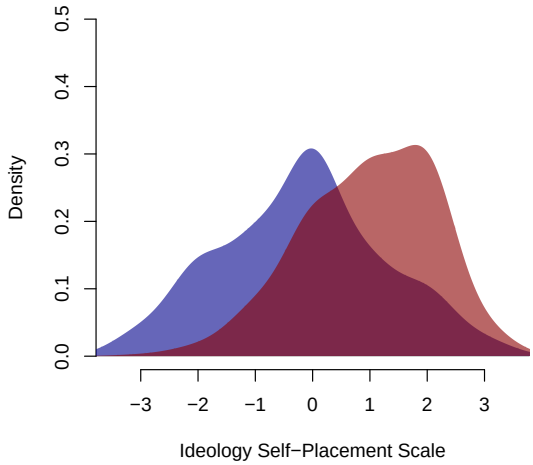
(b) Somewhat Extreme

Some evidence of this realigning (*sorting*) process can be found here as well. An interesting feature of the change found above in people's self-placement on the liberal-conservative scale is that the increase in extremity on this measure corresponds very closely with an increase in the proportion of people identifying as partisans, as well as the strength of their reported party attachments. This correspondance is show in Figure 2.9. Panel (a) of the figure shows the tight coupling between those placing themselves at the most extreme part of the ideology scale in the ANES, which has increased at a rate almost exactly parallel to the rate of increase in respondents identifying as strong partisans.[11] Figure 2.9(b) displays the correlation between increases in strength of partisanship and extremity in self-placement for respondents giving only somewhat extreme responses. Although not dispositive, one straightforward interpretation of this evidence is that there has been an increase in the consistency between those willing to identify as partisans (and especially as strong partisans), and those willing to take more ideologically coherent views across a number of issues, pointing to sorting and not polarization at the level of mass opinion (Fiorina et al. 2005).

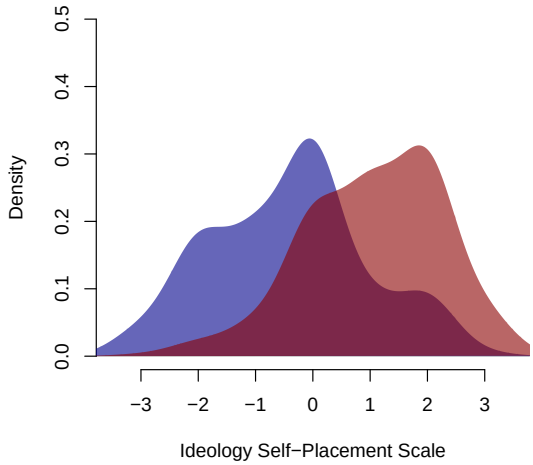
In the mass public, there is evidence of limited polarization in attitudes, whether taken individually or summarized in a common scale. One other finding from this analysis is noteworthy. In spite of partisan sorting, the distribution of voter preferences has apparently changed very little, across both partisan identifiers and districts represented by Democratic

[11]In fact, this correspondence is found more clearly when looking at the bivariate correlation on the individual data, which is increasing at a relatively constant rate over the period.

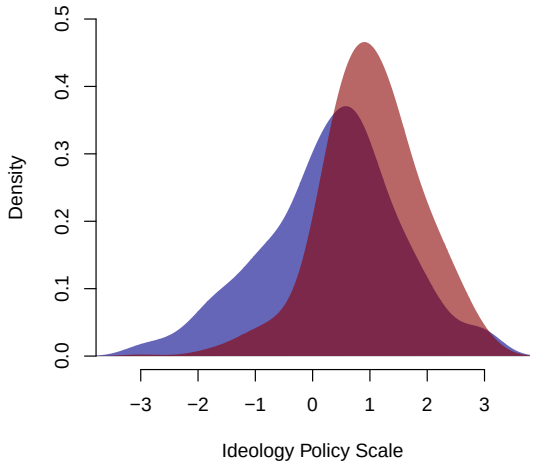
Figure 2.10: Low Polarization and High Overlap in Mass Opinion of Partisan Identifiers: 1980 and 2000



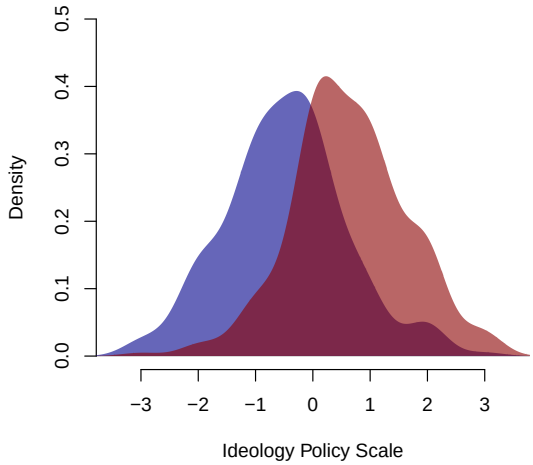
(a) Self-Placement: 1980



(b) Self-Placement: 2000



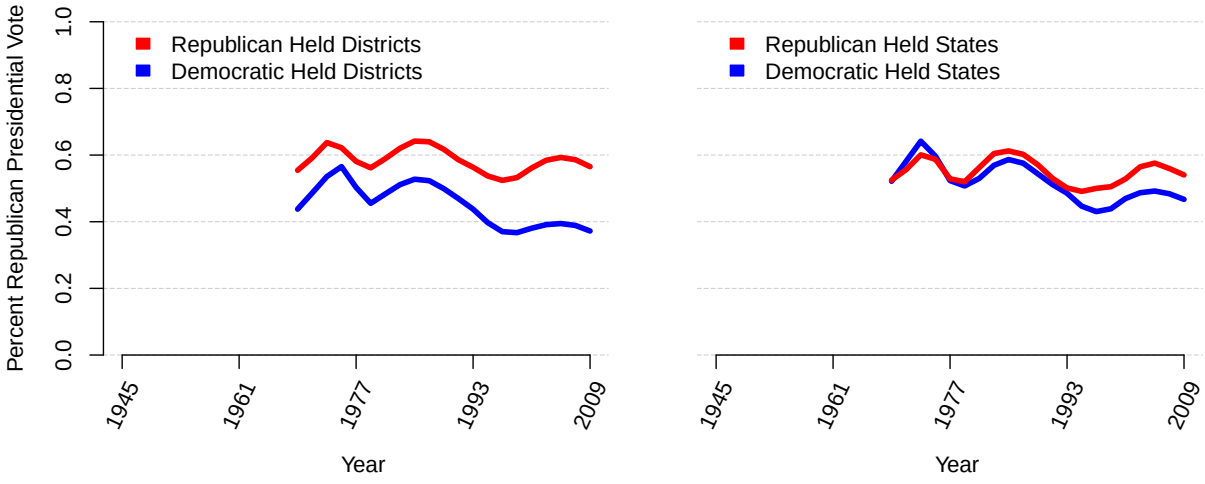
(c) Policy Scale: 1980



(d) Policy Scale: 2000

or Republican congressional incumbents. To see this limited change, I first plot the density of the self-placement measure and the policy summary scale, separately for Democratic identifiers (blue) and Republican identifiers (red), using the 7-point PID measure. These density plots are presented in Figure 2.10. The top panels (a) and (b) show the densities for party identifiers' self-placement on the liberal-conservative measure in 1980 and then in 2000. There is overwhelming overlap between the distributions indicating considerable agreement across party lines. Yet, perhaps most notable is the virtual lack of any change in these distributions following the onset of elite polarization in the 2000s. The bottom panels (c) and (d), illustrate the distribution of scores from the summary of the nine issue items by partisan identification. Though the is a clear movement amongst Democratic identifiers towards the left end of the scale (consistent with realignment of the Democratic South), centrism dominates the picture of mass opinion.

Figure 2.11: Change in Presidential Vote by Party-Controlled Districts and State



(a) House Districts

(b) Senate Districts

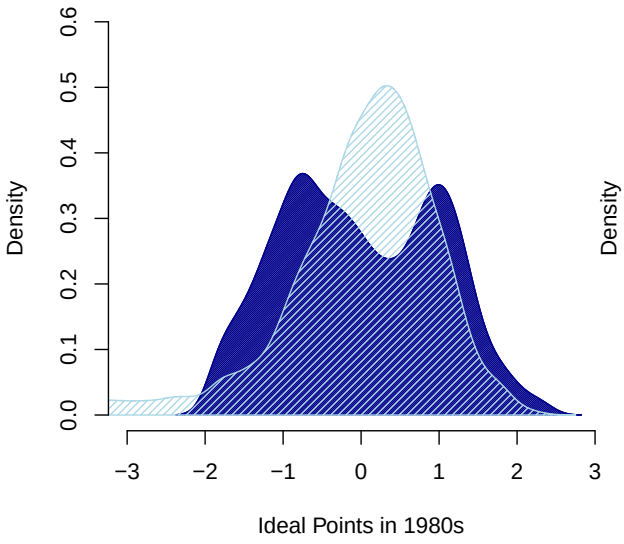
Finally, the evidence also shows that voters have polarized quite modestly at the district-level as well. One frequently used measure of voter preferences in a constituency is the rate of Republican presidential voting. Although an imperfect measure, it is based on the expectation that more conservative districts with more conservative median voters should also be more likely to vote for the Republican candidate running for president. Thus, a higher proportion of Republican votes would indicate that a district is more likely to lean rightward on policy. Using this measure, Figure 2.11 shows movement in the average rate of Republican presidential vote by districts with Democratic or Republican House and Senate incumbents. Though there is some divergence over time, the change in Republican presidential voting across party-control constituencies remains relatively slight. In the 1968 contest between

Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey, Republican-held House districts voted for Nixon at a rate of 56.6%, compared to Democratic-held districts at 44.2%. Forty years later, in a particularly strong year for the Democrats with the victory of Barack Obama over John McCain, districts represented by Republicans supported McCain with 56.0% of the vote, while Democratic districts did so at a lower rate of 36.7%. This shift, however, actually exaggerates the broader trend over the last forty years, where the rate of divergence in presidential voting has gone from about 10 percentage points to about 15 percentage points on average in the House. In the Senate, the divergence is even smaller, with average rates going from 3 percentage points going to 6.5 percentage points by the end of the period.

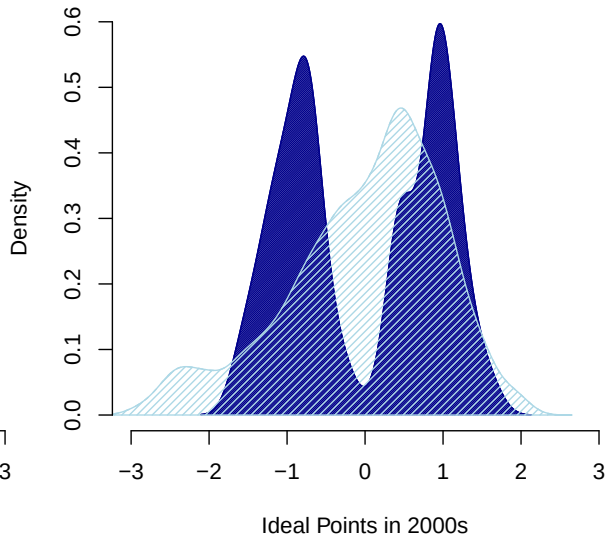
While the rates of presidential voting have diverged somewhat across party-controlled legislative districts on average, this change is not emerging due to the decline of centrist districts. Districts and states fundamentally have not become particularly more homogenous or extreme. As the evidence from presidential voting reveals, a great many centrist districts continue to reelect non-centrist incumbents. Figure 2.12 displays the density of district and state Republican presidential choice, compared to the density of House and Senate roll call ideal points for the respective congresses in the 1980s and 2000s. In Figure 2.12(a) and Figure 2.12(c), House and Senate MCs roll call votes (denoted in dark blue) display the relatively low amount of polarization that differentiates Democrats and Republicans across the chambers in the 1980s. Though the center is still holding in Congress, the figure clearly shows that the districts and states electing these incumbents display virtually no polarization in the rate presidential voting (indicated in light blue). By the 2000s, as shown in Figures 2.12(b) and 2.12(d), the center has completely vanished in Congress. Yet there is virtually no sign of polarization in presidential voting, with the lion-share of districts and states falling somewhere in the center of the distribution. Again the evidence shows that while representatives are clearly polarizing entirely abandoning the center on policy, district-level opinion has not polarized, and remains essentially moderate, and far more so than the congressional representation these constituencies continue to support.

One possibility raised by this pattern of low divergence at the district level (and relatively little polarization amongst voters more generally), is that small changes in the preferences of electorates could lead to big changes in representation. For instance, the electoral forces that tether representatives to their constituencies could be quite elastic, so that even small amounts of voter polarization are inducing dramatic shifts in the incentives of elites to polarize in their legislative behavior. If so, from a normative standpoint, this might still give us some pause. Even if the view is correct that the changes in voter attitudes catalogued above are sufficient to induce the pattern of polarization observed in Congress, it is hard to deny that voters seem to be getting much more than they bargained for, having been greatly outstripped by the extremity of each new class of representation. Doubly so, if this disconnect becomes a fixture of American politics, then uncovering the sources of this putative elasticity in representation becomes all the more important in understanding the linkage between voters, elections, and the production of policy. Moreover, from a theoretical standpoint, the view that small causes make for big effects might pose an even more interesting puzzle.

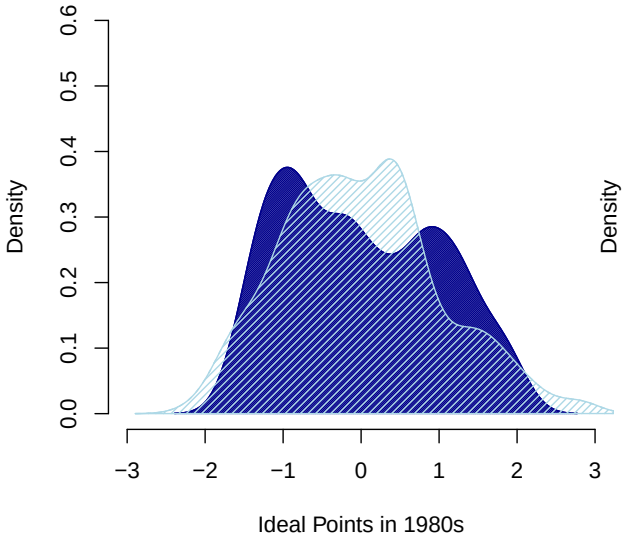
Figure 2.12: Density of Presidential Vote and MCs in Districts and States: 1980s and 2000s



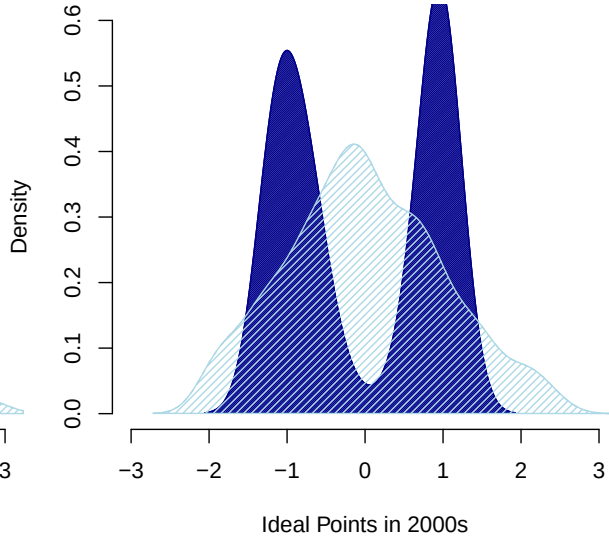
(a) House Representation in 1980s



(b) House Representation in 2000s



(c) Senate Representation in 1980s



(d) Senate Representation in 2000s

If politicians are capable of "locking in" polarization through their own strategic behavior, even if originally egged on by voter demands (Levendusky 2009; Pierson 2004), then this raises a fundmental question: why can voters not simply pull back the reigns?

Do Voters Have Attitudes?

A criticism of efforts to summarize voter opinion in this way is that many people may not have well-formed or consistent attitudes about certain issues, and that a significant segment of the public may in fact have no opinion at all. For instance, Converse (1964) found that people often took seemingly random and conflicting positions on policy items when asked to give their attitudes in successive surveys. Also unlike elites, mass voters often appear willing to take positions that seem incongruent with typical ideological alignments on the issues, for example supporting a policy to provide health care for all adults, but opposing an expansion of medicare for seniors. If voters have weak or non-existent preferences, or are cross-pressured in their attitudes given the available alternatives, then this may significantly alter the way we understand the connection between elite polarization and mass behavior.

One part of this debate is that voters may have preferences, but that these do not align well with the ideological options offered by the two parties (Miller and Stokes 1963). By collapsing multiple dimensions into one, the above summaries may portray these cross-pressured voters as centrists, even if they hold extreme positions on two misaligned dimensions. If these types of voters are commonplace, then this recasts the representational disconnect in a new multidimensional light. Cross-pressured voters are still poorly represented under polarization, since they can never elect a candidate who champions their ideal extreme policy preferences along more than one dimension at a time. But, they may be equally bad off under low polarization, since moderate congresses would likely produce non-extreme policy along both dimensions. Some voters may simply be impossible to please.[12] Other voters may have little interest in the ideological dust-ups between the two parties, and have minimal attitudes on policy. Perhaps these are generally uninterested voters who do not particularly care about what politicians are up to, at least so long as they provide for necessary public goods like a healthy economy and national defense, and so on. In this case, the policy attitudes of voters cannot be misrepresented since they generally do not exist.

The central concern in this dissertation, however, is over the degree of electoral control voters have over their representatives. And in particular, with the way this control interacts with the inequality in the influence that elites and activists have in comparison to the disinterested, cross-pressured or moderate. If many voters are cross-pressured on multiple issues, then this may allow leeway for politicians to enact the policies they most prefer, and can enable them to ignore the second-order preferences of voters who must hold their nose and vote for the lesser of two evils. Cross-pressure may also provide extremists the opportunity to defeat more centrist candidates by exploiting issue differences within the latter's party on important policies (Hillygus and Shields 2009; Geer 1998). Constituent control seems even more remote if voters have at best weak preferences over policies. Such voters would likely have a hard time constraining elite behavior since they would rarely pay

[12]Voters with these kinds of cross-cutting preferences, however, offer minority parties opportunities to win new majorities by exploiting them to split the current majority, often through 'heresthetic' (Riker 1986; Schattschneider 1960).

enough attention to know which set of policies produced the best outcomes. The absence of meaningful preferences amongst voters would depict a much starker representation disconnect in influence rather than in policy terms (Gilens 2012).

Although it is clear that some voters are cross-pressured and others may have only shallow policy preferences, it seems unlikely that this characterizes most voters. For example, I show in the next few chapters that candidates are increasingly emphasizing issues in their campaign ads and are doing so by presenting themselves as moderates, something which could very well alienate cross-pressured voters, and that would be wasted on those who decide on other non-policy grounds. Thus, at least from the standpoint of their electoral incentives, candidates do not appear to see voters as operating with unconstrained policy attitudes or without any attitudes at all.

2.3 Electoral Accounts for Polarization

Why do centrist voters and electorates continue to reelect extreme incumbents, in spite of the evidence above that they prefer more moderate over polarized representation on the issues? In light of the process of polarization in the U.S., quite a few explanations have been offered to explain the growing representation disconnect. Much of this work emphasizes either legislative or electoral mechanisms (or both) to explain polarization. In spite of theoretical differences, this work shares a core emphasis on electoral constraint as the central driving force behind the diverging representation choices of politicians.

The most frequently cited accounts of polarization revolve around three broad themes that depict conditions under which candidates would cultivate extreme positions while representing moderate districts, and under which centrist electorates would elect out of step politicians. First, the incentives (political or electoral) to taking extreme positions may outweigh the costs of immoderation, at least under certain conditions. Second, advantages to incumbency or the importance of non-policy differences in elections may insulate polarized politicians. Third, voters may actually like policy extremism or be willing to reward candidates who represent polarized records. I briefly explore each of these explanations below.

Benefits Outweigh the Costs

Although candidates are diverging from the center of their districts, this does not mean they are being unresponsive to *all* voters in their positioning. Many theoretical accounts for polarization generally agree that candidates, as primarily office-seeking, have experienced some change in the 'balance of electoral forces' that now drive them to take more extreme positions on policy to maximize their reelection prospects (e.g., Abramowitz 2010; Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Fiorina et al. 2005; Levendusky 2009; McCarty et al. 2006; Rohde 1991; Schlozman et al. 2012; Theriault 2008; Wand 2012). A major electoral force for

polarization could be the prominent role that ideologically-motivated activists now play in influencing primary and general election outcomes.[13]

According to one view, the decline of party bosses and their replacement with primary elections dominated by the party faithful may have unleashed new demands for candidates to appeal to the base as a precursor to running for Congress. Primary voters hold more extreme views on policies compared to the broader electorate and have increasingly polarized in their attitudes (King 2012; Fiorina et al. 2005; Van Houweling 2012). By exerting significant control over candidate selection, primary electorates may be able to enforce greater ideological fealty through selection and removal (Aldrich 1983, 1995; Burden 2001; Fiorina et al. 2005; King 2012; Snyder and Ting 2002), or the more general threat of subsequent primary defeat (Brady et al. 2007; Layman et al. 2010; Schlozman et al. 2012).

However, the evidence that primary electorates have driven polarization has been mixed. Some research has shown that primary competition or the presence of a primary opponent leads incumbents to take more extreme positions (Burden 2001; Brady et al. 2007). There is also limited evidence that closed rather than open primaries are the most polarizing by restricting the electorate to only party loyalists (McGhee and Krimm 2009; Pearson and Lawless 2008). Yet, systematic studies of primary systems across the states provide reasons for doubt. For example, a recent study by Hirano et al. (2010), shows that Senate candidates did not change their positioning on issues after the introduction of primaries in their states. Further, the openness of primary systems across states appears to have little impact of state-level polarization as well (McGhee et al. 2011).[14]

Rather than driving primary competition, activists may have a strong influence in the general election. Candidates need money and volunteers to run their election campaigns, both of which are mobilized mainly from those who are most engaged in politics and care most strongly about policy (Abramowitz 2010; Aldrich 1983; Schlozman et al. 2012; Wand 2012). Losing the enthusiasm of partisans then may also pose significant constraints on incumbents to polarize. Conversely by being more readily mobilized partisan or extreme voters may allow candidates the option to lower their transaction costs by running to the poles, rather than trying to appeal to difficult-to-mobilize centrists (King 2012; Miller and Schofield 2003; Markus 2005). Related to this point, co-partisans may punish candidates for taking the 'wrong' positions on party platform items, while voters from the other party refuse to provide any benefits for such defection, further incentivizing elite polarization (Kelly and

[13]Some general election voters may also prefer more extreme politicians, for example if they vote 'directionally' and reward candidates for being on their side of the policy space (Merrill 1993; Rabinowitz and MacDonald 2002). If there is a mixture of directional voters and proximity voters, polarized candidates could conceivable make up the losses of one type by gains with the other. However, Tomz and Van Houweling (2008) find strong experimental evidence that directional voters are a relatively rare breed.

[14]Abramowitz (2008) takes a different tack and argues that primary electorates are no more extreme than general election voters, suggesting that primaries induce no additional pressure to polarize not already felt from the median voter.

Van Houweling 2012; Sniderman 2011).[15] If so, then the electoral benefits to polarize to appeal to extreme voters (either in a general or primary election) may outweigh the loss of moderate voters, and particularly so if winning these extremists is necessary to winning elections.

Party leaders in Congress may also distribute side benefits or electorally valuable resources to reward loyal MCs who take partisan or polarized positions to help advance the party's policy agenda. For example, Cox and McCubbins's (1993) *cartel theory* of parties in Congress argues that the majority party will use their privileged positions to stack committees with partisans who are more likely to help promote the party's legislative goals. MCs often covet these committee positions, and especially the more powerful committees, as prestige rewards that can help advance their legislative careers and broader influence (Fenno 1973). There is evidence that loyal partisans who reflect the broader preferences of the party get better assignments, and advance more quickly in leadership, suggesting that the parties could be using these to reward cooperative legislators (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005).[16]

In a similar vein, party leaders could also use their control over the appropriations tap to distribute earmarks and expenditures in ways that benefit more loyal partisans, and perhaps those electorally vulnerable or cross-pressured across party and constituency (Carroll and Kim 2010; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Lazarus 2009). These benefits could be particularly valuable if they help MCs shore up their electoral weaknesses by improving the local economy, giving MCs an opportunity to claim credit, or otherwise highlighting their priorities or performance in office (Levitt and Snyder 1997; Mayhew 1974; Stein and Bickers 1994). If so, then parties could be using side payments to make up for the electoral costs to polarized representation.

Dominance of Incumbent Quality and the Personal Vote

Instead of appealing to extremists or seeking party rewards, polarized politicians may be able to take advantage of other factors that distract voters away from their out-of-step records. At mid-century, with party polarization at its lowest ebb, congressional behavior was viewed as largely about delivering reelection resources for incumbents (Mayhew 1974), and congressional elections as contests over personality, character or performance rather than policy substance (Bartels 1988; Page 1978; Stokes 1963). Instead of waging divisive battles to enact competing legislation, candidates would be better served taking symbolic policy positions (regardless of whether these materialize), distributing pork and services to their districts, and promoting name-recognition through publicity and advertising (Mayhew 1974). At the heart of this view are two central premises held with considerable currency prior to the resurgence of parties at the end of the 20th century. First, incumbents must build

[15] Underlying all of this, geographical sorting across congressional districts, or the redistricting process itself, may also be pulling the center of each electorate away from the center of opinion within the U.S. as a whole (Carson et al. 2004; Rohde 1991; Theriault 2008).

[16] But see Krehbiel (1993, 1990) for a different view.

campaign enterprises to run in candidate-centered elections appealing largely to independent (i.e., non-partisan) identifiers (Jacobson 2009; Wattenberg 1998). And second, in doing so, candidates cannot credibly claim to have been instrumental in efforts to pass specific legislation, since this requires the collective action of at least 218 MCs, few (or none) of whom can easily claim a uniquely pivotal role in the process (Mayhew 1974). Both of these features cast congressional elections as being about non-policy dimensions of representation, which, perhaps ironically, could enable MCs to have some leeway in supporting increasingly polarized bills in Congress (Fenno 1978; Longregan and Romer 1993).

The candidate-centered view of elections originates from the work on the decline of parties in elections and government following Progressive-era reforms in the 1920s and 1930s (Polsby 1983; Wattenberg 1998). One putative consequence of these reforms was the rise of amateur political activity as the mainstay of candidate campaign enterprises, as well as the decline in the proportion of people willing to identify with one or the other party, instead identifying as 'independents' (Nie et al. 1999; Wattenberg 1998; Wilson 1962). As a result of this process, candidates may have found it advantageous to distance themselves from their party in order to mobilize independents and amateurs to fund and run their elections. Rather than emphasizing policy accomplishments that might naturally divide independents during elections, MCs could be better off highlighting qualities associated with their incumbent status: seniority, stature and influence in Congress (Fenno 1978; Page 1978).

While in Congress, incumbents may also have incentives to engage in representational activities that help cultivate an independent base of support around a personal connection with voters and districts (Cain et al. 1987; Fenno 1978). A typical way to do so is to invest significantly in congressional offices throughout the district, respond to the personal problems of voters through constituency service, host town hall meetings to listen to voter concerns, and more generally make oneself accessible to people in the district (Cain et al. 1987; King 1991). Alternatively candidates could invest in winning and publicizing projects and other accomplishments for the district to gain supporters on grounds besides policy affinities (Grimmer 2011; Levitt and Snyder 1997). The ability to sustain these connections with voters and more generally to leverage the benefits to incumbency might allow incumbents electoral insulation for their extremism (Longregan and Romer 1993).

Finally, some research has suggested that campaigns and elections may be decided over matters that have little to do with policy. An important line of research suggests candidates avoid talking about policy positions or at least remain ambiguous when doing so (Campbell 1983; Meirowitz 2005; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). Instead, elections are contested over which of the candidates possess the greatest "valence" advantage, that is characteristics that generally have universal appeal, like hard work, experience, or being effective in office (McCurley and Mondak 1995; Page 1978; Stokes 1963). If voters choose based on the personal reputations of MCs, rather than on policy records, then candidates may have room to take extreme positions in Congress while securing reelection in their moderate districts on the basis of being better quality politicians (Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Zaller 1998), or being

in a privileged position to communicate strengths to voters (Burden 2004; Fenno 1978; Lenz and Lawson 2011; McCurley and Mondak 1995; Stone and Simas 2010). Therefore, by cultivating and highlighting qualities or accomplishments that voters like, but that distract from a relatively extreme record on the issues, incumbents may be able to obtain greater leeway in explaining their record in a way that could encourage greater polarization by insulating polarized incumbents.

Rewarding Polarized Records and Strong Party Brands

Another electoral explanation for the growing partisan gap is that centrist voters (along with extremists) may in fact be rewarding candidates for the broad policy differences being offered by the two parties (Fiorina 1980; Snyder 1994). For example, voters may perceive moderate politicians as compromising on their principles, and thus would reward polarized politicians for standing on their beliefs (Pew Research Center 2010).[17] In such cases, it is unclear whether moderates have any reservations in rewarding principled politicians well out of line with their own views. In the context of spatial politics, however, an important theoretical revision of the Downsian model does provide a rationale for centrist voters to prefer more extreme candidates on principled policy grounds through the strategic actions of responsible parties (APSA Committee on Political Parties 1950).

By developing clear and distinct policy 'brands' and enforcing member discipline, parties may reduce the uncertainty voters face about the ideological commitments of competing candidates (Grynaviski 2010; Snyder and Ting 2002). Accordingly, party leaders acquire and use advantaged positions in Congress to promote or deny legislation that advances the policy interests of all of its members (Cox and McCubbins 2005). Under such conditions, incumbents can be expected to reliably support the party's agenda, and voters can use this information to reward or punish candidates as a whole for their collective performance. Under the model, one mechanism for why centrist voters might prefer polarized politicians representing divergent policy platforms is that this reduces the information uncertainty they possess in evaluating competing candidates (Snyder and Ting 2002). One model of electoral risk aversion, assumes that voters evaluate candidates by mixing over rewards for greater proximity with punishments for greater uncertainty when considering competing candidates' ideal points (Alvarez 1999; Enelow and Hinich 1984). By collectively maintaining a polarized reputation and enforcing non-centrism amongst its standard-bearers, parties reduce the uncertainty about their candidates' individual policy preferences, attracting the support of risk-avoiding voters willing to discount on extremity (Tomz and Van Houweling 2008).

An alternative version of the theory emphasizes the lack of credible commitments individual candidates can make on legislation without the assurances of parties to enforce such statements. Accordingly, parties act as "surety bonds" that, by polarizing and monopolizing the legislative process in Congress, help voters hold their party members collectively respon-

[17] A recent survey by Pew for example showed 49% of respondents preferred politicians to stand on principle and not compromise, though no specific policy content was considered in the poll.

sible and reap the electoral rewards for doing so (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Grynaviski 2010). With polarized and strong parties in Congress, voters may have little incentive to choose between candidates based on their individual positions or promises (since these are not credible), and should focus on which party's agenda the candidate will endorse if elected (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Grynaviski 2010; Tomz and Van Houweling 2008). This is due to the belief that parties are the only game in town, and as such can constrain the actions of party members to behave like a team. Consequently, candidates have little incentive to present information that differentiates them from their party on core policy matters, or to vote against their party on important items, and especially those that split the majority or highlight internal disputes that tarnish the party's reputation (Cox and McCubbins 2005). Thus, any action on these independent positions is moot, and rational voters should punish such distancing statements or actions for their irrelevancy (Grynaviski 2010). In the end, voters will only support polarized politicians, and will punish candidates running away from their party's 'brand' as non-credible statements about their future legislative actions.[18]

A number of studies have sought to empirically investigate some key predictions from these party reputation theories. Much of this work looks at the effects of macro-level polarization in Congress on the frequency and magnitude of party tide elections, as well as on micro-level voting behavior (Claggett et al. 1984; Grynaviski 2010; Jones 2010; Kelly and Van Houweling 2012). Other work has examined the connection between polarized party reputations and voter learning about the parties (Bawn et al. 2012; Grynaviski 2010; Levendusky 2009), partisan information screening and proximity voting (Van Houweling and Sniderman 2005; Sniderman 2011), issue sorting (Fiorina et al. 2005; Levendusky 2009), and majoritarian accountability (Jones 2010; Lipinski 2004). Overall, this research has shown that voters are increasingly aware of policy differences between the parties. Yet, very little is known about the effects of polarized party brands on voters' evaluations or attitudes towards individual candidates, and even less still on whether or not clarified party brands are electorally beneficial or costly for polarized MCs.

Nonetheless, from the vantage of the parties, polarization is likely to be seen as a feature of rather than a dilemma for adequate representation of the electorate's policy preferences. Though there is some disagreement over the precise electoral mechanisms, these above accounts all agree that candidates are polarizing in response to shifts in the demands they face when seeking reelection, and thus being out of step may be *electorally* necessary and perhaps even helpful for politicians.[19]

[18]Cox and McCubbins (2005) offer a slightly different logic to the electoral benefits of polarization. They argue that voters will punish or reward all members of a particular party based on their partisan affiliation as a judgement about what the party as a whole has been doing in Congress. Since their fates are all linked together, party leaders have an incentive to enforce cooperation amongst the party membership and to ensure all act in unison to advance the party's goals.

[19]For instance, some of these accounts see candidates as cross-pressured, and thus forced to vote against the majority of their constituents in exchange for other electorally valuable goods. Yet, other scholars point to the collective electoral benefits that candidates may gain from having clarified party 'brands', which would reward partisan behavior even amongst legislators representing swing districts (Cox and McCubbins 2005;

2.4 Policy Motivations, Shirking and the Limits of Electoral Constraint

Although these various explanations span both legislative and electoral contexts, as well as many behavioral and strategic mechanisms, they each share a view that voters constrain legislators through the potential for electoral punishment. Most of the prior research on polarization takes the view that candidates are polarizing in pursuit of reelection, and that electoral constraint is the dominant way to understand the incentives to take more polarized positions in Congress. This view is particularly dominant, since getting elected is an essential precursor to securing both the subsequent policy goals and career aims that motivate ambitious politicians. Additionally, there is a strong belief that positions taken on policies in the legislative context typically pin down the actions candidates can take in subsequent election contests or congresses. Opponents have strong incentives to publicize an incumbent's unpopular or difficult votes during a campaign. And incumbents may suffer serious reputation costs for being caught trying to reposition.

A major alternative to this electoral pressure account of polarization is that incumbents may be 'strategic shirkers' using political office to advance their own policy goals, while seeking to insulate themselves from the potential electoral fallout delivered by their more moderate constituents (Bawn et al. 2012; Fenno 1978; Kalt and Zupan 1984; Kau and Rubin 1979; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Van Houweling 2012; Wright 1993). Rather than being strictly motivated by the allure of a career in politics (Downs 1957), politicians likely have personal views about the types of policies Congress should enact, views which motivate them to join a particular party and suffer the challenges of running for office (Bawn et al. 2012; Crespin et al. 2006; Fenno 1973; Fiorina et al. 2005; Karol 2009; Kingdon 1989; Rohde 1991; Van Houweling 2012). Accordingly, the rise of polarization could be a largely elite-driven process, pushed forward by politicians who aim to legislate their vision of good public policy (Arnold 1990; Fiorina et al. 2005; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Van Houweling 2012).[20] This is not to say that politicians only care about policy, and disregard the moderating pressure emerging from the demands of centrist voters. However, this pressure need not always be directly translated into considerations about how to vote in Congress or represent a district. Given certain conditions, candidates may be quite capable of managing or reducing the costs of being out of step with their constituents (Bawn et al. 2012; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). The argument proposed here is that politicians can adjust their campaign promises in ways that voters find credible, and that conveys a more moderate impression than would be gained from a fuller view of an incumbent's record.

Though the work of Downs (and other rationalist accounts of representation) has led to a great deal of research emphasizing election-derived inventives to explain legislative behavior, a number of scholars have taken a richer view about the motivations of politicians. Much of

Grynaviski 2010; Snyder and Ting 2002)

[20]Note that 'good public policy' could also entail more narrow economic, political or social goals.

this subsequent work is premised on the view that reelection may indeed be of paramount concern to MCs, however, it seems unlikely that it is the only thing that MCs care about (Kingdon 1989; Rohde 1991).[21] Yet, being motivated by policy is not the same as having incentives for particular legislative action stemming from preferences over policy. Thus, what is at stake is not whether politicians care about policy, but whether their policy views have any systematic sway over the way they vote or represent their districts in Congress.

Some political science research suggests that politicians *believe* that their policy attitudes matter in this way. For instance, in interviewing lawmakers about their committee preferences, Fenno (1973) found that MCs frequently cited their interest in or concern about particular issues as a strong influence over their decision to join a particular committee. Kingdon (1989) found similar evidence through interviews of House members, showing as well that MCs believe their personal views about policy had an important impact on the way they voted on the floor. Other scholars point to mechanisms that could explain how policy motivations might mediate the electoral connection in the context of elite-led polarization. For example, a number of scholars have argued that politicians have become increasingly ideological and policy-driven, and perhaps even decreasingly sensitive to electoral concerns (Crespin et al. 2006; Fiorina et al. 2005; Van Houweling 2012; Williamson et al. 2011).[22] One source for this greater focus on ideology by politicians may be due to the way congressional candidates are recruited, that is from amongst the cadre of partisan activists and volunteers who have become much more polarized and ideological over the last few decades (Fiorina et al. 2005; Van Houweling 2012).[23] Finally, turning Downs (1957) on his head, recent theories of party formation argue that the parties themselves are organized around policy-motivated groups whose sole aim is to take over the reigns of government exclusively for the purposes of enacting policies that each interest group in the party can agree upon (Bawn et al. 2012; Karol 2009).

If politicians have an overriding interest in enacting preferred policies that pivotal voters dislike, how do they manage to avoid defeat? Scholars in this tradition typically emphasize two main insulating strategies available to politicians that may weaken the electoral connection. The first is that politicians can exploit or heighten the monitoring costs voters face through strategies in Congress that decouple legislative outcomes from particular legislative actions (Arnold 1990; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Van Houweling 2012). For representatives to be held accountable, voters must have some awareness of the specific votes or policies that incumbents have previously supported, and be able to understand the political significance

[21] It is worth pointing out that the two scholars who are often viewed as asserting the most full-throated view about the primacy of the electoral connection, Downs (1957) and Mayhew (1974), both recognized the importance of policy motivations, but set these aside for the sake of parsimonious explanation.

[22] A well-known case is the question fielded to Robert Gibbs about President Barack Obama's willingness to forego the possibility of a second term, if that meant getting to pass the Democrat's health care bill in 2009 (Office of the Press Secretary 2009).

[23] Perhaps this is most readily apparent in the Republican freshman class in 1994 (Crespin et al. 2006) and the 2010 Tea Party Republicans (Williamson et al. 2011).

of these positions (Barro 1973; Kalt and Zupan 1984).[24] In Congress, legislators can use a variety of complicated rules and devices to make this task more difficult. For instance, congressional leaders will often mask tough votes as procedural items (Rohde 1991; Van Houweling 2012), combine controversial provisions in otherwise banal bills (Arnold 1990), and package proposals in ways that minimize 'traceability' to particular lawmakers (Arnold 1990; Riker 1996). Opponents may try to blame a MC for particular policies, but this can be quite challenging especially when it involves having to simultaneously explain the complex arcana of a collective legislative process (Fenno 1978).

The second way incumbents may insulate themselves is to influence the direction of public opinion, by priming or packaging information to cultivate majority support on other grounds (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1986). To change opinion, voters must be willing or able to recognize dissonance between their own views and the actions of their representatives. Yet, most issues are fundamentally multidimensional, so that politicians may be able to talk about policies in ways that 'prime' some dimensions over others in voters minds (Iyengar and Kinder 1998; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1986).[25] In a similar vein, Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) highlight the use of 'crafted talk', where politicians use moderate-seeming words or images to describe issues in ways that appeal to voters' centrism (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1986). Finally, scholars have long noted the use of information strategies that shift the conversation from policy to other matters more favorable to a candidate, such as the good constituent service they provide (Cain et al. 1987; Mayhew 1974), their personal qualities (Fenno 1978; Page 1978), or particular issues for which they or their party have an advantage (Petrocik 1996). Being out of step then is much less puzzling if voters are deciding on a myriad of policy and non-policy factors that are subject to strategic influence by candidates. The central argument outlined in the next chapter, is that candidates can use the campaign as an opportunity to implement or execute a number of insulation strategies that minimize the potential electoral fallout over their polarized records.

2.5 Why Polarize If There is a Cost?

An interesting question drawn from the above discussion is whether MCs (or the political class more generally) are themselves growing more ideological and extreme in their own policy attitudes, or that these elites are acting strategically at the behest of a more assertive set of ideological voters, donors, and activists. While it may be impossible to systematically discern strategic from true opinion, a number of anecdotal examples are interesting, if not suggestive here. For example, President Jimmy Carter, considered a moderate in the Democratic Party during his Presidency, in recent years has expressed opinions on many controversial topics (e.g., Israel and Palestine) that would be considered quite to the left of even most Democrats today. Another interesting example, Senator Dale Bumpbers, after retiring

[24] A whole literature has arisen to explain cases in which low-information voters can do this using heuristics and other shortcuts. See Lupia and McCubbins (1998).

[25] See Lenz (2009) and Huber and Lapinski (2006) for alternative views on priming and voter learning.

following the bruising battle of President Clinton's impeachment trial, publicly said that his private views were much more liberal than the positions he took in the Senate, seeing his office as the property of Arkansas' voters and himself its steward. Certainly, examples can easily be found of political figures expressing close alignment with their moderate attitudes and moderate actions, but these cases highlight two prominent officials who may have felt compelled to subdue their more ideological impulses to provide good representation in office. If most politicians are made from similar stuff, then we might expect that growing electoral pressure, rather than changing attitudes of political actors is the source of the representation disconnect, and that office-holders are increasing being taken 'hostage' by whichever set of voters are the most ascendent.

On the other hand, many prominent politicians have stated clear goals of ushering in major policy changes in Washington, whether or not the voters are willing to come along with them in the short term. From political strategists like Karl Rove, to party leaders like Nancy Pelosi or Newt Gingrich, many political elites see themselves as engaging in longer term efforts to 'reset' the playing field by rebuilding political coalitions through broad institutional change and electoral outreach. These efforts are consistent with a view that politicians care about policy, and may be increasingly willing to implement policies they desire, and then try to persuade voters to go along with them. The recent health care debate over the Affordable Care Act or "Obamacare" may be especially illustrative that politicians are willing to enact certain legislation in spite of national public opinion seemingly opposed to the policy. In this case, many supporters of the bill argued that it would be a resounding defeat to fail to enact the signature policy of their Party's platform, and that voters would likely come around once they experienced some of the benefits of the law. Yet, at best, those are much more nuanced views about electoral inventives over the longer-term, views which also happen to be in confirmation of the policy attitudes of those MCs willing to thwart short-term public opinion to enact preferred legislation.[26]

In terms of normative views of representation, these two views offer minimal differences. In both cases extremists are driving policy. But it does matter which set of extremists are pushing policy forward, activists demanders or political officials. While more work is needed to trace the evolution of political candidacy in the U.S. over the course of polarization, either view strongly suggests that polarization is not being driven by the preferences of the general electorate.

[26]Perhaps it is more accurate to say preferred legislation against the status quo, since many Democrats would have been willing to enact a far more sweeping health care bill.

Chapter 3

Representational Style in the Changing Campaign

The view that campaigns can influence the way voters perceive or evaluate a politician's record is hotly contested. Many scholars point to limitations in the level of information voters have available or use to make decisions (Lenz 2012; Zaller 1992), the strength and stability of partisan identification in driving individual vote choices (Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002), or certain fundamental factors in the electoral environment that largely drive aggregate election outcomes (Campbell 2008; Gelman and King 1993), as evidence that candidates can do relatively little during a campaign to change voters' minds or sway their decisions. Indeed, a widely held view in political science research on elections is that campaigns have minimal effects, largely realizing forces already underfoot that determine the choices voters eventually will make and which candidates will eventually win (Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Finkel 1993; Erikson and Wlezien 2012). By implication, if campaigns have little impact, then it is unlikely that candidates could gain very much from emphasizing or asserting their moderateness in elections.

More recently, however, a number of scholars have challenged this view, uncovering meaningful effects from the study of campaigns. Much of this research focuses on the marginal effects of advertising tone or content on turnout or vote choices (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Brader 2006; Franz et al. 2007), the effects of campaign expenditure on election outcomes (e.g., Gerber 2004; Jacobson 1978), the mobilization effects of Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) efforts (e.g., Green and Gerber 2008; Hillygus 2005), and the influence that candidate communication has on voter attitudes or learning (e.g., Bartels 1993; Spilotes and Vavreck 2002). While this work points to evidence that the strategic choices candidates make in the campaign do matter, particularly over the way candidates allocate their campaign resources, much less is known about what effects the positions candidates take or the issues they emphasize have on voter or election outcomes. This is especially so in general (rather than on the margin), where candidates' efforts to cultivate particular impressions on specific issues or positions is liable to cancel out in competitive equilibrium (Zaller 1996).

In spite of this debate amongst political scientists, candidates and consultants have simply carried on running costly and high profile campaigns. Indeed, politicians clearly believe that campaigns matter a great deal. Candidates invest a considerable amount of time and money preparing for them, carefully consider how their representational choices might effect reelection, and develop strategies over the best way to convey or suppress information in order to appeal to the right coalition of voters (Hillygus and Shields 2009; Jacobson 1987; Vavreck 2009). Campaigns perhaps so preoccupy the permanent attention of office-holders that they may even imperil the ability to govern well (Doherty 2012; King 1997). While this focus does not provide conclusive evidence that campaign position-taking or issue emphasis matter, it does mean that we can learn a great deal about the issue (or non-issue) strategies candidates think will best facilitate their reelection.

In this vein, what do candidates emphasize in their campaigns, especially over the course of polarization? To what degree do they emphasize issues, and what kinds of issues and positions get communicated to voters? Though a great deal of research has reappraised the importance of issue agendas in elections (Geer 1998; Hillygus and Shields 2009; Nie et al. 1999; Petrocik 1996; Sulkin 2005, 2009; Kelly and Van Houweling 2012; Vavreck 2009), the classic view is that candidates should largely avoid talking about issues or positions in the campaign (Campbell 1983; Jacobson 1987; Meirowitz 2005; Page 1978; Stokes 1992; Stone and Simas 2010; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). Much of this prior work assumes that candidates have limited ability to control the information voters have about their records in office through efforts in the campaign, and especially to distance themselves from these positions. This avoidance strategy is reinforced by the fact that challengers have strong incentives to point out to voters when an incumbent is out-of-step with the district on an issue, as well as to hold the incumbents' feet to the fire should she try to flip-flop or reposition (Canes-Wrone et al. 2002; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). With the expansion of polarized representation, these incentives to avoid issues in the campaign are likely to be felt with even greater intensity since challengers will possess a wider assortment of extreme positions to target, and thus may be more likely to materialize and mobilize an attack (Jacobson 1978; Mayhew 1974). An effective strategy then could be to run on the basis of non-policy qualities that distract from or avoid divisive issues, at least when possible.

Contrary to this view, I argue that candidates can influence elections through their issue strategies in the campaign, largely by reshaping voters' impressions of their records. Rather than being limited to cultivating these impressions only by tailoring a legislative record in Congress, it seems quite plausible that candidates can emphasize particular parts of their record, or reposition on certain issues in order to influence how voters perceive their legislative actions. The implication of this view is that congressional campaigns should center around political issues, and increasingly so over time in light of the growing pressure emerging from party polarization. To test this prediction, this chapter examines the issue strategies of congressional candidates over the last forty years of elections. A major limitation in previous research has been the lack of data from actual campaign sources to verify whether or not the predictions of issue avoidance hold, especially prior to the 2000s. Here I present a first look

at never-before-available data from the *Congressional Ads Project* (CAP) to assess whether or not candidates are avoiding issues in their campaigns, and to uncover what kinds of issues do get mentioned in elections. Additionally, I look at data from the ANES to see whether or not voters' impressions of elections mirrors the change in focus going on in campaigns, in particular alongside changes in the style of representation on display by politicians.

In the sections below, I test the avoidance prediction by looking at secular changes in the degree to which campaign ads focus on issue information. In doing so, I uncover evidence that candidates do not avoid talking about issues in their campaigns, and in fact are increasingly doing so in increasingly specific ways. Thus, if candidates suffer a penalty from emphasizing their out-of-step records, they appear to be either unaware of the cost or are embracing it with considerable relish.

3.1 Issue Avoidance in Congressional Campaigns

Much important work on candidate strategy in the campaign has argued that politicians should minimize the amount of effort devoted to talking about issues (Page 1978; Stokes 1992; Stone and Simas 2010), and especially to avoid taking particular positions that could divide or upset voters (Campbell 1983; Meirowitz 2005; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). Instead candidates are expected to emphasize those things that all voters can agree on (e.g., valence issues or personal characteristics), and otherwise downplay positions that might help galvanize a clear opposition around a set of issues (Stokes 1963), or pin them down in a future primary or general election (Meirowitz 2005; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). As a result, rather than being defined around policy differences between competing candidates or parties, electoral contests have frequently been seen as turning on factors largely unrelated to the legislative process, such as candidates' personality or character (Page 1978; Stone and Simas 2010), their appearance (Bartels 2008; Lenz and Lawson 2011), and even irrelevant events such shark attacks and natural disasters (Achen and Bartels 2002; Healy and Malhotra 2010).

While scholars like Downs (1957), Key (1966), and Popkin (1994) pushed against this view by proposing that candidates should be expected to contest elections by offering reasoning voters policy positions that appealed to their preferences, there has been some skepticism in political science over how much issues really matter to voters in campaigns.[1] Much of this skepticism has arisen in light of findings about the stability of partisan affiliations (Green et al. 2002), the limited formation of issue preferences or awareness (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992), and the inability to recognize or recall the names or policy positions of incumbents (Jacobson 2009) exhibited by voters. In addition, related research found simultaneous incentives for candidates to shift the conversation to their strengths as quality incumbents or influential legislators (Jacobson and Kernell 1983; Zaller 1998), and away from the ever-increasing list of votes or positions in Congress that tend to divide and shrink their reelection coalitions (Fenno 1978; Fiornia 1975). In the context of the growing representation disconnect, these

[1] See Bartels (2008) for an extensive review of much of this literature.

incentives to avoid issues in elections may be felt even more strongly, since polarizing politicians would likely be accumulating records that put them ever more out of line with the median voters in their more moderate constituencies (Alesina and Holden 2008; Grose et al. 2013; McGraw et al. 1993).

However, another line of research on elections over the last few decades has emphasized the significance of issues in voter decisions and campaign choices (e.g., Fiorina 1981; Hillygus and Shields 2009; Jackson 1975; Miller and Shanks 1996; Nie et al. 1999; Petrocik 1996; Pomper 1972). Much of this work has uncovered evidence that voters do respond to the issues and positions candidates cultivate while in office (Fiorina 1981; Miller and Shanks 1996; Pomper 1972). Related work has shown that voters may have some awareness of the positions of their incumbents or can use shortcuts to acquire this information (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Nie et al. 1999; Popkin 1994). In addition, voters may also respond to new issue information emerging in the campaign, providing evidence that candidates can win votes by emphasizing their issue priorities or positions (Hillygus and Shields 2009; Petrocik 1996; Sulkin 2005; Vavreck 2009), or influencing the information voters have available about their records (Grose et al. 2013; Rogers and Nickerson 2013).

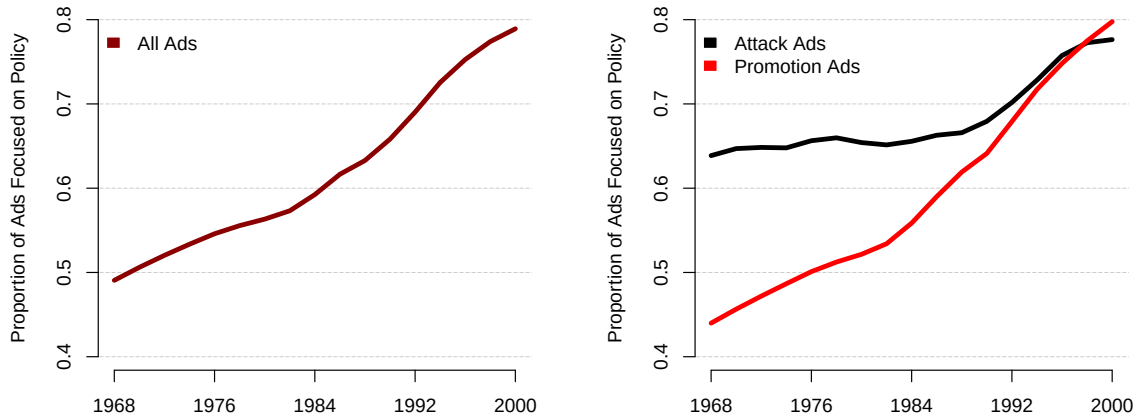
While candidates might benefit from avoiding issues or remaining ambiguous, it generally may be difficult to do so given other electoral forces at work. For example, voters, donors, and activists likely demand that their candidates stand for something. Consequently, it may be difficult to tap the enthusiasm of supporters without communicating at least some legislative priorities to be undertaken in office. Further, issues often emerge in elections in response to national events, changing economic or social conditions, or scandals in Washington (e.g., Miller and Shanks 1996). Opponents may press candidates to discuss these issues or may attack them for their previous positions on related matters. Failing to respond may be viewed as a weakness, tantamount to conceding the argument. Thus, candidates may simply have to discuss issues as a prerequisite for running a campaign (e.g., Geer 1998; Sellers 1998; Vavreck 2009). In this way, just observing that candidates emphasize issues in elections is not sufficient to show that they do so to influence how voters perceive their records. On the other hand, if polarized records hurt candidates on Election Day, they should be minimizing the amount of time spent talking about those out-of-step issues. If candidates increasingly discuss issues over time, and decreasingly talk about other representational activities, this provides compelling evidence that avoiding issues is either infeasible or not beneficial from the standpoint of developing and implementing a campaign strategy based in significant part on costly advertising.

Evidence of Issue Avoidance in Elections

I now turn to data from the campaign to look at changes in the way candidates present their representation choices to voters through their political ads. The data for this analysis come from the CAP dataset, and include 10,458 ads for House and Senate race from 1968

to 2000.[2] In the dataset, a number of measures aim to capture the central focus of each ad (i.e., character appeal, issue appeal, both or other), how specific is this focus on issues or non-issues (i.e., very specific, somewhat specific, somewhat vague, very vague), among others. These and similar measures form the core of the investigation below and seek to assess the overall information presented to voters (See Appendix B for the full list of items included in the CAP dataset.) Additionally, each issue statement or position was transcribed in order to capture how candidates took positions on particular issues. There are over 30,000 of these issue statements for the 1968 to 2000 period across both chambers. These form the main substance of the analysis in the next chapter.

Figure 3.1: Increasing Issue Focus in Ads



(a) All Ads Combined

(b) Promote and Attack Ads

Initially, there appears to be a clear and substantial increase in the proportion of ads focusing on policies and issues in the campaign. Figure 3.1 presents the change in the average amount of focus each candidate devotes to issues relative to other appeals across their ads. This measure is built from a coded item (*information focus*) in CAP that asks:

> "Is the primary focus of the ad on policy or the personal characteristics of the candidates?"
>
> 1. Personal Quality
> 2. Issue or Policy
> 3. Both
> 4. Neither/Other

In this case, a binary indicator is taken for each ad that is scored either as exclusively (2. Issue or Policy) or inclusively (3. Both) devoted to talking about issues or policies, which

[2]The coding for the remaining 2,234 ads from 2002 to 2008 is currently being finalized.

is then averaged for each candidate and averaged over all candidates in each election year. Thus, this measure captures an estimate of the average proportion of ads spent on at least some policy content compared to just personal characteristics or other things.

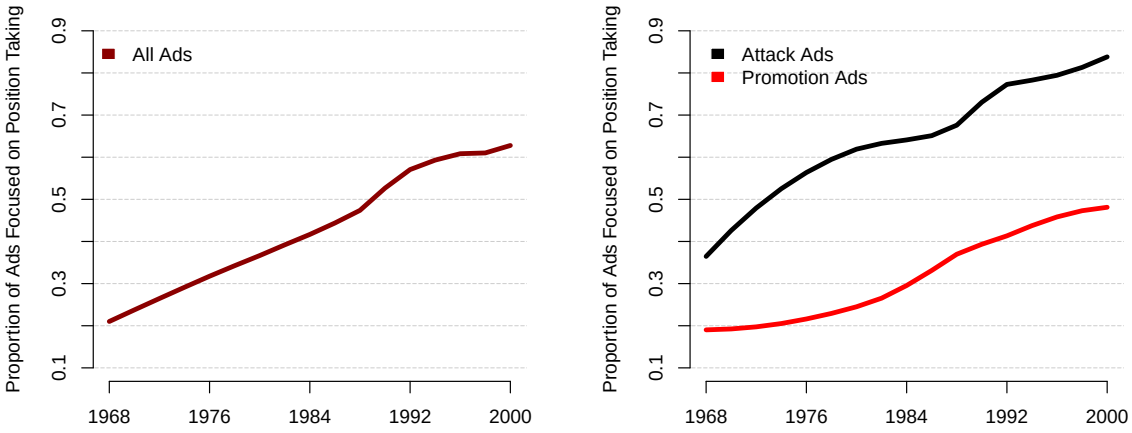
As can be seen in Figure 3.1(a) in 1968, the average candidate produced about half of their ads to talk about political issues. At first blush, this is a fairly significant proportion of ads centering on issue information. Indeed, this finding indicates that candidates were about equally likely to avoid issue information in their ads as include it, even as early as the 1960s. This is even more remarkable, since this substantial issue content is found at the nadir of polarization and in a time when campaigns were widely expected to be monopolized by non-policy talk. Perhaps equally striking, by 2000, there is a dramatic increase in the amount of policy information being discussed in the campaign, with as much as 0.8 of ads focusing on issues. Notably, this corroborates similar findings made by other scholars for presidential elections (Geer 2006; Gilens et al. 2007; Hillygus and Shields 2009). However, this finding points to first-ever evidence that congressional candidates now spend the vast majority of their advertising dollars discussing issues through their communications to voters. This is compelling evidence that House and Senate candidates are not avoiding issues in their campaigns, and in fact are increasingly making their election campaigns about policy matters.[3]

One expectation is that this increasing focus on issues could be due to the secular growth in negativity that characterizes modern campaigning. Geer's (2006) work for instance uncovers evidence that presidential campaigns have become more negative, but that this negativity is associated with more information and especially more policy or positional information, relative to the content found in positive ads. Figure 3.1(b) replicates the same analysis above, but separates the issue content measure by tone of the ad. The evidence does show that attack ads generally are more issue-focused, at least through the first half of the time period. Yet, the amount of issue focus in promotion ads has seen the quickest leap going from about 0.44 of promotion ads focusing on issues to 0.8 by 2000, where the issue focus actually appears to outstrip that found in attack ads. There is also an increase in the proportion of attacks focused on issues, but this increase is much less dramatic going from about 0.64 to 0.76. Fundamentally, candidates are not avoiding issues when presenting themselves to the voters through positive ads, and the degree of issue focus in their promotion ads has increased dramatically.

Next, this finding also holds when examining the degree of specificity candidates use when discussing issues. Although the evidence clearly shows campaigns are emphasizing issues more readily over time, this emphasis may contain relatively little meaningful policy information. Candidates could be communicating policy positions in broad or vague ways,

[3]This combines both challengers and incumbents and candidates for the House and Senate. Separating these kinds of candidacies produces very similar patterns in the baseline and change in issue content in campaigns (not shown). Just coding for exclusive focus on policy (2. Issue of Policy) produces a lower baseline amount, but a very similar pattern of increase.

Figure 3.2: Increasing Specificity of Issue Positions in Ads



(a) All Ads Combined

(b) Promote and Attack Ads

that do little to clue voters in on what kind of legislation a candidate might support (Sides 2006; Sulkin 2005; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). Figure 3.2 presents changes in the proportion of ads taking at least one issue position that is defined as specific, rather than general or vague. This measure originates from an item in CAP (*issue specificity*) that asks:

> "If there is a focus on policy, how specific is this focus?"
>
> 1. Specific Policy, Position or Vote
> 2. General Issue
> 3. Broad Theme

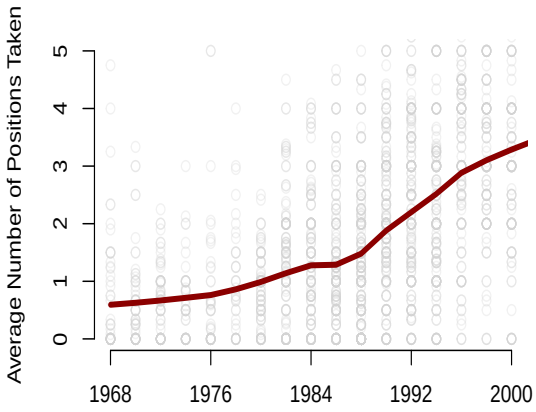
For this measure, I define a specific position as a statement for or against some policy or governmental action that either emphasizes a particular action (e.g., "for cutting taxes", "for a bill to reduce class sizes in schools") or a specific roll call vote, bill, or law (e.g., "for passing No Child Left Behind"). Such a statement aims to communicate a meaningful action or consequence of a legislative action, as opposed to a general issue statement of priority or emphasis (e.g., "important to protect education","for a clean environment"), which highlights an issue without mentioning what could or should be done. Finally, a broad theme is meant to capture issues that are discussed in vague ways (e.g., "the forest around us has been here for centuries"). Again, a binary indicator is taken for each ad that mentions at least one specific position, which is averaged over candidates and years. As seen in Figure 3.2(a), ads are becoming focused increasingly on particular positions and not just vague issues statements, going from about 20% to 60% of ads including at least one specific position.[4]

[4]Also looking at average rates on the specificity measure of the issue information overall, that is averaging

It should be noted that this kind of specificity is not an indication that candidates are necessarily discussing policy with as much detail or nuance as they do on the floor in Congress or in their other constituent communications. The typical thirty-second ad spot leaves little room for in-depth presentation. But, this finding does show that candidates are increasingly staking real actions to often identifiable policies or issues, even including listing specific bill titles or roll call numbers when doing so, in a manner that is significantly different from the way candidates typically communicated with voters forty years ago.

This finding of increased specificity in ads also is not about changes in patterns of negativity. Figure 3.2(b) reports the change in specific positional information separately for promotion and attack ads, again pooled for challengers and incumbents in House and Senate races. Not surprisingly, attack ads are much more likely to contain a specific issue position. For most of the period, attack ads are about 20 percentage points more likely to contain at least one positional statement in attacking an opponent than promotion ads in supporting their own candidacy. However, both appear to increase in their specificity over the period, and at about the same rate. In 1968, about 0.2 of candidates' promotion ads contained a positional issue, yet by 2000 this has increased to nearly half of candidates' promotion ads. Not only are ads becoming more preoccupied with discussing political issues, candidates are changing the *way they discuss them* by emphasizing particular actions they have taken when promoting their own candidacies.

Figure 3.3: Increasing Average Number of Issue Positions in Ads



A final way to see this increase in the importance of issues in advertising is to look at the average number of issue positions taken across each candidates' set of ads. As described above, in addition to coding each ad on the basis of whether it significantly focused on conveying issue information or contained a positional issue, I also transcribe each separate

over a the specificity of each candidates complement of ads.

issue statement across all of the ads. This transcription captured (in paraphrase fashion), each distinct issue mention that included an accompanying statement of emphasis, support or opposition to a policy, governmental action, or broader issue area.[5] Figure 3.3 presents the average number of issue positions across each candidates' ads, including both ads with and without a significant issue focus. As can be seen, the number of positions and issue statements candidates are taking has increased considerably over the last forty years. In 1968, candidates took less than one issue position on average per ad. But, by 2000 candidates are taking over three unique positions *in each ad*. This evidence indicates that the increase in issue focus by candidates is not the result of a move from taking zero positions to one position, but reflects a much broader expansion of issue information such that position-taking across multiple distinct issues in ads today could be effectively considered the norm.

Overall, this evidence indicates that candidates have consistently found some benefit to discussing issues and positions, and that this benefit appears to have substantially increased over the course of polarization. The amount of issue content in ads indeed hovered at its lowest point when political scientists remarked on its putative ebb. Yet, even at this low point, there was substantial issue information in congressional television ads. Of course, there is some debate over how to interpet this issue emphasis, and in particular over whether or not candidates are communicating meaningful positions on items that indicate likely future action on legislation. For example, indicating "support for a bill that cleans up our beaches" does not narrow down exactly what kind of approach the candidate would take to do so, or whether or not the candidate would vote for any set of competing bills that might propose a particular action.[6] However, this position does communicate a relatively specific and clear legislative priority, emphasizing both a target (beaches) and a goal (cleaning them up), which gives voters and opponents a clear claim to consider (i.e., did the candidate support any bill that aimed to clean up the coastline?).[7] The important point is that this is very different than how candidates appear to have been using the campaign to communicate their positions in the early years of advertising. Ads today pin candidates down in a way that was not available to opponents or voters previously (e.g., "walking amongst the woods, I see how important these forests have been for me and my son"). Nonetheless, this finding is novel and surprising from the viewpoint that candidates gain relatively little from emphasizing

[5]In this coding, if different issues were lumped together in the same statement, these were considered separate issue positions, e.g., "I support a balanced approach that preserves the environment, while protecting our jobs". Though these positions are clearly related, a logic to treat them separately is that this clearly contains more and different information than "I support preserving the environment". If multiple phrases related to the same issue were included these were generally coded as the same position, unless additional information was included, e.g.,"I support preserving our air, water, and natural resources", versus "I voted for the clean air act, voted to clean up our beaches, and voted to prevent companies from polluting our air". Clearly three different actions were indicated to protect the environment in the latter, where in the former only the act of preserving synonymous things gets included.

[6]Candidates do also increasingly list the specific roll call numbers and bills that they previous supported or opposed with increasing frequency as well.

[7]Also, given the limitations of the thirty-second spot, it is hard to imagine candidates being able to be all that more specific across multiple issues without much more time, money and ad buys.

their positions or issues in campaigns, and thus is worth exploring further.

3.2 Changing Presentation of Representational Style

Beyond simply discussing issues, a significant way in which politicians represent their districts is by cultivating more general impressions of themselves and their legislative actions to voters (Fenno 1978; Grimmer 2011; Hall 1996; Sulkin 2005). In his landmark work, Fenno (1978) sought to uncover how these general impressions were developed by following 18 House incumbents as they traveled through their districts and interacted with their constituents. One of the conclusions Fenno drew from observing and interviewing these legislators is that they place a considerable amount of emphasis on developing what he calls a "home style", that is, a particular mode of self-presentation that helps build trust amongst the voters, something which may be key to a long and successful political career. Moreover, he argues that trust can be gained by being accessible in the district and by communicating a sense of qualification, identification and empathy to voters, even (or especially) when they disagree with an incumbent on particular issue positions or actions (Fenno 1978). While candidates in the campaign aim to do a number of things to win votes, an important insight here is that candidates invest a great deal in tailoring a particular style of self-presentation that may be directed at insulating themselves from the wrath of their constituents. With incumbents growing increasingly out of step, however, an interesting question arises: How do politicians present themselves and their more polarized legislative records today compared to forty years ago? In addition to the growing emphasis on issues in campaigns, have politicians changed in the other ways that they seek to build trust or support amongst their constituents?

In his study, Fenno (1978) outlines four broad types of home styles that he observed in the field: (a) personalism (b) political leadership or stature, (c) district service, or (d) issue focus. Accordingly, politicians develop one (or perhaps a few) of these styles in response to features of their constituency, their own preferences, and strategic reelection concerns that constrain their range of actions in Washington and the way that they relate to voters at home. Personalism is about emphasizing one-on-one contact or a common background in being from the district, for example being "one of us". A political leadership style is about conveying seniority, stature, experience, or influence in Congress or amongst important social or political groups. Engaging in district service is aimed at displaying the help given to constituents to address their problems with the government or the effort to bring dollars and projects to the district. Finally, an issue-focused home style is about connecting with constituents on the particular issues they care about, an effort aimed at conveying trust and not to persuade voters to change their minds.

Generally we might expect that each of these styles would be present across the communication modes that candidates deploy, at least to the degree these styles of self-presentation have been adopted by candidates and help secure reelection through those communication efforts (Adler et al. 1998; Butler et al. 2012; Grose et al. 2013; Grimmer 2011). Indeed, some

recent research has looked at presentational style in constituent contacts (Butler et al. 2012; Grose et al. 2013), press releases (Grimmer 2011; Lapinski 2004), campaign and incumbent webpages (Adler et al. 1998; Druckman et al. 2009), and political advertisements (Franz et al. 2007; Kahn and Kenney 1999), and have uncovered interesting variation in the contemporary development of these home styles. For example, Adler et al. (1998) and Butler et al. (2012) highlight the use constituency service over policy-based styles, while Lapinski (2004) and Grose et al. (2013) find the opposite, and Grimmer (2011) and Druckman et al. (2009) find elements of both, alongside appeals to character, experience and stature. Though illuminating, these previous studies are limited in their ability to capture changes in presentational styles over time (rather than at a snapshot) due to the lack of data prior to the late 1990s. Thus, examining the patterns of self-presentation from forty years of congressional campaign data, on the other hand, can provide the first ever glimpse at the changing way in which politicians have cultivated representational images for their constituents.[8]

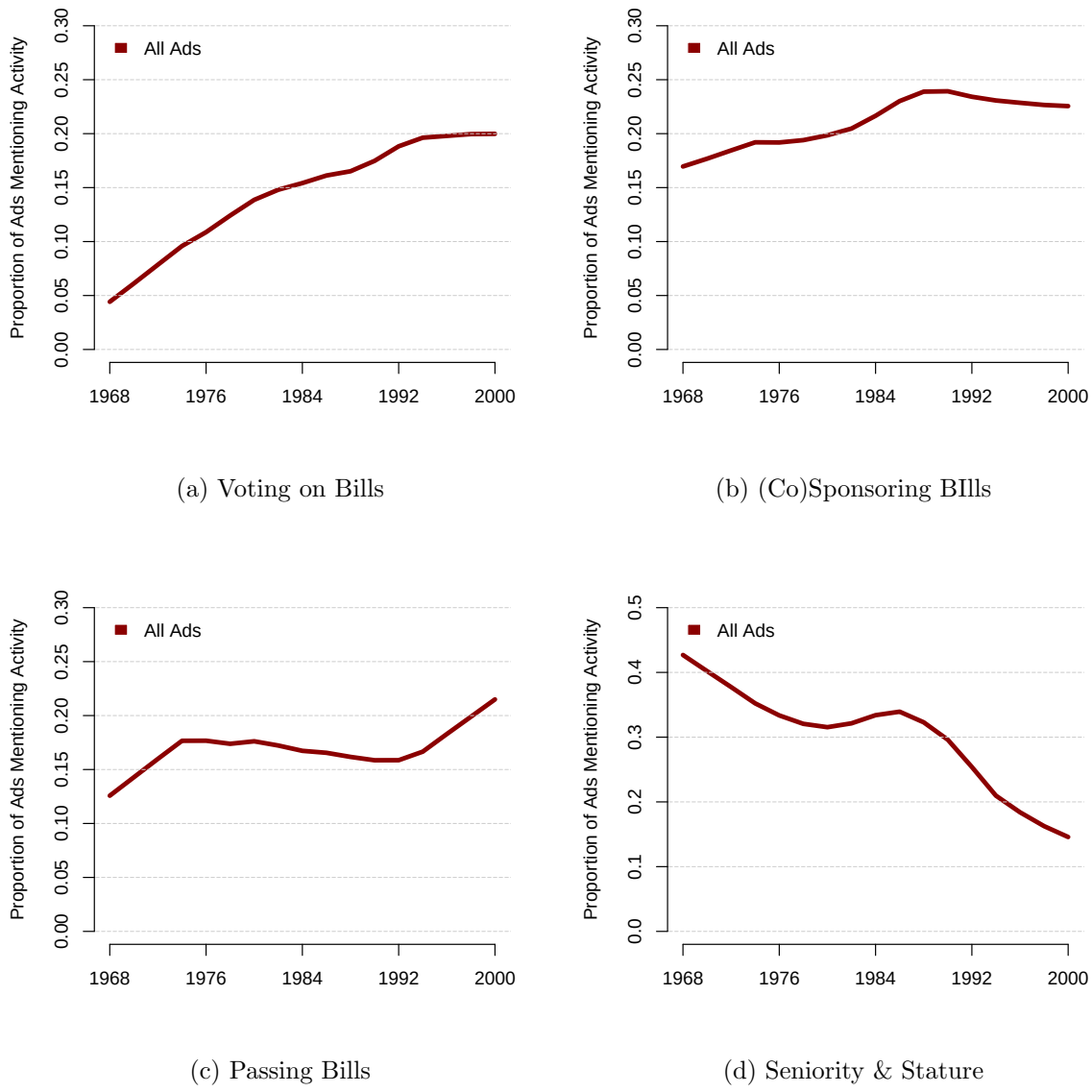
Presentational Style in Campaign Ads

Candidates are clearly emphasizing issues and positions more readily in their campaign ads. Alongside these changes, however, has been a remarkable shift overall in the way candidates talk about issues, as well as their legislative activities and broader priorities. One way to see this is to look at the particular actions politicians mention when discussing issues. Figure 3.4 displays four ways in which candidates describe their efforts taken to advance specific legislative priorities: voting, cosponsoring, or passing bills on the floor, or through seniority and stature in committee. The data for floor actions (*vote, cosponsor, pass*) come from the transcribed issue positions, and indicate whether a candidate used these or synonymous words (e.g., "vote","voted","voting") to describe actions taken in support or opposition to a particular issue. The measures in Figure 3.4(a)–(c) indicate the average proportion of ads for each candidate that used such words alongside at least one issue position, averaged over candidates at each year (and pooled for promotion and attack, House and Senate ads).

Along all three of these measures, we see that candidates are now much more likely to emphasize their individual efforts to enact or advance policies than at four decades ago. This increase can been seen the proportion of ads mentioning efforts to cosponsor or enact bills, shown in Figure 3.4(b) and 3.4(c), respectively. Yet, the most significant change here can been seen in the dramatic rise in mentions of floor voting when communicating issue positions. As seen in Figure 3.4(a), about 0.05 of candidates' ads mention a particular vote on an issue in 1968. Yet, by 2000 this rate had jumped to 0.2 of ads, constituting a four-fold increase in the rate of candidates depicting their issue positions through legislative voting. Previous scholars have noted that an important way in which candidates take positions on

[8]Campaign advertising might differ in the baseline types of home styles candidates communicate in comparison to other kinds of communication, since ads are less personal and aiming at a general reelection constituency. Though comparing baseline proportions of the various styles across communication venues may be misleading, looking at the relative changes in home style in the venues can be quite informative about forces at work over time.

Figure 3.4: Changing References to Representation Activities by Type



(a) Voting on Bills

(b) (Co)Sponsoring BIlls

(c) Passing Bills

(d) Seniority & Stature

issues is by linking (or distancing) themselves to particular votes in order to influence how traceable or credible these positions are when communicated to voters (Arnold 1990; Mayhew 1974). Much of this classic work has argued that individual positions on votes or bills are not very credible due to the collective nature of policymaking in Congress, thus candidates should be expected to avoid them. Yet, we see quite clearly here from this evidence that politicians appear to be bucking this expectation and are increasingly emphasizing their individual actions to advance policy.

In contrast to the heightened importance candidates appear to place on individual leg-

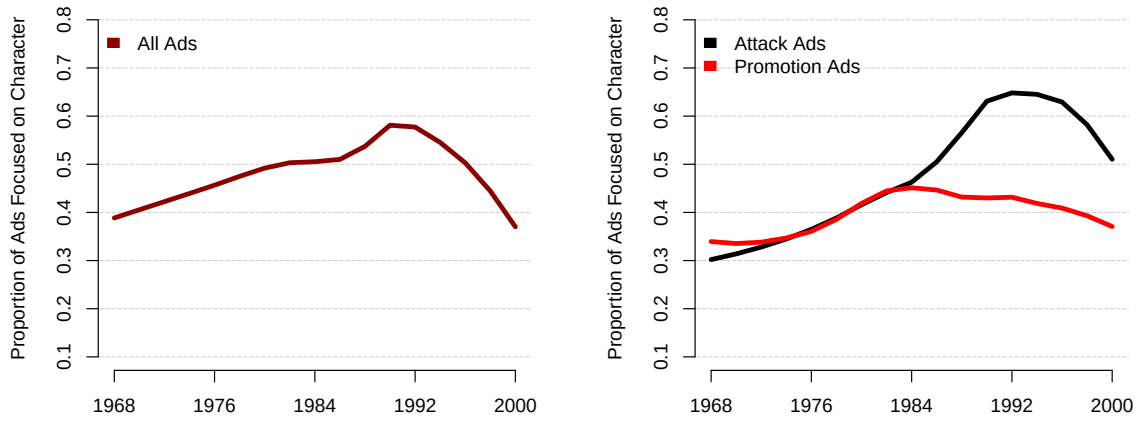
islative action to promote their issue positions, candidates and incumbents are significantly reducing their efforts to communicate seniority or stature in committee (or more generally) as instrumental to enacting or advancing their legislative priorities. The data for this measure comes from three different items in CAP. The first item is an indicator whether or not the ad mentions either the words "seniority", "stature" or "influence" overall, or the incumbent's specific rank or membership in a particular committee. The second item is an indicator for whether or not the ad features at least one endorsement by an incumbent politician other than the President or Vice-President, or candidates running for those offices. A third item is somewhat more holistic, and is an indicator for whether or not the ad features any positive image of the candidate at the U.S. Capital or on the Capital steps.[9] These items are combined into one summary measure that takes the value of 1 if *any* of the three indicators are 1, and 0 otherwise. The rate presented in Figure 3.4(d) is the average of this summary stature measure across the ads for each candidate, averaged over time. Quite strikingly, the emphasis on appeals to seniority or stature have been in significant decline over the last few decades.[10] As Figure 3.4(d) shows, in 1968 over 0.4 of ads contained at least one reference to a candidates' seniority or stature through references to their efforts in committee, political endorsements, or other images. This emphasis may be sensible due to the importance of seniority in the legislative process prior to the party-strengthening reforms of the mid- to late-1970s. However, in 2000, less than 0.15 of candidate ads refer to this kind of legislative stature, indicating a substantial change in the way politicians depict lawmaking, and their role in the process to voters.

While issue-based appeals consistently have been on the incline, there has been a somewhat more nuanced change in the use of character appeals in congressional campaigns. The overall issue-focus measure discussed above (and referenced in Figure 3.1) also evaluates whether the congressional ads emphasize the personal characteristics or qualities of the candidates to any significant degree. Again the measure discussed here is the average proportion of the ads each candidate devotes to discussing personal characteristics. Change in this rate is presented in Figure 3.5. One of the interesting changes in self-presentation is that candidates increasingly focus on presenting substantial character information through the late-1980s, when character emphasis drops off precipitously as seen in Figure 3.5(a) for pooled promotion and attack ads. This inverted-U-shaped pattern is noteworthy as well since over the same period issue emphasis is also increasing in the ads. The main explanation for this pattern is that ads overall are focusing more on presenting at least some information to voters about the candidates or their position, rather than simply being content-free efforts at publicity or name recognition.

[9] A reoccurring image presented across many of the ads was of the candidate walking up or down the Capital steps, often with other public figures, in order to convey the importance of the candidate conducting the people's business. These efforts seem to present an image of the incumbent as an important figure in Washington, in contrast to efforts to depict the candidate as something of an insurgent or outsider, or as someone who is just "one of us" from the district.

[10] A similar pattern of decline is observed for each of the three stature items taken separately.

Figure 3.5: Changing Importance of Character in Ads



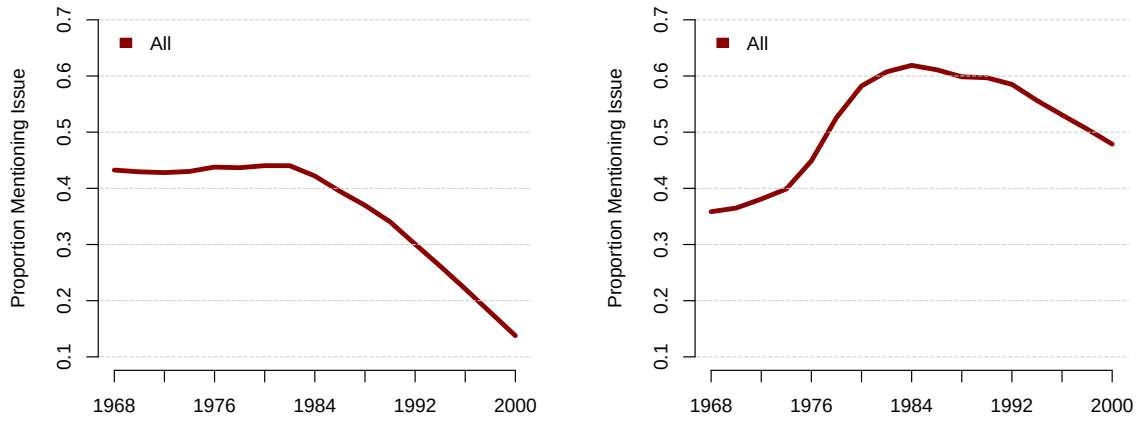
(a) All Ads Combined

(b) Promote and Attack Ads

Separating out attack and promotion ads in Figure 3.5(b) presents another interesting pattern. While both promotion and attack ads gradually increase in the amount of character information that is presented, in the mid-1980s this pattern diverges. Starting then, attack ads continue in their upward slope reflecting a sustained amount of character emphasis through the early-1990s, at which point this focus declines. Yet, the degree of character focus in promotion ads actually declines in the 1980s, well *before* the observed decline in character-based attack ads, albeit at a more gradual pace. This pattern could be due to the heightened salience of congressional scandals that had arisen the late-1980s and early-1990s, especially over abuses of congressional pay, perks, and travel, as well as bribery and corruption charges linked to failing banks and savings and loans corporations on Wall Street. Alternatively, candidates may have hit a ceiling with issue-based attacks due to their saturation, finding character based attacks an effective complement or substitute strategy. Overall, these data show that while character appeals and attacks remain significant strategies even into contemporary congresses, their use is now on the decline, complementing the above finding that issues are increasingly becoming a dominant form of self-presentation in campaigns.

Finally, it also appears that certain types of character appeals have been on decline, with other types of characteristics getting relatively greater emphasis. Figure 3.6(a) shows the proportion of ads focused on character appeals that make reference to the candidate's experience, knowledge, or background in Congress. Figure 3.6(b) displays the proportion of ads that focus on a candidate's values, beliefs or principles. Strikingly, by separating character appeals into these two types, we can see that candidates have also changed in the way they make appeals to their personal qualities that make them fit for public office. Following the above decline in the emphasis on stature or seniority, candidates also are less likely now to list their experience in office as a strong basis for reelection, and appear to be

Figure 3.6: Decline in References to Experience and Values in Ads by Party



(a) Appeals to Experience

(b) Appeals to Values or Qualities

telling voters to support them more on the basis of shared values and principles, at least until the Republican era in Congress following the 1994 midterm sweep.

One final point is noteworthy. With respect to Fenno's (1978) home-style types, we see that candidates have increasingly shifted from presenting themselves as political leaders with seniority or stature and away from talking about their own qualities or personal characteristics that make them in touch with or like the voters, and have placed far more emphasis on discussing issues and positions. But, what about the importance of district service or pork-barreling? Work by Cain et al. (1987), Grimmer (2011), and others have shined new light on the efforts by incumbents to try to develop a personal vote on the basis of securing benefits for the district, or helping people with problems receiving government benefits and other issues. Figure 3.7(a)-(b) display changes in the emphasis of constituency service and district projects appeals in ads over the period. Although the change is uneven, the general trend is also in the direction of decline, especially by the late-1980s. Given the dramatic (marginal) increase in earmark expenditures to fund district projects starting in the late-1980s and early-1990s, this low-baseline and decline in ads focused on district service constitutes a remarkable amount of silence. Other evidence shows that politicians take credit for spending and earmarks in the district through other avenues, most frequently in press releases (Grimmer 2011). Further study is needed to piece apart the various targeting strategies candidates might be pursuing when communicating their efforts at securing funds or support for their constituents. Yet, this finding suggests that politicians believe that little broadcast ad time should be used to talk about winning money for the likes of bridges, ports, or roads at home, compared to discussing their issue agendas or legislative positions in Washington.

In conclusion, the evidence above shows that candidates are much more focused on issues

Figure 3.7: Decline in References to Service or Pork

(a) Casework or Constituency Service

(b) Special Projects or Earmarks

in their presentation styles today than in the 1960s and 1970s. They talk about a greater number of issues in ads and do so in much more detail, including more frequently taking positions rather than just emphasizing priorities. Looking at other presentational choices, however, indicates that this heightened issue emphasis is not an isolated development. Not only have politicians increasingly focused on discussing issues with voters, they have also fundamentally changed the way they describe their legislative activities in addressing or promoting these issues, and in advancing other interests of the district. Politicians are increasingly referring to specific legislative actions (e.g., "voting", "cosponsoring","passing") taken on particular issues and even particular legislation. In comparison, appeals to character or personal qualities are on the decline as a whole, though certain qualities, most notably efforts to communicate hard work, effectiveness, and participation on legislation have declined more slowly and unevenly. Further, politicians are minimizing appeals to their seniority, stature, or experience in Congress. Alongside this process (although the change has been somewhat uneven), there has also been a general decline in efforts to emphasize bringing pork or projects home to the district or in addressing constituent problems or requests through district service. Overall then, there has been a sea change in presentational style exhibited through congressional campaign ads over the last forty years, so much so that the way that incumbents present their legislative activities today scarcely resembles that depicted by scholars studying Congress in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Fenno 1978; Mayhew 1974; Shepsle 1989).

The Evolving Electoral Connection

An interesting prediction made by Fenno (1978), particularly in light of the above findings, is that broad social and political forces underway by the late 1970s could lead to the

decline in personalistic home styles (and perhaps also service or leadership ones) and to the rise of more policy-oriented styles. Moreover, Fenno (1978) argues that issue-based home styles offer the least personal connection between an incumbent and her district, and notes that these styles may emerge with candidates competing in more marginal elections. The evidence presented here confirms this prediction, at least in form. It is very clear that candidates' 'home styles', at least as presented in broadcast advertising, are changing by becoming much more policy-focused, and much less focused on cultivating a personal connection or a sense of stature and influence with the voters. But, the relevant empirical challenge is to isolate the source of this change in self-presentation. The sources that Fenno (1978) highlights have to do with the rise of suburban districts, the decline of community networks and rise of social atomism, and other changes in America's social fabric, and not party polarization. Thus, because personal connections are becoming more difficult to build, voters are accordingly less trusting of efforts to do so, and perhaps of congressional actions more broadly. Candidates must then respond by emphasizing connections based on common concern over particular political issues or problems in light of the changing expectations and attitudes in the electorate.

Figure 3.8: Gallup Measures of Congressional Approval

One part of this prediction seems to have arisen: Americans have grown increasingly distrusting of Congress. Over the same period as the rise of polarized parties, Gallup periodically asked a sample of Americans: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?" The results of this survey are presented in Figure 3.8. Clearly, there is an overall trend of declining levels of trust expressed in the institution. Though there are some periods of rebounding, for instance during the heady economies of the 1980s and 1990s, very few voters ($\approx 11\%$) say they approve of the way Congress does its job today. Of course piecing apart the source of this decline is immensely difficult. The broad social forces Fenno outlines could be at play. Other scholars argue that polarization in Congress may be having a negative effect on levels of trust (Brady et al. 2008), but in doing so may help provide a mechanism for voters to hold polarized parties accountable (Jones and McDermott 2010). While candidates and incumbents could be increasingly adopting a more issue-oriented ap-

proach in response to these complex forces, perhaps these issue-based strategies themselves are contributing to voters' dissatisfaction.

This final point raises an interesting question: Are voters approving of or even aware of changes in the way candidates are communicating during elections? Voters may have preferences or judgements over what elections should be about. For instance, a common refrain amongst political observers is that voters want elections to be about "substance and not style", and thus focused on issues and policies rather than lighter stuff. If voters do have such attitudes as commonly suggested, perhaps these views are reflected in their assessments of the candidates that compete for office. Understanding the way voters evaluate candidates can reveal important insights about their changing orientations towards candidates and incumbents, as well as their views of the most important dimensions that, in fact rather than in the ideal, define electoral competition. Further, if voters were unaware of or unresponsive to these changes in campaign style, it seems difficult to imagine that the particular content of this advertising has much of an effect either.

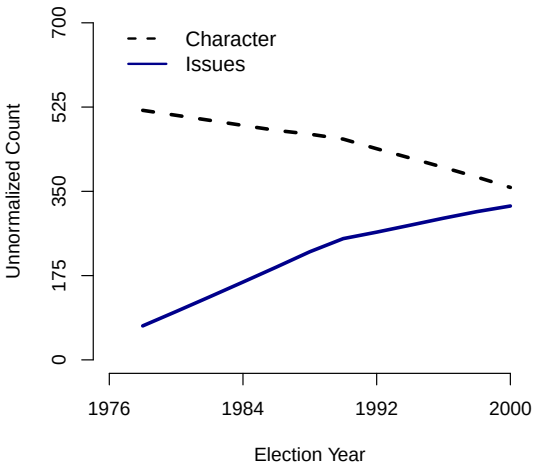
Data drawn from the ANES can help illuminate things. Each election year, the ANES surveys a nationally representative sample of Americans on their attitudes and behaviors during and before the campaign. For each cycle, the ANES asks voters to volunteer up to four likes and four dislikes for each House candidate, totaling up to sixteen evaluation statements. These responses are then top-coded into general categories by the ANES (e.g., "Abortion and birth control – for legalization, against legalization, no direction in opinion"). Finally, I then categorize these top-coded likes and dislikes into five broad topics (*Issues*, *Character*, *District Service*, *Representation*, *Partisanship*) and track changes in the counts of each type of (dis)like over time.[11] Notably, these five categories are meant to replicate as closely as possible the above measures of campaign content. Thus, the topics for *Issues*, *Character*, and *District Service* are defined similarly as above. The *Representation* topic, however, tracks evaluations of the candidate's ideological positions or extremity, while *Partisanship* deals with statements about the candidates' partisan behavior.[12]

Figure 3.9 shows the relative shift in unnormalized counts of each topic between 1978 and 2000. These counts are taken as the sum of each of the sixteen possible evaluations for each respondent that are categorized under each of the five above topics. A familiar pattern emerges. Similar to the trends observed in congressional ads, Americans increasingly volunteer evaluations of liking or disliking candidates based on issues or their issue positions, especially to other kinds of evaluations. As shown in Figure 3.9(a) this increase in issue evaluations is on par with the substantial decrease in the frequency of likes or dislikes about a candidate's character over the period. Significantly, the changing trends in the kinds of information in campaign ads appear to track similar trends in the kinds of things voters are using to base their judgements of candidates. Figure 3.9(b) displays the comparison between

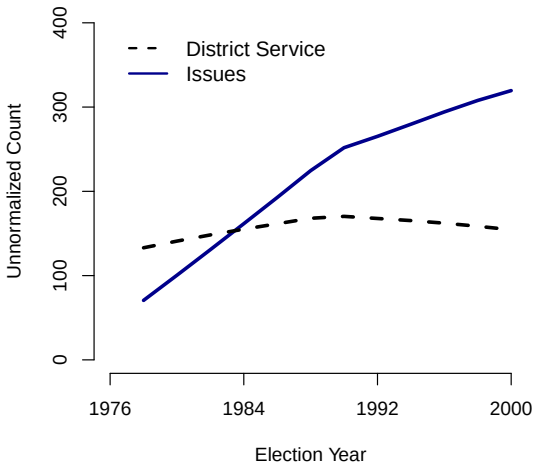
[11] Code for this categorization can be made available upon request.

[12] See Johnston (2013) and Gilens et al. (2007) for alternative codings and analyses of these open-ended evaluations of House and Presidential candidates.

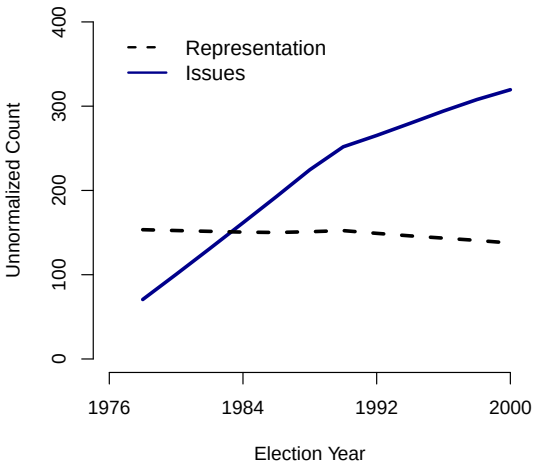
Figure 3.9: Changing Nature of Candidate Evaluations in the ANES



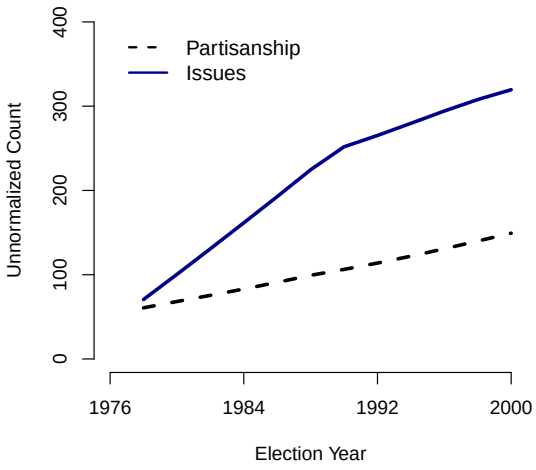
(a) Character v. Issue Importance



(b) District Service v. Issue Importance



(c) Ideology v. Issue Importance



(d) Partisanship v. Issue Importance

issue evaluations and evaluations of the abilities of candidates to provide district services, either through constituency requests or spending in the district. Here the amount of emphasis on district service evaluations seems to be relatively flat, suggesting the electorates still think these services are important criteria to consider when judging competing candidates now compared to an earlier period.

Perhaps surprisingly, voters appear *no more* concerned with the ideological extremity of candidates in their likes and dislikes today as they did thirty years ago as shown in Figure 3.9(c). Yet, they are more concerned about partisanship in their evaluations as seen in Figure

3.9(d). In interpreting this finding, voters thus may be somewhat more informed about the rising importance of parties and partisanship in Congress or congressional election, and seem to base their judgements about policies and policy positions. Yet, there is a fundamental disconnect between these evaluations and judgements about the extremity or ideology of candidates in terms of policies overall (e.g., being too liberal or too conservative). This suggests that people may not see politicians as out of step on policy as a whole, or if they do, that these kinds of considerations are *no more* important now in the midst of polarization than they were before its onset, at least as stated by the voters. People may more heavily weight candidates' positions on individual issues or their instances of partisan wrangling in Congress, yet these evaluations appear not to contribute to a growing picture that candidates and incumbents are polarizing in terms of their overall policy stances.

It is important to note that counting likes and dislikes of top-coded topics in this way has a number of shortcomings. For instance, issue evaluations may fundamentally differ from character evaluations, since there may simply be more issues available to choose from, issues may tend to linger much longer in politics, or may be more memorable or salient when asked in a survey. Though drawing baseline comparisons seems most suspect, comparing relative changes over time seems to be on a firmer ground, and especially given the magnitude of changes observed in the data. Also, Johnston (2013), in a different analysis, uses a distinct top-coding and summarizing approach, but finds very similar increases in issue evaluations and decreases in references to pork-barreling or spending in the district as a proportion of the sample of respondents. In spite of potential limitations, these data provide important evidence that voters are responding in unison with the kinds of information candidates choose to present in their ads, weighting issues more heavily over character or other appeals.

An interesting prediction of Fenno's not borne out was the claim that a growing emphasis on issues amongst politicians (alongside the above social changes) would result in the decline of the incumbency reelection advantage (Fenno 1978). Restating this point somewhat differently, if focusing on issues is less effective than cultivating a personal vote, it seems likely that candidates forced to do the former would be less able to hold on to their seats. This finding seems especially puzzling though given the fact incumbents appear to be as safe today as they were forty years ago in spite of having polarized records *and* far more extensively cultivating issue-based presentational styles. This suggests that developing an issue approach to self-presentation may very well have some important electoral benefits not anticipated by Fenno (1978) or others. In the next section, I examine the particular issue agendas candidates develop and communicate in order to better understand the particular electoral benefits candidates might be after.

3.3 Issue Agendas in Congressional Elections

The evidence above shows clearly that polarized candidates talk about issues in elections. Further, the evidence also suggests that these communications are becoming more specific,

and more frequently oriented around positional information rather than vague appeals. Yet, it is possible that candidates' issue agendas are not meant to discuss particular positions, but are aimed at universalist support through valence appeals. Alternatively, perhaps candidates are taking positions in order to split opponents or mobilize core supporters. While polarized candidates now appear to have incentives to discuss their issue agendas in the campaign, it is not entirely clear how they choose to craft such communications. What issues are they talking about, and how have these communications or issue-agendas changed?

Two major bodies of research have emphasized the benefits candidates may receive from actively discussing issues or positions during campaigns, either to set the agenda in an election (Petrocik 1996; Vavreck 2009) or to preempt efforts by challengers on the attack (Sulkin 2005). The first of these emphasizes the use of issues to highlight the advantages candidates possess due to their performance or effort in office. The second underscores issue strategies that candidates may develop to appeal to particular sets of voters given their attitudes or preferences. Both sets of views (broadly defined) argue that congressional candidates should discuss issues in elections. Yet, there is considerable variation in the ways issues are discussed and the kinds of issues different candidates will emphasize. Exploring this variation can reveal the types of incentives politicians face when running their campaigns.

A central theoretical prediction in research on issues in elections is that candidates should typically emphasize the issues that their party "owns", and stay away from talking about issues that give the other party or its candidates an advantage (Egan 2013; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). According to the theory, this advantage originates from the parties coming to own (or be closely linked with) particular issues by prioritizing them when elected to office (Egan 2013), or by being seen by the voters as better stewards on those issues in terms of their performance in government (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). Much of the work on issue ownership points to survey evidence showing that voters often attribute particular issues to each of the parties, based on the belief that that party and its candidates will do a better job (in valence terms) on those issues.[13] Candidates can leverage this feature by defining an election as being about their party's issues, reminding voters to focus on the things that they do better. In this way, candidates would be expected to talk past each other during a campaign, emphasizing very different sets of issues (Brasher 2003; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). Moreover, under the theory, issues will be discussed not in terms of particular actions or policies, but in much more general, universal or ambiguous terms (Petrocik 1996; Sides 2006).

Petrocik's (1996) initial work on issue ownership spurred a great deal of empirical research seeking to assess the degree to which candidates emphasized their party's owned issues (Brasher 2003; Petrocik et al. 2003), or alternatively sought to "trespass" or "converge" on those issues associated with the other party (Damore 2004; Holian 2004; Kaplan et al. 2006; Sellers 1998; Sides 2006; Sigelman and Buell 2004).[14] On balance, these findings indicate that

[13]Though see Egan's (2013) work that emphasizes ownership as policy priority and not performance.

[14]Two core disagreements emerging across this work is over the best way to measure divergence or

candidates frequently talk about the same sets of issues across parties, rather than talking past each other.[15] In light of this empirical evidence, some scholars like Sulkin (2005) have argued that congressional candidates in fact should largely emphasize their performance on the *same issues* in order to inoculate themselves from attacks by future challengers on previously ignored issues (Sulkin 2005). Yet, in spite of this evidence, the jury over issue ownership in congressional elections is still out. The vast majority of previous work has focused on presidential elections, with only limited attention given to recent Senate races, and even less to the House. Further, most of the data has come from newspaper coverage of elections, and not directly from the candidates or their campaigns, and thus is not a direct measure of candidates' issue agendas.[16]

Scholars have also argued that candidates can appeal successfully to the policy preferences of voters, not through ambiguity, but by emphasizing positions on particular issues in elections. One line of research outlines the opportunities candidates may have to win over their opponents' cross-pressured partisan voters through the use of wedge issues in the campaign (Hillygus and Shields 2009). Some voters are split between their attitudes on certain salient issues and their partisanship, for instance when their party's candidates typically take an opposing position on those issue (Carsey and Layman 2006; Hillygus and Shields 2009). In such a case, candidates may be able to highlight these cross-cutting issues through position-taking in the campaign, and get these persuadable voters to defect from their party (Hillygus and Shields 2009). Other research notes that candidates may have general reasons to 'talk past' each other on the issues, rather than engage in a common dialogue regardless of the particular positions discussed (e.g., Simon 2009).

Interestingly, these studies disagree on a core prediction about issues in elections. Petrocik's (1996) work on issue ownership predicts that candidates should talk about entirely different sets of issues, due to the reputations the parties have for performing well or prioritizing those issues. Similarly, work by Hillygus and Shields (2009), Simon (2009), and others suggest additional reasons for why candidates should refrain from talking about the same issues, either because of internal divisions amongst their supporters or because of other candidate (dis)advantages. Yet, other scholars point to alternative electoral reasons for can-

convergence, as well as what exactly constitutes evidence in favor of one or the other prediction. For example, it is not entirely clear what proportion (e.g., 100%, 50%, 1%, etc) of issues being discussed have to be shared across Democrats and Republicans for this to be strong evidence of convergence. There is also some disagreement over whether top-coded issue measures reliably capture the same issue dimensions (e.g., Moser and Wakao 2012). Yet, this debate seems to admit that it is the positions on issues rather than the overall issue agendas that are the relevant things to focus on in a campaign, undermining an essential premise of the theory.

[15]Some of this work though suggests that issue divergence may be conditional on the features of the candidates or the electorate (e.g., Brasher 2003; Moser and Wakao 2012; Sellers 1998).

[16]Indeed, newspaper coverage offers at best an indirect measure of the issue agendas promoted by candidates, since it reflects only those issues the newspaper chose to report. For example, the news media may choose only to report the most controversial issues and downplaying the ones that candidates do not combat over. Sulkin's (2005) research also looks at newspaper coverage of elections to uncover the issue agendas of House and Senate candidates from 1988 to 1996.

didates to talk about at least some of the same sets of issues, perhaps to steal the advantage on an issue (Sides 2006) or to inoculate against future attacks (Sulkin 2005). From a theoretical standpoint, uncovering the degree to which partisan candidates 'converge' or 'diverge' in their issue agendas in campaign ads can provide strong evidence to clarify which of these accounts fail to hold in the context of U.S. congressional elections.

Candidates may also be able to influence voters' impressions of their overall positions through the kinds of issues they discuss. For instance, if Democrats almost exclusively talk about health care, but only rarely discuss taxes, voters with limited information about particular candidates may infer that those who follow that pattern in their ads are most likely to be a Democrat, and those who directly contravene it a Republican. Yet, a candidate who discusses both health care *and* taxes is much harder to pin down. If a Republican only discusses Republican-dominant issues, then that candidate might be considered a strong Republican, and potentially quite conservative, and similarly for consistent Democrats. In this way, candidates may be able to signal to voters information about their relative partisanship or extremity through tailoring their issue agendas in elections. A consequence of this point is that different candidates may be strategically engaging in *both* issue convergence and divergence in order to communicate an overall impression of their records.

Measuring Issue Agendas in Congressional Campaigns

In order to capture the issues that candidates emphasize in their ads, I code the first three issues (in temporal order) that candidates mentioned from a list that was used to code all the ads. (See Appendix B for the full list of issues used.)[17] An ad was coded to reference certain issues if it used particular words that tend to 'go along' with those issues. For example, an ad was coded as being about the *environment* if it used the following words (or close synonyms): environment, environmental protection, protection of natural areas (e.g., lakes, streams, mountains, natural areas, etc), preserve wildlife, offshore, oil spills, environmental disasters, cleanup, environmental legislation (e.g. Clean Air Act, Clean Water, etc), climate change, oil drilling in Alaska/ANWR, conservation. Comparatively, an ad was coded to be about *energy* if it mentioned: energy, energy policy, oil, gas, or nuclear power, energy prices, foreign dependence on oil. The ads were coded accordingly until the top-three issues were recorded for each.

Clearly, issues in ads can overlap or reference other issues, for example by referring to qualifiers ("I support energy independence both for national security and for a cleaner environment") or common words ("I voted to clean up the oil spill hurting our beaches and streams"). In such cases, best effort was made to code the first three main and distinct issues

[17]This list of issues was built from a variety of sources including the Wisconsin Ads Project (CMAG), as well as the Congressional Bills Project (CBP). The issues coded by CMAG and by CAP are quite similar, but there are some differences. A testing set of ads was randomly selected and coded based on the issues from CMAG, with left out issues denoted. Commonly occurring 'left out' issues were then added to the list, and very rare CMAG issues were then excluded.

being discussed, in the order they were discussed. Also, the top-three issue codes was strictly enforced. If an ad mentioned three issues quickly, and then went on to focus extensively on a fourth, that last issue was not included in this item.[18] While this coding certainly misses some issues that candidates discuss in their ads, it does provide a first-ever-available look at a great many of the actual issues mentioned by House and Senate candidates in their ads prior to the 1990s, and perhaps most importantly, as these mentions change over the last forty years of polarization.[19]

Figure 3.10: Party Dominance of Issues in *Congressional Ads Project* Data, 1968 – 2000

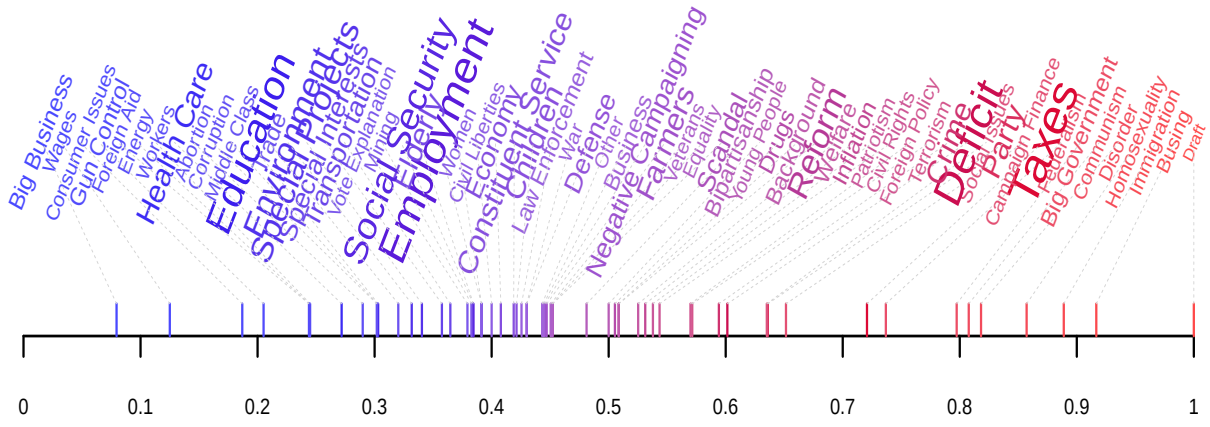


Figure 3.10 provides a first look at the kinds of issues that each party's candidates emphasize. The figure plots the proportion of candidates discussing each of 63 issues who run as Republicans. In other words, this figure displays the marginal probability that a candidate who discusses a particular issue (*education*) is a Republican (0.31) given the data. In the figure, the topics are arrayed from least to most 'Republican', with *big business* and *the draft* bookending the distribution. Perhaps most apparent from this figure is that most issues fall somewhere in the middle in terms of their partisanship. A large majority of issues fall between 0.3 and 0.6 Republican, with an interesting bias in the direction of the Democrats. On the other hand, there are clearly some issues that are the main focus of either the Democrats (e.g., *health care*, *gun control*, *the minimum wage*) or Republicans (e.g., *deficit*, *taxes*, *immigration*). Thus, depending on the strictness of the expectation regarding issue ownership (all or nothing, in probability with error, etc), the evidence is either half-empty or half-full. Candidates of different parties often talk about the same set of issues, but there are certain lines of conflict where candidates appear indeed to talk past each other.

[18]In such cases, these 'extra' issues were of course captured in the transcribed issue positions component of the coding.

[19]Note these missing issues, however, are captured in the transcription of issue positions taken the ads.

Table 3.1: Issue Ownership From Survey Data

	Survey		All Ads		Expected
	Dem %	Rep %	Dem %	Rep %	Avg. Diff %
Republican "Owned" Issues					
Defense	17	68	57	43	32.5
Foreign Policy	23	59	43	57	11.0
Foreign Aid	23	59	76	24	44.0
Industry	26	55	62	38	26.5
Drugs	26	48	49	51	13.0
Crime & Death Penalty	28	46	41	59	13.0
Economy	32	49	59	41	17.5
Inflation	34	49	47	53	8.5
Immigration	30	43	11	89	32.5
Terrorism	38	49	43	57	6.5
Taxes	35	44	28	72	17.5
Social Issues	33	42	36	64	12.5
Deficit & Budget	35	40	40	60	12.5
Trade	34	40	68	32	21.0
Democratic "Owned" Issues					
Environment	40	35	67	33	14.5
Wartime Policy	42	37	57	43	10.5
Unemployment & Jobs	45	38	61	39	8.5
Middle Class	48	34	70	30	13.0
Education	44	28	70	30	14.0
Farmers & Agriculture	48	27	55	45	12.5
Social Security & Medicare	52	27	62	38	10.5
Health Care	51	22	73	27	13.5
Elderly	60	24	62	38	8.0
Workers & Labor	64	22	76	24	7.0
Welfare & Poverty	64	22	47	53	24.0

Though candidates converge on some issues and not others, do they at least tend to diverge on those issues that their party 'owns'? Following Petrocik (1996), I categorize a subset of the issues based on whether a majority of voters indicate that one of the parties does better than the other party on that issue. This measure is intended to capture the advantages a party is thought to possess by reminding voters about those issues where they

believe their party is likely to do a better job. Using data from Petrocik (1996) and the ANES, Table 3.1 classifies 25 issues for which there are survey items and that appear in the CAP issue code list. As can be seen, Republicans get a resounding advantage on defense, drugs, crime and the slew of other foreign policy and economic issues, while Democrats tend to do much better on environment, education, health care, and elderly issues. Yet, for six issues (*defense*, *foreign aid*, *industry*, *the economy*, *trade*, *welfare*), members of the opposite party are more likely to be the ones airing ads than members whose party owns them. This means that 24% of this set of issues is being substantially trespassed by members of the other party.

As can be seen, not every voter agrees that the Democrats do better on the environment or in advancing education goals, or that the Republicans outperform the Democrats in dealing with crime or drugs. Instead of seeing ownership as a perfectly polarized, all-or-nothing decision, perhaps it is more appropriate to see it as a weighting that candidates do or should follow.[20] So if Democrats get a 15 point advantage over Republicans on education, this does not mean that Republicans should forsake the 40% of people who believe them to be advantaged. Alternatively, if ads indicate political or legislative priorities to voters, we should expect there to be some congruence with the issue agendas communicated and the advantages voters report on those issues.

To capture this insight, I also construct a measure of the difference in the partisan dominance that emerges from the expectation voters have about the parties, and the choices the candidates make about emphasizing different issues. This measure takes the difference in the advantage given to a party on a particular issue and the amount that that party invests in ads talking about that issue. Specifically the measure is given as

$$ExpectedDif = \frac{1}{2} \times abs\left\{(Advantage_{Dem} - Advantage_{Rep}) - (Ads_{Dem} - Ads_{Rep})\right\},$$

and ranges between 0 and 100, where 0 means perfect accord and 100 means complete contrast between the two. This measure is provided for the above issues in column 5 of Table 3.1. It is somewhat difficult to interpret the values of this measure since it is hard to identify a meaningful baseline for comparison. Nonetheless, the magnitude of differences exhibited in this measure seem to indicate that either candidates do not closely heed this performance expectations of the voters when choosing issues to emphasize, or that voters' judgements about party performance are not strictly or perhaps strongly determined by candidates' issue agendas. In addition, one interesting and clear finding does emerge. Issues 'owned' by Republicans exhibit a great deal more incongruence than those 'owned' by Democrats. If a party advantage predicts divergence in issue agendas, this pressure appears to be felt asymmetrically across the parties' candidates. Not only are Democrats much more likely to 'trespass' on Republicans' issues than the reverse, but are also liable to 'over invest' when discussing their own issues.

[20] Another view is that candidates might try to target the subset of voters who give their party the advantage when talking about an issue, and to try to avoid talking to those voters who do not.

Table 3.2: Issue Ownership From Ads Data

	Dem Avg.	Rep Avg.	t-test p-value	ks-test p-value
Republican Issues				
Taxes	0.18	0.42	0.00	0.00
Deficit & Budget	0.23	0.38	0.00	0.00
Big Government	0.03	0.11	0.00	0.00
Contested Issues				
Crime & Death Penalty	0.12	0.18	0.00	0.01
Inflation	0.07	0.09	0.03	0.66
Welfare & Poverty	0.07	0.08	0.21	0.30
Drugs	0.08	0.09	0.49	0.30
Bipartisanship	0.07	0.07	0.96	0.97
Small Business	0.07	0.07	0.75	0.11
Scandal & Impeachment	0.09	0.08	0.63	0.30
Farmers & Agriculture	0.13	0.12	0.48	0.66
Law Enforcement & Police	0.07	0.06	0.33	0.66
Economy	0.13	0.12	0.30	0.30
Defense	0.12	0.11	0.18	0.66
Children & Families	0.15	0.13	0.03	0.66
Trade	0.07	0.04	0.00	0.66
Middle Class	0.06	0.03	0.00	0.01
Gun Control	0.06	0.02	0.00	0.30
Transportation	0.12	0.08	0.00	0.11
Elderly	0.17	0.13	0.00	0.01
Democratic Issues				
Social Security & Medicare	0.24	0.19	0.00	0.30
Environment	0.20	0.13	0.00	0.00
Unemployment & Jobs	0.32	0.24	0.00	0.03
Health Care	0.19	0.09	0.00	0.01
Big Business	0.12	0.01	0.00	0.00
Education	0.32	0.18	0.00	0.01

Finally, rather than use survey responses to classify issues, I also provide a categorization based on the investment partisan candidates make in airing specific issues. For this measure, marginal probabilities are estimated for the likelihood of producing an ad on a

given topic given the partisan affiliation of the candidate.[21] Classifying in this way allows a judgement as to whether or not the parties' candidates are equally likely to talk about any particular issue or set of issues. Table 3.2 presents these probabilities. Here I have separated out REPUBLICAN, CONTESTED, and DEMOCRATIC issues. These designations follow from candidates of one party being more likely to talk about that issue than the other by at least a 5 percentage point difference. As can be seen from this approach, most issues would be considered contested. Stated differently, for most of the topics that are widely featured in the campaign, neither party is especially more likely to dominate the conversation.[22] For the Republicans the only issues where they dominate are on *taxes*, *deficit & budget*, and *big government*, while the Democrats take the lead on a few more, including *social security & medicare*, *environment*, *jobs & unemployment*, *health care*, *big business*, and *education*. Yet, this clear dominance is found on only 35% of the 26 issues include here, with no such dominance arising on a number of commonly raised and often pivotal issues.[23]

3.4 Faithful Advocates of Their Party Agendas?

Putting these findings in perspective, there is little evidence that candidates consistently diverge in their issue agendas in accord with traditional theories of issue ownership. Although there is some evident variation in this regard, at least with respect to their agendas (as opposed to positions), partisan candidates appear to emphasize a lot of the same issues in their ads. Even if candidates in fact are not differentiating in their positioning when doing so, as argued by a number of scholars, one could easily imagine how it is that voters could miss polarization in Congress, especially for those whose main source are candidate communications during the campaign.

This finding in combination with the evidence that ads are more policy focused, both point to a surprising irony. Campaign ads are becoming much more information-laden, but may be no more informative about a candidate's legislative record now than they were thirty years ago when ads were much more vague and character-focused. In the next chapter, I provide additional evidence of this information disconnect in the campaign, by showing that candidates increasingly exalt their moderateness, and their opponent's extremity, through these issue-based campaign strategies.

[21] Above, marginal probabilities are the likelihood of being a member of one or the other party given an ad is focused on certain issues. Thus, the probabilities above must sum to 1 since the event (D or R) is binary, whereas here the event, featuring issue $j \in M$, is not mutually exclusive to any j'.

[22] Another way to classify is to use a measure of statistical difference between these average probabilities. One shortcoming of this approach, however, is that discerning statistical differences is not the same as gauging magnitude of differences. For example, voters may have a difficult time observing a one percent difference in the emphasis on defense issues, while a statistical test may have enough power to do so.

[23] The issues in this table are meant to mirror the issues found in Table 3.1. Including the full range of issues in CAP reduced this percentage to about 12% issues being 'non-contested'.

Chapter 4

Evidence of Issue Distancing from Campaign Ads

The view taken here is that politicians may be behaving as 'strategic shirkers' using elective office to advance their own policy goals, while insulating themselves from defeat at the hands of centrist voters. Accordingly then, the rise of polarization would be a largely elite-driven process, pushed forward by politicians who aim to legislate their vision of good public policy, but avoid voter retribution through tailoring their campaign messages (Arnold 1990; Fiorina et al. 2005; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Van Houweling 2012).[1] The core prediction stemming from this argument is that politicians aiming to shirk would try to obscure these out of step records by presenting themselves as moderates on the issues.

Alternatively, candidates might be polarizing in response to changes in electoral forces that favor more extreme positions on important issues. The rise in prominence of activists or donors in general or primary contests, for example, might motivate politicians to take more polarized positions in Congress, and to reinforce these positions through campaign appeals during elections (e.g., Abramowitz 2010; Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Fiorina et al. 2005; Levendusky 2009; McCarty et al. 2006; Rohde 1991; Schlozman et al. 2012; Theriault 2008; Wand 2012). In contrast to the above, this latter view predicts that candidates should campaign (more or less) faithfully as extremists, emphasizing their efforts to implement polarized policies in Congress.

In this chapter, I assess these two predictions for candidate positioning in elections driven by competing theories of polarized representation. First, I outline a theory of issue distancing in the campaign, and discuss a variety of ways in which candidates might be expected to raise the monitoring costs of voters and how it is that these kinds of strategies work. Next, I analyze over 30,000 position statements aired by candidates in 10,458 television commercials drawn from over three decades (1968 to 2000) of House and Senate elections in the *Congressional Ads Project* (CAP) dataset. Using these advertising data, I investigate

[1] Note that 'good public policy' could also entail more narrow economic, political or social goals.

whether or not candidates are increasingly taking positions on issues (or talking about policy more generally) in ways that mirror polarized partisan conflict in Congress. To do this, I develop a text-scaling approach that uses cosponsorship choices over bills to link position-taking in the campaign to a similar ideological dimension in Congress. I then develop a number of validation checks to ensure that scaling words in ads is sufficient to capture meaningful ideological conflict in Congress. In addition to the text scaling analysis, I compare candidates' prior legislative records on issues mentioned in the ads to those not mentioned, and also assess the overall bipartisanship of the issue agendas communicated in the campaign. Finally, I replicate much of this analysis using 2008 election data from the Wisconsin Ads Project (CMAG), and connect these ads to measures of district-level preferences using scaled responses from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).

From this analysis, I find that candidates substantially *understate* their partisanship and extremity, presenting themselves as moderates, even as they compile increasingly immoderate records. In addition, in the next chapter, I find consistent evidence that this distancing may actually help candidates win votes, by mitigating the potential fallout due to observed partisanship in legislative behavior. Moreover, as shown above, this finding is not about candidates being vague or ambiguous on the details of policy. On the contrary, candidates are airing more policy information then ever before, and appear to be doing so with increasing detail about their own legislative activities. This does not mean that the campaigns exhibit no signs of partisanship. In fact, ads in congressional races have grown more negative, and these attacks are becoming increasingly policy-oriented and partisan in focus. Overall then, we see candidates striving to present themselves as moderates, while portraying their opponents as partisans and extremists through relatively explicit discussions of the issues to gain an apparent electoral benefit.

4.1 Towards a Theory of Issue Distancing

In general terms, politicians may successfully shirk on voters by heightening or exploiting the monitoring costs voters face in trying to link legislative outcomes to particular congressional actions (Arnold 1990; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Van Houweling 2012). For representatives to be held accountable, voters must have some awareness of the specific votes or policies that incumbents have previously supported, and be able to understand the political significance of these positions (Barro 1973; Kalt and Zupan 1984).[2] In the context of Congress, legislators can use a variety of complicated rules and devices to make this task more difficult. For instance, congressional leaders will often mask tough votes as procedural items (Rohde 1991; Van Houweling 2012), combine controversial provisions in otherwise banal bills (Arnold 1990), and package proposals in ways that minimize 'traceability' to particular lawmakers (Arnold 1990; Riker 1996). Opponents may try to blame a MC for particular policies, but

[2] A whole literature has arisen to explain cases in which low-information voters can do this using heuristics and other shortcuts. See Lupia and McCubbins (1998).

this can be quite challenging especially when it involves having to simultaneously explain the complex arcana of a collective legislative process (Fenno 1978).

In a similar vein, Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) highlight the use of 'crafted talk', where politicians use moderate-seeming words or images to describe issues in ways that appeal to voters' centrism (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1986). They describe a communications process during the lawmaking process that simultaneously strengthens a politicians' position in legislative bargaining and provides a foundation for better subsequent electoral performance. Incumbents may also try to insulate themselves by influencing the direction of public opinion, often through efforts to prime or frame information to cultivate centrist support (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1986).[3] Indeed, many of these findings are built on the work by scholars who have long noted the use of information strategies in Congress to shift the conversation from policy to other matters more favorable to a candidate, such as the good constituent service they provide (Cain et al. 1987; Mayhew 1974), their personal qualities (Fenno 1978; Page 1978), or particular issues for which they or their party have an advantage (Petrocik 1996). Yet, much of this previous research has either assumed a one-to-one link between strategies developed in Congress and those implemented in elections, or has generally ignored efforts at gaining insulation by taking positions in the campaign environment.

Seeing position-taking in the electoral and lawmaking arenas as potentially distinct representational activities can help provide a clearer picture into how and why the disconnect in representation may have developed. Compiling a legislative record that is out of step with a moderate electorate may be feasible if politicians care about policy *and* are capable of winning enough support to hold on to their seats. For the latter, incumbents may try to use the campaign to *persuade* moderate voters to change their opinions or to *mobilize* enough of the party base to balance the loss of the center.[4] However, polarized candidates may have some difficulty persuading and mobilizing enough supporters to repeatedly win elections on the basis of their extreme legislative records. In these cases, politicians may be confronted with a decision: adjust the voting record or adjust the campaign message. I argue that policy-motivated and polarized candidates can win enough support to retain their seats, but will do so increasingly through *issue distancing* strategies to adapt their messaging to the electoral demands of the post-legislative campaign. In this section, I develop this argument further by extending the 'shirking' model to the campaign.

[3]For instance, to change opinion, voters must be willing or able to recognize dissonance between their own views and the actions of their representatives. Yet, most issues are fundamentally multidimensional, so that politicians may be able to talk about policies in ways that 'prime' some dimensions over others in voters minds (Iyengar and Kinder 1998; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Riker 1986), though see Lenz (2009) and Huber and Lapinski (2006) for alternative views on priming and voter learning.

[4]In the Downsian model for districts with unimodal preferences, for instance, appealing to the base could be optimal if the cost of mobilizing the base is much less than mobilizing the center (Downs 1957).

Information and Constraint in Campaigns

At root, the electoral constraint and shirking models discussed previously advance very different views about the role of information in providing for entreprenurial cover or constituent control over legislative action. The constraint model asserts a tight link between legislative behavior and position-taking, which largely emerges from voters having meaningful information about their representatives' records or actions (Barro 1973; Downs 1957). For instance, if candidates run away from their records, informed voters would see these campaign statements as not credible (Fiorina 1980; Snyder 1994). In this case, voters would at best ignore the information, and at worse punish candidates for it. On the other hand, if voters are generally unaware of a candidate's positions, it seems reasonable to conclude that the candidate would be more unrestrained in their behavior.[5]

As a result of this information link, the constituent control models predict that candidates would be constrained to run more or less faithfully on their records in elections, at least to the degree candidates focus on issues. In the context of polarization then, candidates would be expected to campaign substantially as ideological or partisan. Candidates might do this in a strategic effort to *persuade* moderates or *mobilize* partisans (Riker 1986; Sides 2006), but may also face potential punishment for flip-flopping or being perceived as dishonest on particular positions (Franz et al. 2007; Tomz and Van Houweling 2012; Sulkin 2009). This prediction is particularly consistent with the information theory of party brands. Here moderates support polarized candidates because they reduce uncertainty about future representation outcomes, while ideological voters support these candidates due to their greater proximity on policy (Snyder and Ting 2002). Running away from a legislative record is likely to increase this uncertainty *and* may alienate extremist voters who come to question the ideological fortitude of their candidate.[6] Along similar lines, candidates who forego moderate voters to appeal to the base for electoral support are also likely to emphasize their more ideologically polarized records (Abramowitz 2010). Incumbents who face increasing electoral pressure to enact partisan legislation in Congress may risk dampending the zeal or raising the ire of their volunteers or donors by taking centrist positions in the campaign, even if this shirking is for the 'right' cause.[7]

Rather than facing a sharp constraint, I argue that candidates can exploit the information shortfalls that voters face by repositioning towards the center in elections. A number of

[5]Even in this case, candidates might be presenting a faithful account of their records. But, this would be evidence that doing so is electorally optimal regardless of monitoring. Accordingly, voters might do quite well, getting desired policies for free without having to invest in learning about the candidates.

[6]For similar reasons, the types of issue statements candidates air would *not* likely be ambiguous, since these messages would also encourage uncertainty and dampen the benefit of the party brand.

[7]Ideological voters may see repositioning in the campaign as a reasonable strategy to enact preferred legislation *and* retain seats, minimizing punishment for shirking. Yet, behavioral findings suggest most people get involved in campaigns for non-instrumental reasons, which might be negatively influenced by flip-flopping. Also, ideological supporters may also want to interpret elections as policy mandates, something that is more difficult to do if candidates do not clarify the alternatives at stake in the campaign.

findings in the behavioral literature show that voters generally do not pay much attention to politics (Campbell et al. 1960; Jacobson 2009), have unstable or shallow attitudes on issues (Converse 1964; Zaller 1992), and generally are unaware of their incumbents' legislative records or even their names (Bawn et al. 2012; Jacobson 2009).[8] In spite of these shallow attitudes, persuading voters to form or change an opinion on an issue may be much more difficult compared to the task of influencing available information (Berelson et al. 1954; Riker 1986; Sides 2006). Overall, this lack of information may give incumbents greater license to take a wider array of positions in their campaigns without voters being able to punish them for inconsistency or 'flip-flopping'. (And the sources of information accusing a candidate of inconsistency must be credible to have much of an impact anyway, and this credibility can also be another dimension of conflict in the campaign.) Following the above, candidates then may try to increase the difficulty of monitoring their positions in Congress (e.g., Tomz and Van Houweling 2009), or may seek to prime, craft, or distract constituent opinion to cultivate broad electoral support in spite of being polarized (Cain et al. 1987; Petrocik 1996; Sides 2006).[9]

There is an important debate over how much information is needed for voters to make reasonable choices (Grynaviski 2010; Lupia and McCubbins 1998), as well as how information inequality may distort representation outcomes (Schlozman et al. 2012). For instance, voters may be able to use information 'heuristics', like party membership or interest group endorsements, to wield meaningful constituent control over legislative actions (Campbell et al. 1960; Grynaviski 2010; Lupia and McCubbins 1998).[10] Perhaps the strongest case for such accountability is through voters' use of the party label to punish (or reward) candidates for the collective behavior of their partisan colleagues (Fiorina 1980; Grynaviski 2010; Jones and McDermott 2010). Yet, even in this best case, a reliance on the party brand can lead voters astray, since parties may intentionally obscure some of their policy goals or activities (Bawn et al. 2012; Van Houweling 2012), and since party candidates can exploit the myopia that party identifiers often fall prey to when evaluating party candidates on issues (Campbell et al. 1960; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009).

[8]Moreover, this information is costly to collect, and may not be particularly useful once collected, indicating that political ignorance may even be pervasive in the electorate (Downs 1957).

[9]Under some conditions, candidates might aim to reposition in the campaign towards the extremes, for instance if people vote 'directionally' and reward candidates for offering clear choices on issues (Rabinowitz and MacDonald 2002). However, there are strong reasons to expect that entreprenurial candidates will portray their positions as centrist to appeal 'instrumentally' to the majority of voters in districts who are essentially moderate on most issues (Downs 1957; Fiorina et al. 2005; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000).

[10] Political knowledge and interest are not distributed equally amongst centrist and ideological voters (Abramowitz 2010; Schlozman et al. 2012). Even if centrists utilize heuristics well to make better decisions, the better-informed are comparatively more likely to be successful at influencing the actions of representatives, permitting the more ideologically extreme electoral forces to win out.

How Do Candidates Distance?

I argue that out of step candidates will try to run away from their records through issue distancing in campaign advertising in order to convey a moderate impression of their positions to voters. Indeed, there are many possible ways incumbents might aim to appear moderate or non-extreme to an electorate. For instance, politicians could use non-issue strategies to frame their positions in universal or valence terms, perhaps using a catchy turn of phrase (e.g., "to help main street, and not wall street") (Geer 2006; Sides 2006). Alternatively, candidates might choose to be vague in the way they discuss policy, allowing voters to fill in the blanks, or may avoid issues entirely (Page 1978).

The focus here, however, is primarily on the issue-based strategies that candidates pursue. As shown above, rather than avoiding issues or remaining vague about their policy positions, candidates appear to discuss issues and their legislative efforts to advance certain policies much more readily over time and especially in recent elections. I argue that in doing so candidates are implementing a number of issue distancing strategies, including what I call *issue selection*, *repositioning* and *rhetorical bipartisanship*. Further, I argue that these strategies generally are about communicating positional information to voters. Yet, this type of positional information can be conveyed not only by directly offering specific positions to voters, but also through emphasizing certain issues over others or framing the discussion about an issue around a particular theme or conflict.

While some of these strategies have been discussed in previous political science research (especially issue selection and repositioning), two innovations are notable here. First, most of this prior work emphasizes each of these strategies in isolation, rather that seeing them as an ensemble of approaches that may be used to gain the center ground. Secondly, while campaigns are generally seen as about clarifying differences to voters through the control of information, the view here is that politicians may also be able to use issue strategies to confuse voters about policy or ideological differences, effectively 'jamming' or disrupting an opponent's ability to attack on the basis of policy extremity (Minozzi 2011). In doing so ironically, this may heighten the salience of non-policy differences that typically advantage incumbent politicians, especially their demonstrated quality and experience as office-holders. Each of these strategies are described in more detail below.

Issue Selection

In the campaign environment, politicians can only discuss a limited subset of the thousands of legislative actions and perhaps innumerable characteristics that qualify them for elective office. Given this limitation, candidates fighting for the center might choose only to raise those issues on which they have established a more moderate record (Geer 1998; Vavreck 2009). By emphasizing certain issues, politicians may be directing voters to pay attention to particular legislative actions, and to ignore or downweight other actions. For example, a candidate who discusses her "efforts to clean up the environment" in an ad would highlight a stream of prior positions on bills or amendments that could have some effect on

environmental policy. If an election becomes defined around that issue, this could invite (or force) opponents, the media, interest groups, and electorates to more heavily base their electoral actions around the public statements, roll call votes, bill cosponsorships, or other efforts of that politician to advance environmental causes.[11] Choosing to emphasize issues where a politician is more in line with a district may help convey a more moderate impression to voters, and simultaneously downplay those dimensions where a politician is more polarized or out of step.

Notably, this strategy of issue selection is related to other work on issue agendas, and especially research on issue ownership. As discussed above, a common view of campaigns is that candidates should only emphasize issues on which most voters believe their party performs better than the other (Petrocik 1996). Following early work in this vein, studies have sought to establish whether candidates only emphasize issues that their party accordingly 'owns', or whether they try to 'trespass' on the other party's issues. I show above that candidates of both parties will frequently emphasize the same issues, but also distinct ones. The core difference here is that the legislative record rather than voters' impressions of the parties (in valence terms) is the main force driving the choice to empasize particular issues in an election. Finally, politicians may choose to emphasize issues that convey *more extreme* or *relatively faithful* impressions of their records to voters, or may do so in line with other electoral or political forces. In each of these cases, observing the differences in the ideological or partisan information stemming from legislative activity within particular issue domains is informative about the incentives politicians face when devising campaign strategy.

Repositioning

Though candidates have some leeway in defining elections around particular issues, their efforts to do so at specific times or contexts may be limited. Certain issues may take hold on the national stage or may be raised by an opponent in a way that must be addressed. For example, issues that emerge perenially (e.g., the economy) or are highly salient at particular times (e.g., universal health care) may command a great deal of attention by voters, the media or other politicians, raising the stakes for candidates to discuss them. If a candidate has previously taken a relatively extreme position on such an issue, however, emphasizing it may be electorally costly if voters punish out of step representatives. This may lead candidates to either avoid taking clear positions or avoid discussing prior positions in any detail during an election (Meirowitz 2005; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). Yet, candidates are often attacked for avoiding talking about their positions on an issue or for not taking any position at all. Though these avoidance or ambiguity strategies may be effective under certain conditions (for instance, if voters dislike a flip-flopper worse than a waffler), at other times candidates may find it necessary or advantageous to reposition on an issue to win

[11]There may be additional effort to control which kinds of legislative or political activities are seen as conveying this information. For instance, roll call voting versus cosponsorship may provide somewhat difference impressions given the way the floor agenda is contrained.

elections (e.g., Karol 2009).

In contrast to much previous work, I argue that issue repositioning can be an effective strategy, from campaign to campaign, to gain electoral insulation for a prior extreme record in Congress. Repositioning is most often defined as the act of taking new or different positions on a particular issue. Alongside this, I also include two additional behaviors to the definition of repositioning: candidates selectively emphasizing potentially conflicting positions actually taken on one or many bills within an issue area, and taking (or denying) credit for legislative or political outcomes (e.g., bills, votes, laws) opposed (or supported) by the candidate through actions while in office. Overall, very little research has investigated the costs and benefits of repositioning to candidates' electoral fates, and most of this research has focused on the first kind rather than the other types of respositioning that occur (e.g., Karol 2009; Tomz and Van Houweling 2012).

The argument here is that candidates can obscure their prior extreme positions by respositioning to the center in elections. Though repositioning is a riskier strategy than issue selection, candidates may be able to find ways to do it while minimizing the potential costs associated. In general, candidates caught repositioning could be penalized by voters and considered 'unprincipled' or 'untrustworthy' (Tomz and Van Houweling 2012). Yet, voters must be aware that a new position has been taken that is distinct from a prior position, and must be willing to weight this act when deciding between candidates. Moreover, voters must balance exacting a punishment based on the reputation loss for repositioning, and the benefit from choosing a candidate they may see as more proximate on the issues. In this vein, candidates may also try to strategically reduce the reputation costs of flip-flopping. One way to do so may be to use the multidimensionality inherent in position-taking activities to emphasize dimensions where they behaved consistently in spite of their new or conflicting positions (e.g., "I support raising the minimum wage, but opposed that bill because it put too many regulations on small businesses"). Candidates can also communicate their positions and engage in other strategies in ways that influence how much weight voters attach to punishing flipflopping. In other words, while respositioning may at times be costly, candidates do as much as they can to protect their flanks when changing positions, and thus may be able to reduce or minimize some of the reputation costs associated with doing so.[12]

Rhetorical Bipartisanship

In addition to issue selection and repositioning, I argue that candidates can also influence the way their records are portrayed by tailoring how they talk about issues and positions. Parties tend to prioritize certain issues over others when elected to office (Egan 2013). Though imperfectly informed, voters are likely to have some information about these issue priorities, perhaps significantly due to the efforts of candidates, groups and party leaders to provide useful signals for voters to determine which issues "go with" which party. For

[12]Moreover, in elections with all-or-nothing stakes, candidates trailing behind may see repositioning as a necessary last resort to victory.

example, Democrats may talk extensively about the environment in an election, but Republicans focus exclusively on jobs. In such a context, the voters may come to understand that electing Democrats means prioritizing environmental outcomes over employment in the policy-making process. Should another candidate come along and raise the environmental impact of some bill as an issue, voters would reasonably assume this candidate was a member of the Democratic party. Voters may also be increasingly aware that Democrats form the party of liberals and Republicans the party of conservatives (Grynaviski 2010; Levendusky 2009). Thus, voters possess certain information about the parties' reputations, and may use that information to evaluate particular candidates (Sniderman 2011). I argue that these reputations give candidates the opportunity to differentiate themselves from their party colleagues as a way to position towards the political center. One way to do this is to raise counter-stereotypical issues in the campaign.

Along a similar line, candidates can also clarify their particular positioning on the *same* set of issues by talking about those issues in different ways, or by prioritizing particular policy actions over others in that dimension. For instance, Democrats and Republicans may both talk about their environmental policy agenda, but highlight very different goals: "promoting private ownership and individual stewardship" or "enforcing tougher governmental regulations to make polluters pay". If Republican candidates all make the former statement, while Democrats the latter, voters would have a strong sense about the kinds of values or priorities candidates of each party would emphasize when voting on environmental bills. Then voters may use that information to make judgements about the relative positions of the competing candidates.

Distancing in this sense then is candidates using political words or phrases that are commonly used by members of the other party or both parties, rather than just phrases used mainly by their own. Using another example, a candidate who "strongly supports a woman's right to choose, always" is more likely to be a Democrat than a candidate who is "pro-life, against murder, and against abortion". However, compare this to someone who is "against the government making that choice for a woman *and* against allowing her daughter someday to have an abortion in secret". Here we see a candidate taking a version of both stereotypically partisan positions on an issue in a way we might generally interpret as signalling a more moderate view.[13] Candidates can also use issue language typified by members of the other party to signal to voters that that candidate is less extreme compared to partisans who only use language typical of their own party. As voters come to see certain issues and phrases as linked with particular parties, candidates may strategically be able to defy party stereotypes in order to signal moderation.[14]

[13]The way these phrases are scaled is explained in more detail below. Also, such a definition given here may make it difficult to account for real differences on issues that get communicated through negation, (i.e.,"I strongly oppose a woman's right to choose, always"), though such uses appear infrequently.

[14]Relatively extreme candidates can do likewise without necessarily taking very ideological positions to provide cover from primary challengers. Further, the usefulness of this strategy of course depends on the solution to a collective goods problem. If every candidate failed to take stereotypical positions, voters would

4.2 Assessing Position-Taking in Congressional Campaigns

The main aim in this study is to analyze position-taking in congressional campaigns alongside the legislative behavior of incumbents in Congress. Rather than exclusively focusing on issue agendas in broad terms, this chapter seeks to measure the overall policy impressions, in liberal or conservative terms, that candidates convey to voters about their records. To do so, I propose a new method of scaling the words and phrases aired by candidates on a single left-right dimension, and then connect this scale onto a similar mapping of political conflict in Congress. The key challenge here is to find a common basis to link the statements made by candidates in the campaign to similar position-taking activities in Congress. The method I develop uses the words in bill titles that describe the policy content of legislation, which are scaled based on the choices legislators make in cosponsoring those bills. In this way, I take cosponsorship decisions as incumbents 'endorsing' the positions in the bill as expressed through bill titles since these endorsements may provide information about how political actors see the ideological content of words, positions and bills. Finally, scaling ads and bills using the common set of positions taken (as measured through common words and phrases) allows a comparison of how candidates present themselves in elections relative to their legislative records, as well as an examination of how these position-taking activities change over time.[15]

The data used in this analysis come from a number of sources. First, for the 1968 to 2000 period, information about the positions candidates take in the campaign come from the CAP dataset, which includes over 30,000 transcribed positions for House and Senate races. To facilitate the scaling of position-taking in Congress, I use the short bill titles that accompany each bill introduced in the regular session as collected by Adler and Wilkerson (2009) in the Congressional Bills Project (CBP). These bill titles then are linked to each individual endorsement decision made by every MC using Fowler's (2006) data on bill cosponsorship. Finally, to replicate the analysis for 2008, I use the ads data from the Wisconsin Ads Project (CMAG) that contain the full texts of each ad aired in the top-210 media markets for that year's election. Below I discuss the methods and assumptions used for the scaling analysis using these ads and legislative data.

---

have no expectations about what constitutes a typical Democratic or Republican phrase, making it difficult for candidates to use such information to position. In this case, perhaps voters turn to other information to make jugements about differences, or perhaps voters come to see all candidates as either "tweedle-dee" or "tweedle-dum".

[15]Note this approach does not allow the ability distinguish between issue selection, repositioning or bipartisanship strategies, but measures the overall differences between a cosponsorship record and positioning in the campaign as a summary of these three and perhaps additional distancing approaches.

Scaling Issue Positions Through Models of Phrases

In recent years, scholars have witnessed a so-called 'text-as-data' revolution. This revolution has been driven in significant part by the dramatic expansion of information packaged as strings of words, as well as the development of computational approaches to store, process, and classify the immensity of such data. Many of these advances have made their way into the social sciences, opening up new frontiers of study. Although still quite a new field in political science, an important line of such work has sought to understand policy preferences and ideology by looking at word or phrase choices that may be indicative of particular ideological orientations, viewpoints, or values (e.g., Beauchamp 2011; Laver et al. 2011; Slapin and Proksch 2008). Indeed, this work may be viewed as the next wave of earlier research in psychometrics (Aldrich and McKelvey 1977) and political science (Poole and Rosenthal 1997) aimed at uncovering ideological dimensions through latent models of choice over political or legislative alternatives (e.g., Bafumi et al. 2005; Warshaw and Rodden 2012).

While various approaches to scaling phrases differ in certain data choices and model assumptions, each shares a common assumption. Fundamentally, words or phrases must contain information about the ideological dimension being measured. Typically this is assumed by a model that sees the production or expression of words as a function of the 'ideal point' that characterizes each speakers most preferred policy location in political space. A version of such an assumption (analogous to that in Eq. 2.1 from chapter 2.), is that phrases follow a particular process so that the 'closer' that phrase is to indicating a legislator's preferred policy, the more often it gets used in speeches or other communications.[16] Ideal points can then be recovered by analyzing which kinds of phrases are frequently used by which kinds of politicians under a particular choice model. Other alternative approaches do not rely on an explicit ideal point model of phrase generation to scale phrases on an common dimension (e.g., Beauchamp 2011; Laver et al. 2011; Blei and McAuliffe 2007). Here estimation is usually done in a supervised way by identifying parameters on a dimensional line that maximize the prediction of some pre-determined quality that correlates with ideology and can denote common features of phrases and speakers (e.g., partisanship) in probability. Yet, these approaches perform only so well as the information available to link particular word patterns with an underlying scale through the particular target of prediction. Notably, if phrases to be scaled indicate some other kind of political meaning other than ideological preference (or no systematic meaning), then an ideological dimension may not be recovered or easily interpreted.[17] On the other hand, this assumption seems relatively weak in general, particular given the bulk of findings elsewhere that show that the phrases politicians use can be very dispositive of their partisan proclivities (Beauchamp 2011) and policy positions

[16] Slapin and Proksch (2008) make a similar kind of assumption by modeling work choices in party manifestos as driven by an underlying Poisson process as a function of ideal point proximity.

[17] This is the similar problem faced by Nominate, IRT and other scaling approaches to studying binary choices in legislative settings. If legislative choices over bills or votes does not indicate underlying policy preferences (or is contaminated by other considerations) the recovered estimates will not reliably uncover ideological preferences.

(Laver et al. 2011). In other words, it seems hard to believe that the words and phrases used by politicians (or the short titles for bills) do not reveal important information about policy attitudes.

The approach here is to use a particular kind of classifier algorithm (*sLDA*) that predicts a common ideological dimension using the overlapping phrases found in ads and bill short titles. As described below the approach combines these phrase data with cosponsorship choices to obtain information about the candidates willing to endorse particular phrases in ads and bills. This approach is novel in linking legislative decision-making through cosponsorship and position-taking in the campaign by using common words and phrases to bridge to two representational domains. But, given the considerable amount of work using roll call voting to study ideology in Congress, why use cosponsorship rather than floor votes?

First, using roll calls as bridges is limited due to the underlying theory for how politicians come to support or oppose particular votes. For instance, a typical roll call scaling method typically assumes a cutpoint utility model where a MC votes for a bill if her ideal policy location is closer to a *yea* than a *nay* location, no matter how far away the affirmative vote location happens to be. Yet, this type of cutpoint approach does not seem particularly well-suited to model other types of ideological or political behavior where there is no natural *nay* location to guide a decision. A candidate choosing to emphasize a position in an ad, for instance, seems more likely to do so if that position is 'closer' to the ideal point they aim to reveal to the electorate, than some other set of positions. Thus, the class of endorsements models (those that are typically used to study cosponsorship) seems much more appropriate to use in scaling a latent dimension that may drive position-taking behavior in congressional campaigns.

Moreover as discussed previously, floor voting in Congress may be subject to strategic pressure above purely ideological considerations that may distort MCs behavior in complicated ways (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 2005; Kingdon 1977; Lebo et al. 2007; Patty 2008). One consequence of party agenda setting power may be that floor votes may only offer particular *yea* and *nay* locations, restricting certain votes that might roll the majority party. Yet, these strategic pressures are likely to be very different than those candidates experience in a campaign, where candidates are much freer to talk about a wide range of issues or positions.[18]

For these reasons, I argue that cosponsoring bills in Congress is much more analogous to the type of position-taking that occurs in the campaign. In choosing to cosponsor a bill, candidates may be aiming to signal to voters their support for the overal policy content in the bill or are choosing to cosponsor because they in fact agree with policy. Further, cosponsoring a bill is rarely determinative of whether or not that bill will go forward in the legislative process, much less be passed or enacted into law. Thus, there is much less strategic pressure placed on candidates by parties or other members to do so. Cosponsorship

[18] Also, from a practical standpoint, a great many roll call votes do not have descriptions readily available that clarify the policy consequences of the particular vote.

then may be seen as a rather voluntary legislative act, and thus I argue that these choices may be more informative about the types of policy positions candidates would ideally wish to support for electoral or policy motivated reasons.

A final concern is that short bill titles may be strategically chosen or biased in the way the policy information is described. However, for the most part, bill short titles are designated largely to provide information that facilitates the overall legislative process. The House or Senate Clerk assigns every bill a short title as introduced, typically one sentence long, that describes the overall policy aims and actions proposed in the legislation.[19] Unlike the official or popular titles for bills, which very often are crafted strategically with the intention of giving the bill a veneer of universal appeal, these short titles are typically detailed and informative statements about what the bill actually plans to enact.[20] As a result, I use these bill titles as proxies to measure the policy content that legislators endorse when choosing to cosponsor a bill. In this way, I argue that representatives endorsing the policy words contained in bill titles is a sufficiently analogous choice to that of candidates selecting phrases to depict their policy positions in ads. Under this general assumption, we can model the words in ads aired by candidates in a similar way as the policy phrases endorsed through cosponsorship.

sLDA Models to Scale Ads

The task is to use the common phrases in bills and ads to simultaneously estimate the ideological positions for each candidate as they separately present themselves in the campaign and in the previous Congress. To do this, I use a method called *supervised latent Dirichlet allocation* (sLDA), which identifies issue topics amongst patterns of phrases following a particular model of language. The method then uses this topic information to predict the ideological positions of candidates given their choices to talk about different issues (Blei and McAuliffe 2007; Blei et al. 2002).[21] In this supervised statistical technique, issue topics are identified by finding the cluster of words and phrases that maximize the prediction on some variable, in this case the *party affiliation* of the candidate taking positions in ads or bills by endorsing or airing the associated phrases.

Steps:

A. Fix K topics and β_k term probabilities for membership in k

B. For each document

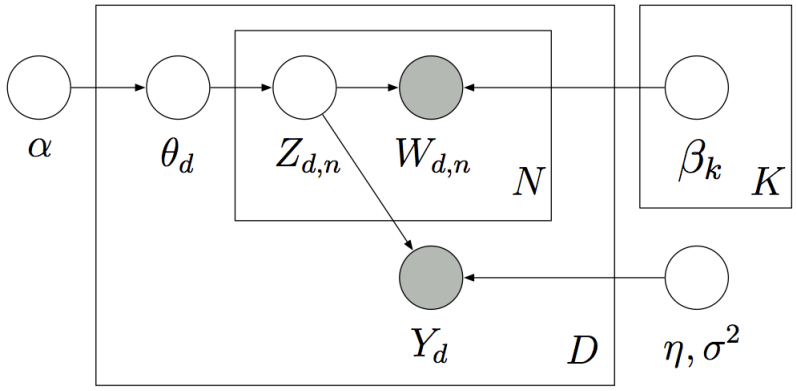
   1. Draw topic proportions $\theta|\alpha \sim Dir(\alpha)$

[19] This title is entered into the House or Senate Journal upon First Reading of the bill. A number of scholars have used these titles to code issue content of the bills, and so on, though none that I am aware have sought to scale the titles on an ideological dimension.

[20] This is not to say that these titles cannot be influenced by MCs pressuring the Clerk (who is an elected MC) to act in partisan or political way. Yet, given the institutional role that the Clerk plays in the legislature, including providing basic descriptive information about bills in these titles, it seems more likely that these titles are relatively faithful representations of the main policies proposed in the bills.

[21] The sLDA analysis was implemented in **R** using the 'lda' package.

Figure 4.1: Graphical Model of sLDA



Source: Blei and McAuliffe (2007)

2. For each word in the document
   i. Draw topic assignment $z_n|\theta \sim Mult(\theta)$
   ii. Draw word $w_n|z_n, \beta_{1:K} \sim Mult(\beta z_n)$
3. Draw party variable $Y_d|z_{1:N}, \eta, \sigma^2 \sim N(\eta^T \hat{z}, \sigma^2)$

The sLDA language model assumes that documents are made up of combinations of latent topics or political issues, and that each issue is essentially a distribution of words or phrases (Blei et al. 2002). Each of these issue topics is a random draw of N words taken from K topics. A candidate first chooses to emphasize a subset of political issues $z_n \in K$, and then randomly selects N total words from a combination of words w_z pulled from each topic z_n chosen. The 'LD' portion of sLDA describes the latent probability distributions underlying the assumptions about language and topic generation. In particular, topic selection by candidates is assumed to follow a Multinomial distribution on θ, which is a multivariate probability distributed Dirichlet with a latent vector term α of real numbers. In the optimization, the number of topics are first fixed at K. Then, the top K topics are found from 'clusters' in the use of words found across all of the position statements, following the document generation model in fully Bayesian implementation, so as to maximize posterior prediction on the binary MC party covariate.

More formally, given a model of word and topic generation, sLDA 'finds' a set of K latent topics that are distributed across documents d in a corpora, based on the strings of phrases w_d contained within them. In particular, topics are uncovered that maximize prediction on some outcome variable Y_d across the documents. A graphical model of the conditional relationships between parameters and priors is illustrated in Figure 4.1, as are the steps in the language generative process assumed by sLDA. The method is analogous to scoring documents based on their overall predictiveness of a binary response variable,

$a_d = f(Y_d|w_d, w_{\sim d})$ (Blei and McAuliffe 2007). Given this interpretation, I use sLDA to to identify topics amongst the ads and cosponsorship positions that best predict the party (D or R) of the cosponsoring or advertising MC. I then interpret the predicted partisan score as a measure of a document's spatial location on a left-right dimension.[22]

In order to estimate ad and bill locations using sLDA, I run a series of fifty-topic models using phrases up to 3 words (3-grams) long. Each position in every ad and each bill title is stripped of white-space and stemmed, and then a series of stop-words are removed. Next, the positions are parsed into 3-gram pieces, which are then associated with each candidate either in the legislative or campaign context. (Candidates can appear up to twice then in the data, once for their positions from the campaign and once from the bills cosponsored in the previous Congress.) Counts of 3-gram phrases are pooled over each candidate as they appear in the ads and bills data so as to produce a matrix that contains the same columns allowing for simultaneous estimation of the model.

Finally, attack and promotion ads were scaled separately in this analysis. Also, throughout the discussion below, I focus on incumbents excusively, rather than candidates running in open races or challengers facing sitting incumbents. The former choice is to ensure that words and positions are not scaled as the convex combination of their meanings as taken from two different modes of positioning in promotion versus attack. Also, note that attack ads are scaled slightly different than promotion ones. An adjusted party response variable is used, $Y'_d = (1 - Y_d)$, so that Republican attacks on Democrats are taken *as* the Democratic candidates' positions, and the reverse. The analysis below then presents challengers' attacks on incumbents.[23] The latter choice to focus on incumbents is made in part to exclude the most competitive races where we might clearly expect convergence to the middle (open seats), and where we have no prior information about candidates' positions in a previous legislature. Also, the main inferential goal is to understand how incumbents can retain their reelection advantages in spite of being increasing out of step with their districts. Understanding two candidate competition is central to this task, but a starting point here is to see how incumbents are positioning and being attacked relative to their own records.

An important practical issue is whether to estimate the model for all congresses at once, or to estimate the models separately. Since the political meaning or significance of issues and phrases can change over time, it may not be sensible to estimate all the words from forty years of politics in the same model. For example, new words, phrases and even issues can appear while other vanish over time (e.g., "stem cell research", "partial birth abortion"). Also, certain issues may come to mean different things after major political events have occurred (e.g.,"civil rights"). Thus, it might make sense to estimate things separately so

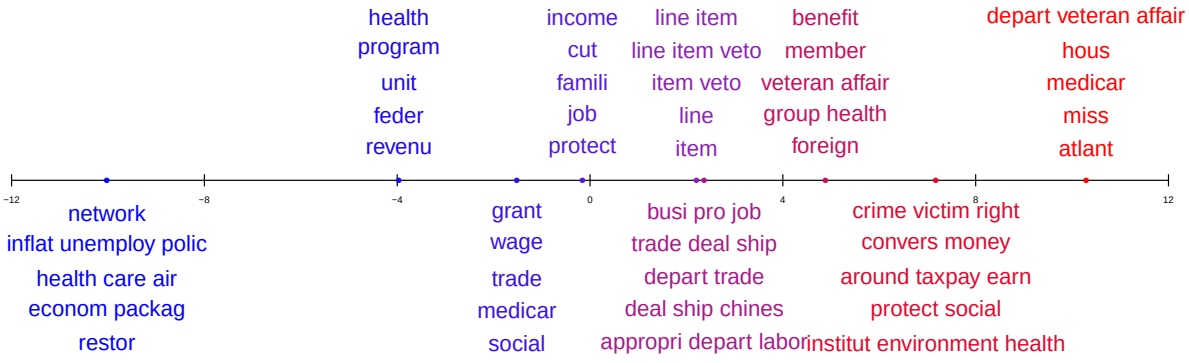
[22] A number of scholars are increasingly using the method for a variety of scaling and prediction tasks (e.g., Balasubramanyan et al. 2012; Blei and McAuliffe 2007; Gerrish and Blei 2012, 2011; Lauderdale and Clark 2012).

[23] Incumbents' attacks on challengers provide essentially the same picture of polarization in attacks, though the 'accuracy' of these statements is more difficult to ascertain given the lack of a prior legislative record in Congress to judge these against.

not to conflate the same meanings to fundamentally different terms. On the other hand, the goal is to be able to draw comparisons between recovered ideological meanings over time, which may not be reliable if each Congress is scaled separately on a different dimension. To overcome this issue, I run a series of rolling models that include five consecutive Congress, so that each Congress in the series is scaled with the most proximate four others (each Congress is scaled five times). Then each common set of estimates is used to reduce the dimension differences in averages and variances across the estimates.[24]

To illustrate the sLDA scaling approach, a nine-topic model is estimated and presented in Figure 4.2. The figure shows the top five words across the topics that best predict the partisanship of the MCs in their cosponsoring and advertising positions. As can be seen the most liberal topic includes a mix of political positions having to do with the economy, health care and the environment, while the most conservative topic deals with issues related to veterans, housing and medicare. In this model, MCs who take positions on either of these topics (using a mix of the associated phrases) effectively would be scored as either quite liberal (≈ -10) or quite conservative ($\approx +10$) respectively. Also, an important and interesting thing to note is that these topics do not contain much coherency as issues, at least in the way most people would understand them. This might be an issue if the research goal was to uncover the *true* topic structure of ads and bills. However, the key emphasis here is on predicting partisan affiliation as a model criteria and not on discovering the precise distribution of issues. In other words, internally valid topic models may not provide the best scaling of position-taking, and appropriate models of position-taking may not be the best topic models for studying Congress.

Figure 4.2: Nine Topic Model of the 106th House Using sLDA



[24] An analogous way to do a boostrap estimation would be to randomly select a subset of Congresses within some time frame and repeatedly estimate ideal points until a sufficient number is obtained to take average and variance moments.

Finally, I perform a series of cross-validation tests in order to ensure the scalings are sensible and comparable to other methods. (These are presented in Appendix C.) As can be seen from this analysis, the topic scaling results are consistent with a variety of alternative ways to scale phrases in ads and bills.

4.3 Evidence of Issue Distancing in Polarized Elections

We can see from the scaling analysis of ads between 1974 and 2000 that House candidates on average present themselves as much more moderate in their campaign messages than their cosponsorship choices in Congress would otherwise indicate.[25] This is especially so as the parties polarize in Congress, but not in their promotion ad statements. Remarkably, average House incumbents are presenting their own legislative records at the close of the 20th century in roughly similar ideological terms as candidates did prior to the onset of partisan polarization in the early 1970s. As a result, voters who only receive political information by watching positive campaign ads during congressional campaigns might entirely have missed the acrimonious ideological conflict that has emerged in Congress over the last forty years.

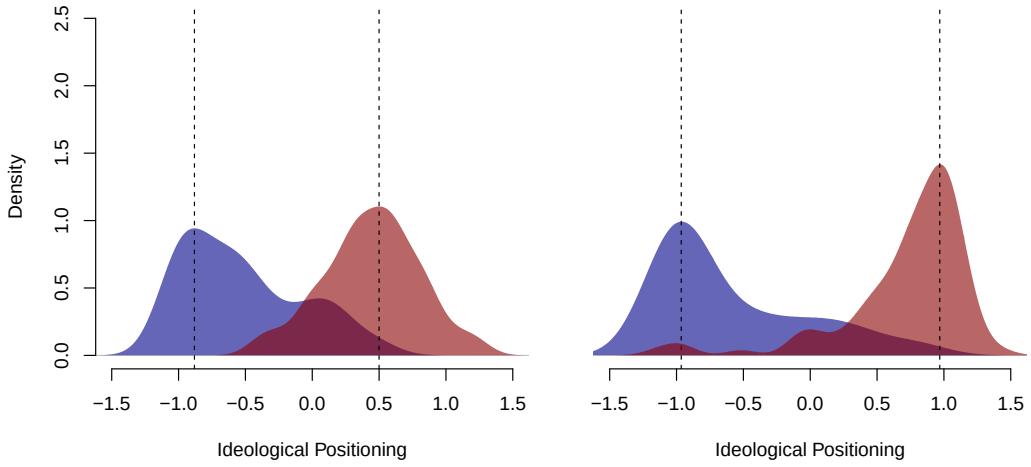
On the other hand, the scaled ads data indicate that attack politics have indeed become increasingly polarized in line with events in Congress. Incumbents increasingly are being attacked as extremists (and attacking their opponents similarly) as they compile increasingly extreme records in Congress. This dual finding, centrism in promotion and extremity in attack, perhaps underscores the central importance that candidates place on positioning themselves and their opponents in ways that optimize their reelection chances when talking about issues, regardless of other institutional or political constraints. This result also replicates an interesting finding recovered elsewhere, that to find truth in political advertising, one must look to the negative and not the positive (Geer 2006). Overall, the evidence clearly suggests that candidates are not running faithfully on their records, and that issue distancing may be a fairly widespread strategy utilized by incumbents in polarized elections.

Moderation in Promotion Statements

The pattern of issue distancing in congressional elections can clearly be seen in Figure 4.3, which presents the density of Democratic and Republican incumbents' positions in their bill cosponsorship and positive advertising at two time periods covering three electoral cycles: 1978 to 1982 and 1996 to 2000. In the Figure in panels 4.3(a) and 4.3(b), we can again see the standard pattern of polarization in cosponsorship over the period from the 95th to 106th Congress. The density of Democrats' ideal points is arrayed on the left in blue and the

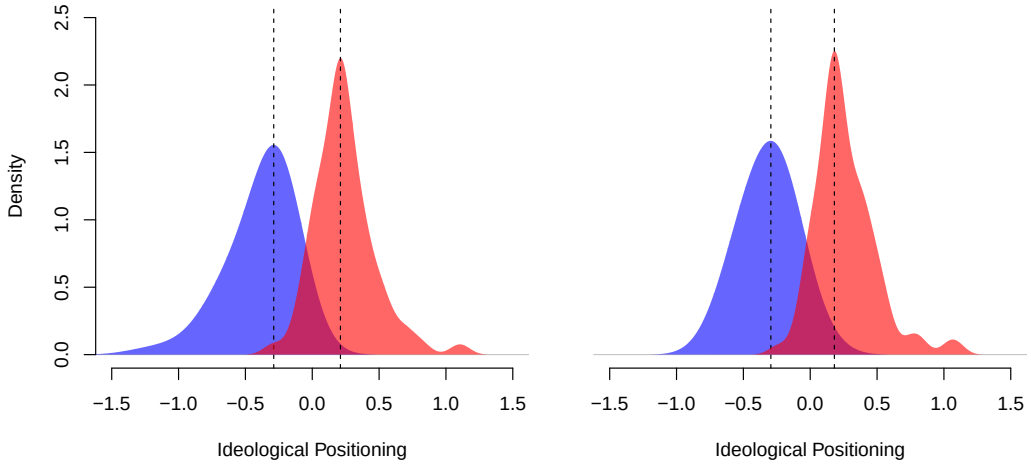
[25]Given the finding above that shows much more bipartisanship and centrism in cosponsorship compared to roll call voting, the disconnect found here may be even more stark when considering how candidates position themselves on the floor in Congress.

Figure 4.3: Relative Extremity of Scaled Cosponsorship Ideal Points Compared to Moderation in Campaign Promotion Statements for House Incumbents in the 1980s and 2000s



(a) Cosponsorship: 95th - 97th

(b) Cosponsorship: 104th - 106th

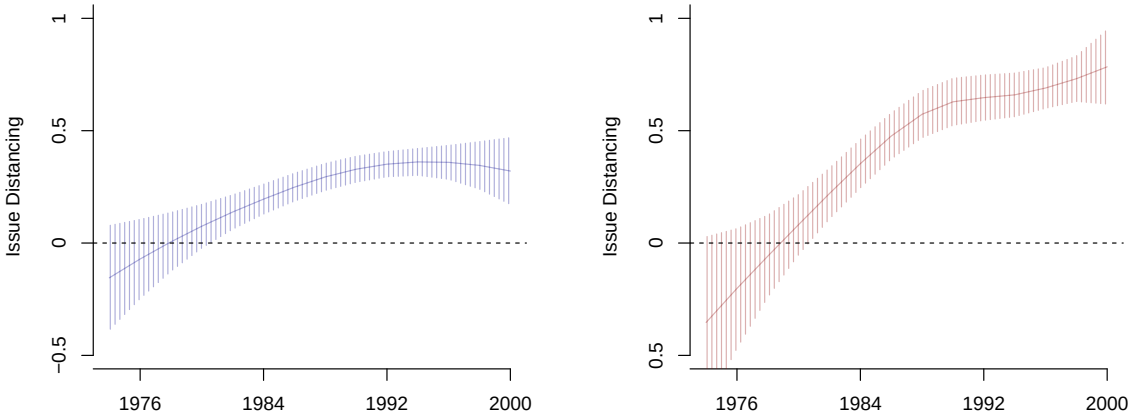


(c) Promotion Ads: 1978 - 1982

(d) Promotion Ads: 1996 - 2000

density of Republicans on the right in red, with the vertical dotted line indicating the center ideal point for each parties' candidates. Two things immediately emerge from these figures. First, while there is considerable overlap in the scaled cosponsorship positions in the early 1980s, most of this overlap has receded by the 2000s. Secondly, over the period, the centers of both parties' cosponsorship coalitions have moved much farther apart, indicating a growing gap between and much less bipartisan cooperation across the two parties in supporing bills.

Figure 4.4: Positive Issue Distancing in Promotion Ads Compared to Cosponsorship Positions for House Incumbents, 1974 - 2000



(a) Democratic House Incumbents

(b) Republican House Incumbents

In comparison, however, there appears to be virtually no polarization in promotion ads, and much more moderation in terms of the positions taken in the ads compared to cosponsorship. The analogous densities of scaled promotion ad positions are presented in Figure 4.3(c)-(d), for the 1978 to 1982 (following the 95th to 97th) and 1996 to 2000 (following the 104th to 106th) elections. Not only is there considerable overalap between the ad positions of both parties across both periods, there is virtually no change in these distributions from the 1980s to 2000s, and especially no change in the average extremity of incumbents' self-presentation in the campaign. An indication of this is the dotted vertical lines that illustrate the average of each parties' advertising ideal point distributions. As can be seen, the dotted lines for ads are always in the interior of the dotted lines for bills, and these lines appear not to move outward at all in advertising over the period. Overall then, the major shift in position-taking underway in Congress does not appear at all in the way candidates present themselves in the campaign.

Looking beyond these two periods of House elections, we find very similar results for promotion positioning. Figure 4.4 shows the average difference between the way individual MCs present their positions in ads and their actual cosponsorship records. These differences are smoothed over time from 1974 to 2000 to reflect the changes in this pattern of issue distancing over the course of polarization. Democratic House incumbents' distancing efforts are presented in blue in Figure 4.4(a) and Republicans in Figure 4.4(b). Both are scaled so that positive values indicate more issue distancing, with ads being less extreme than cosponsorship, and negative values indicating the reverse, ads are more extreme than positions taken on bills. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals for the locally smoothed average change in issue distancing by party. As can clearly be seen, both Democratic and Republican House incumbents are increasingly running away from their records in their promotion ads. Indeed,

the *average* amounts of issue distancing actually reaches between one-six to one-third of the entire scale of ideal point estimates, representating a considerable gap in the way candidates' records and the way they talk about their positions. Not surprisingly, this pattern of issue distancing has increased largely in lock-step with polarization in Congress. Further, given that cosponsorship choices tend to reflect greater bipartisanship, this may indicate that candidates' roll call records portray an even starker picture of issue distancing going on in elections. These last two points strongly suggest that candidates are aiming to obscure their more extreme records in their general election promotion ads, and that candidates seem to be doing much more than just tailoring their cosponsorship choices in Congress in order to obtain political cover for their growing extremity on policy.

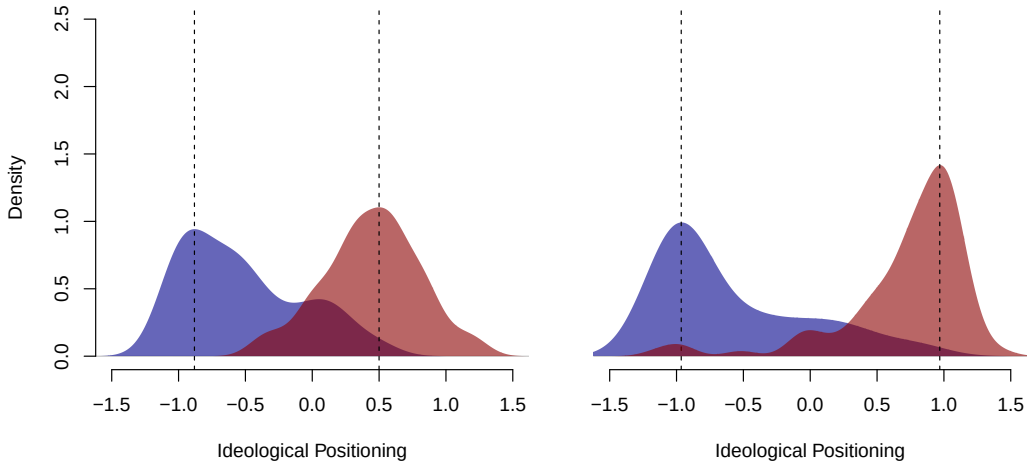
Extremity in Attacks Ads

The other striking result from these data is the conspicuous divergence found between the candidates that is apparent in attack statements, but relatively lacking in promotion messages. House incumbents are consistently being attacked as polarized, and these attacks seem to reflect the process of polarization quite closely. Though attacks may be misleading in other ways, as a reflection of candidates' polarized positions in Congress, attack statements appear to be much more accurate compared to incumbents own promotion messages.

Turning to Figure 4.5, we again see densities for Democrats' and Republicans' scaled cosponsor positions in panels (a) and (b), pointing to the classic pattern of polarization between the 95th and 106th Congresses. Yet, unlike promotion statements as seen above, attack statemates are nearly as polarized as cosponsorship choices in the House. Figure 4.5(c)-(d) presents the densities of incumbents as presented by their opponents when on the attack. From these densities we see that both in the 1978 to 1982 and 1996 to 2000 periods, there is virtually zero overlap in the way incumbents are being portrayed. One way to interpret this finding is that incumbents, as seen in these negative ads, are quite extreme and unwilling to cross the aisle to work with members of the opposing party. Further, in the 1980s period both Democrats and Republicans are being attacked in a way that closely resembles their actual cosponsorship records. There is some apparent polarization in attack ads by the 2000s, though polarization in the House seems to outstrip it. Interestingly, in these recent elections Republicans appear to be launching more centrist-based issue attacks than do the Democrats, perhaps pointing to some constraint in the extent to which candidates can attack opponents. Yet, attack ads are clearly much more polarized than promotion ads over both periods.

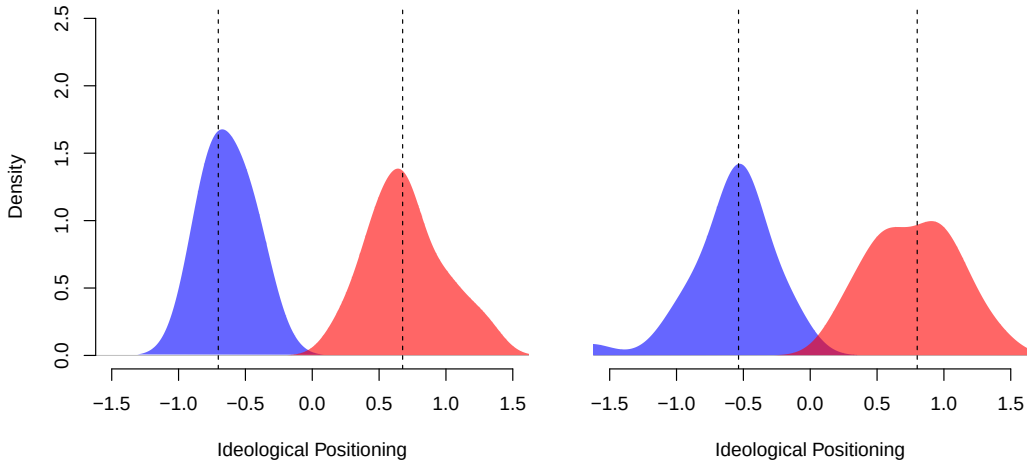
A similar pattern emerges over the entire period of polarization between 1978 and 2000. As demonstrated in Figures 4.6(a) and 4.6(b), incumbents are generally being attacked as out of step representatives, closely reflecting the process of polarization underway in Congress. In other words, the distance between candidates' records and the way they are portrayed by opponents is consistently at or close to zero for most of the last thirty years of campaigns. These small differences stand in stark contrast to the noted issue distancing found in self-

Figure 4.5: Extremity of Both Scaled Cosponsorship Ideal Points and Campaign Attack Statements for House Incumbents in the 1980s and 2000s



(a) Cosponsorship: 95th - 97th

(b) Cosponsorship: 104th - 106th



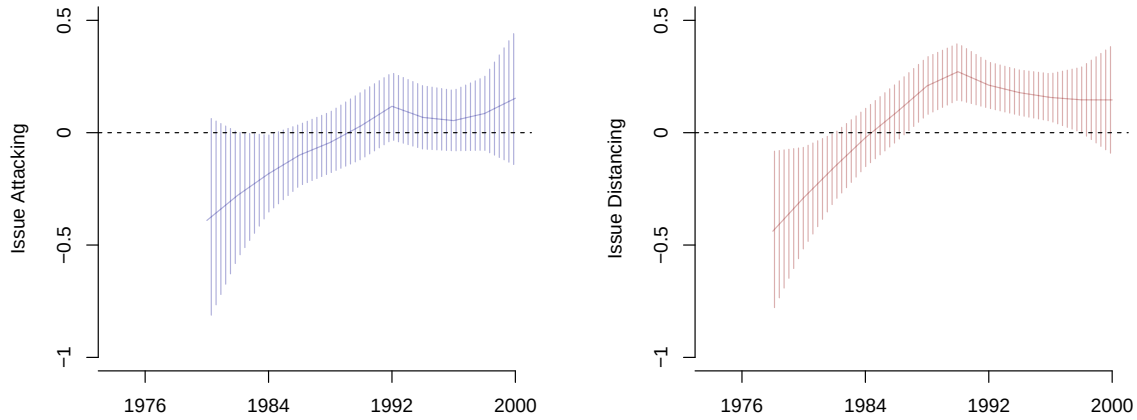
(c) Attack Ads: 1978 - 1982

(d) Attack Ads: 1996 - 2000

promotion ads illustrated above in Figure 4.4. Fundamentally then, we see from the analysis of scaled position-taking that incumbents generally are not campaigning to appeal to the base around partisan or polarized issue appeals, and largely appear to be running away from their legislative records, while simultaneously being attacked as policy extremists.

Taken as whole, what could voters learn about polarization from watching ads in the campaign? One way to answer this is to take the average locations of each parties' candidates

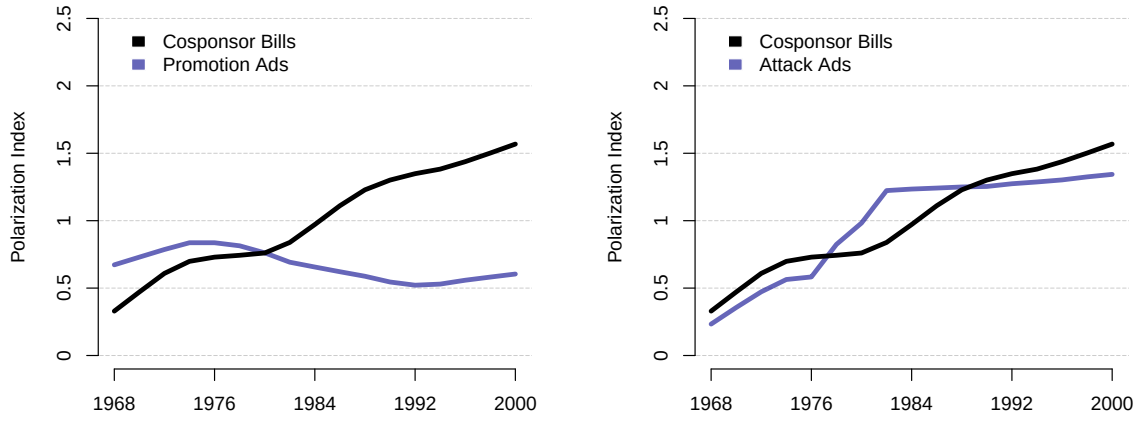
Figure 4.6: Minimal Issue Distancing in Attack Ads Compared to Cosponsorship Positions for House Incumbents, 1974 - 2000



(a) Democratic House Incumbents

(b) Republican House Incumbents

Figure 4.7: Polarization in Attack and Promotion Ads Compared to Cosponsorship Positions



(a) Promotion Ads

(b) Attack Ads

as drawn from their cosponsorship positions, promotion ads, and opponent attacks over time. Figure 4.7 presents such a comparison for House incumbents. Figure 4.7(a) clearly shows that incumbents' promotion statements seriously understate the degree of polarization in Congress. While the average differences between the parties in their cosponsor choices has steadily grown, an exclusive focus on incumbent promotion ads would suggest that the parties have not polarized at all, and may even have grown *less polarized* in their policy differences. In comparison, attack ads portray Congress as steadily polarizing in line with the legislative behavior of its members. Figure 4.7(b) presents the average differences in the

way the parties' incumbents are portrayed by their opponents compared to cosponsorship polarization. Attack ads clearly reveal that the parties have grown farther apart in their legislative behavior. Thus, those voters whose only information are these attacks may be getting a relatively accurate glimpse of the significant changes going on in the kinds of representation being provided by candidates, incumbents and parties as a whole. In contrast, those voters who skip watching or ignore attacks, but tune into promotion ads may be entirely missing the fact that Congress has grown increasingly polarized and acrimonious.

If voters' impressions of their incumbents are being shaped by their exposure to positive ads, then they may be making choices to elect the most moderate seeming candidate. Alternatively, they may believe they are choosing between 'tweedle-dee' and 'tweedle-dum' on policy and thus will favor the candidate with clearest non-policy advantages. Either way, many of these voters may not be aware of any representational disconnect between their preferences and the actions of their representatives, since these differences are obscured or minimized during elections. On the other hand, those voters who watch negative ads may have a clear sense that both candidates are polarized, but still may not be sure who is the most extreme of the two. However, there is at least some evidence that negative advertising tunes out voters (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995). Thus, the voters who get their information during the campaign may be missing much of the polarization process, and attack ads may reinforce this by demobilizing voters or confusing them about who is in fact more ideological and polarized.

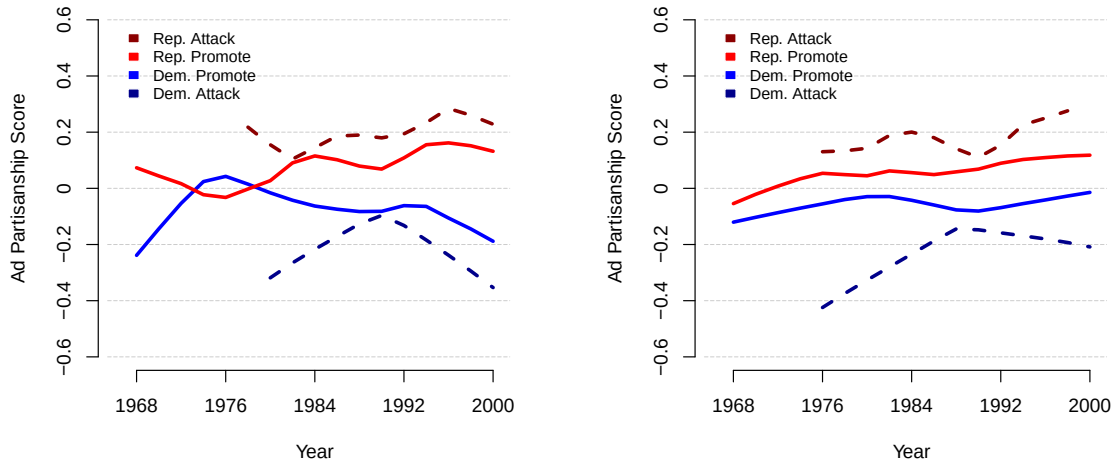
Additional Evidence From Issue Models

One concern from using the sLDA approach to scale phrases in ads and bills is that the topics uncovered may have relatively little connection to meaningful dimensions of political conflict. In other words, by emphasizing prediction, the topics that are used to predict partisanship may not define political issues in the conventional sense of being an internally consisent set of problems and solutions that political actors fight over in elections and during the policy-making process. An alternative approach is to track the issues and topics that appear in ads and bills either by hand or by a similar classification approach as above. Then this information can reveal the degree to which candidates focus their issue agendas in partisan or bipartisan ways during the campaign. Additionally, this topic information can show whether or not the issues candidates mention in their ads tend to be those in which they have compiled more moderate records compared to those issues that get excluded. The latter can also determine the degree to which issue selection appears as an significant strategy for moderating (or not) in campaign ads.

One way to do this is to use the topic-coded issues that come from CAP.[26] Each issue gets scored based on the propotion of those candidates who discuss the issue happen to be Republicans, which ranges from 0 to 1. Such a scoring is illustrated in the prior chapter

[26] An alternative is to use *latent Dirichlet allocation* (LDA), which performs very well in identifying topics in documents.

Figure 4.8: Polarization in Party Focus on Topics in Ads



(a) House Partisan Topics

(b) Senate Partisan Topics

in Figure 3.10. Each candidate is given a party-issue score based on their choices over which issues to air in their ads, those that are more Democratic or more Republican. This score then is the average of the party scores of each issue that makes it into their campaign advertising, weighted by each time that issue appears. Candidates who focus more on those issues that are most prioritized by their party will be scored at one end of the spectrum as more extreme. And those who provide a mix of issues prioritized by both parties or issues prioritized by neither will be scored as more centrist.

Figure 4.8 presents the average of these party focus scores for each party's candidates in the House and Senate over time. Further, in the figure promotion and attack ads are presented separately to illustrate the differences in the kinds of issues candidates focus on across each ad type. For House candidates in Figure 4.8(a) we see some evidence of growing partisanship in the issue agendas of candidates. Across much of the 1970s Democrats and Republicans may have looked quite similar in terms of the partisan focus of the issues aired in their promotion ads. Yet, starting in the early 1980s and especially the mid-1990s, the candidates of both parties, though especially Democrats, tended to focus more exclusively on their own party's priority issues. However, this kind of partisanship is clearly more stark in attack ads compared to positive ones. Candidates thus tend to be much more bipartisan in their promotion ads, and much more partisan when on the attack in the House.

Interestingly, this pattern is actually more clear for Senate candidates as seen in Figure 4.8(b). Indeed, Senate Democrats and Republicans are consistently more bipartisan in their promotion ads. Further, positive ads display very little increase in polarization over time. Thus, Senate candidates are talking about roughly the same mix of partisan and bipartisan issues on average in 2000 as they did in the 1960s. In contrast, Senate attack ads are much more partisan, and show signs of polarization as well, especially in more recent years. These

findings mirror those from above, yet use a much simpler approach to score ads based on party topics. Perhaps most impressively, even by just focusing on the kinds of issues candidates mention we recover the same pattern of candidates appearing more moderate when they present themselves to the voters, and much more partisan in the way they present their opponents.

Table 4.1: Difference in Bill and Cosponsorship Extremity Across Issues Emphasized and Not Emphasized in the Campaign

	House		Senate	
	Mean Dif.	P-value	Mean Dif.	P-value
Sponsor Partisanship	-0.007	0.00	-0.004	0.15
Cosponsor Partisanship	-0.007	0.00	-0.004	0.13
Mean Bill Location	-0.011	0.00	-0.014	0.00
Party Unity Bills (50%)	0.002	0.23	0.044	0.00
Party Unity Consponsor (50%)	0.005	0.36	0.010	0.14

4.4 A Closer Look at the 2008 Election

This evidence above has shown that candidates frequently present voters with much more moderate images of their legislative records, and do so potentially to receive a positive electoral benefit. These findings suggest that candidates have some leeway in voting in Congress to enact preferred policies, and then use electoral appeals to insulate themselves from these votes. Yet, a lingering question throughout all of this analysis concerns the degree to which extreme or moderate voters are placing any pressure on candidates to influence the way they campaign. Surely, candidates can only push voters' impressions so far. What is the limit of distancing for shirking candidates?

To address this question, I take a closer look at campaign in the 2008 election. Moreover, I extend the above analysis by additionally scaling voters' opinions on issues to recover measures of district-level ideological attitudes for partisans, voters and donors in House districts. In spite of its swing-year status, replicating the above analysis using different data with better within-year coverage can help focus the analytic lens in a much sharper way to describe and assess issue distancing strategies.[27]

Following the above design, these ad data are similarly scaled to be on the same dimension as legislative behavior in Congress. Cosponsorship bill titles for the 108th to 110th

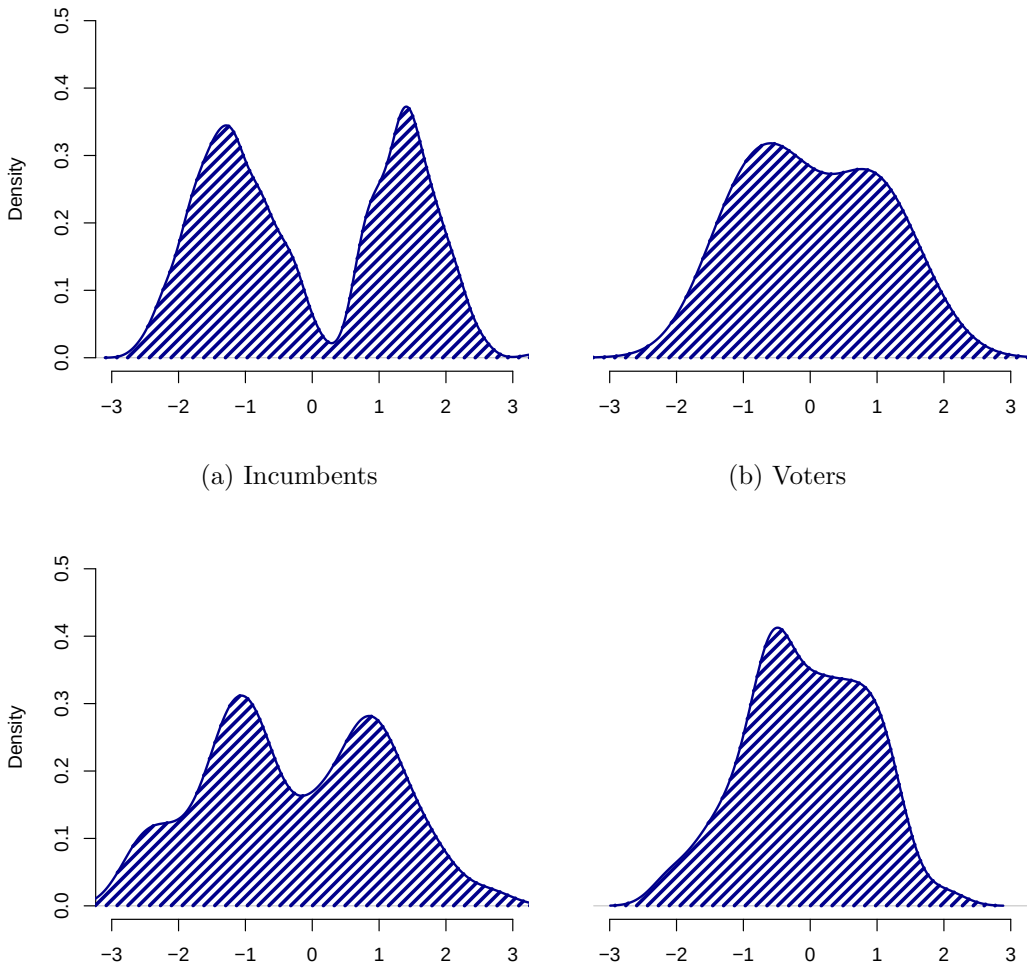
[27] This analysis uses the CMAG ad data in 2008, scaling 2,182 House ads aired across 158 races.

Congresses are used as common bridges to scale positions in the 2008 campaign to legislators' prior records. Additionally, I use the 126,548 respondents surveyed in the 2006, 2008, and 2010 CCES to measure district opinion on the same dimension as MC *roll call voting*.[28] This scaling design follows much of the pathbreaking analysis conducted by Bafumi and Herron (2010) to identify 'roll call' questions in the CCES survey that approximate the same alternatives that MCs faced on real floor votes in previous congresses. Moreover, I extend the analysis to utilize the CCES questions as a 'supersurvey' to combine as many roll call votes questions as possible across the 2006, 2008, and 2010 cycles (Warshaw and Rodden 2012). By linking these three surveys, this analysis can identify much more granular measures of district opinion with much lower error variance, and can greatly improve the quality of the scaling through a larger number of bridging votes across the surveys and Congress. In total, 19 survey questions are linked to 46 House and Senate roll call votes from the 108th to 110th Congresses. There are an additional 25 common issue survey questions across all three CCES samples, so that all respondents are scaled on 44 common items, while respondents and MCs are scaled on 19 items. MCs are also scaled on the full set of roll calls from the three congressional sessions, and all of this is done simultaneously. MCs then are scaled twice, once using their cosponsorship choices linked to bill words, and again using their roll call votes linked to survey responses from the CCES. These two scalings are reduced using a linear reduction technique to ensure that the average and variance moments of the two scale distribution are identical.

In replicating the analysis, as can been seen in Figure 4.9, candidates are indeed distancing in a similar way in the 2008 election, as across the early period. The figure presents unstratified density plots of scaled incumbents 4.9(a) and voters 4.9(b) for all 158 House races. Clearly we can see the stark pattern of polarization in incumbents' positions compared to the complete lack of polarization amongst voters in these districts in 2008. The figure also displays the scaled attack 4.9(c) and 4.9(d) promotion ad positions. While attack positions have some overlap in the middle, there is clear evidence of polarization in them, which resembles the roll call positions candidates took in Congress. The most striking result, however, is that positioning in promotion ads closely mirrors the distribution of opinion expressed by voters. While not dispositive, this evidence suggests that candidates are targeting the moderate opinion of voters in their districts when presenting their records in elections, and simultaneosuly seeking to portray their opponents as much more extreme in order to defeat them.

[28]The questions in the CCES were designed to be analagous to roll call votes rather than cosponsorship choices, thus demanding that such a scaling approach be used here. Howeover, limited tests uses a cosponsorship approach does not appear to change the basic results.

Figure 4.9: Effects of Hypothetical Positions on Election Oucomes



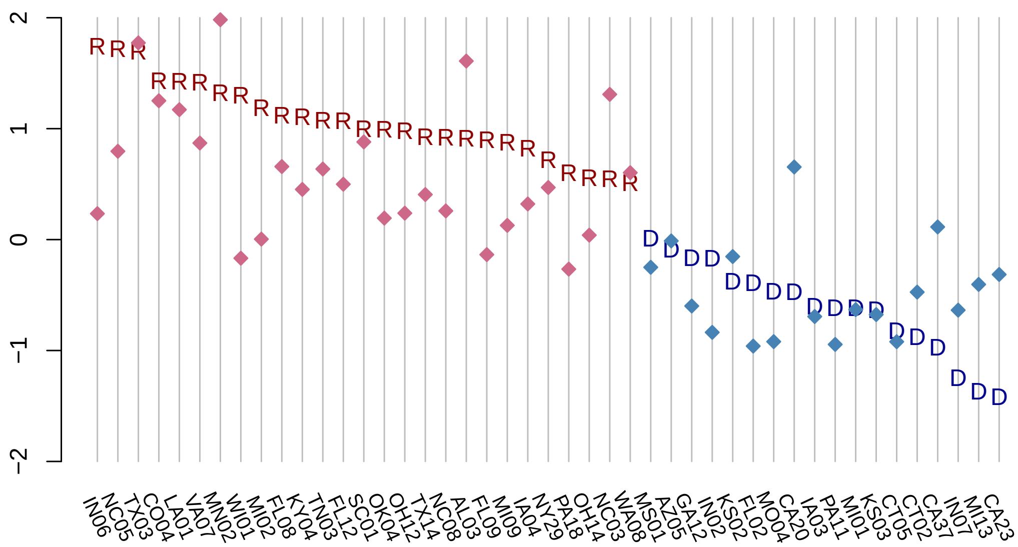
(a) Incumbents

(b) Voters

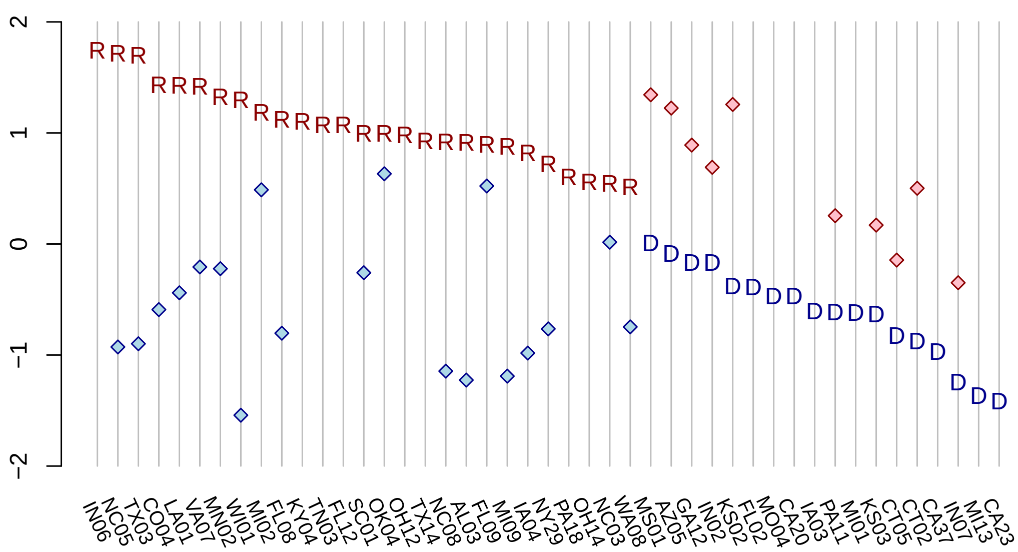
(c) Attack Ads

(d) Promotion Ads

Figure 4.10: District Plots of Incumbent and Challenger Promotion Ads: 2008

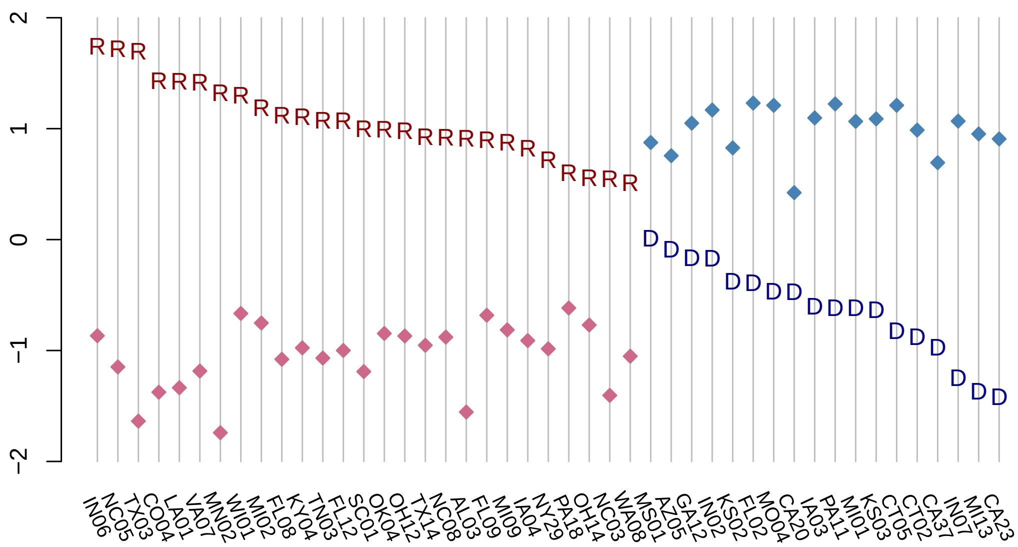


(a) Incumbents Promotion Ads

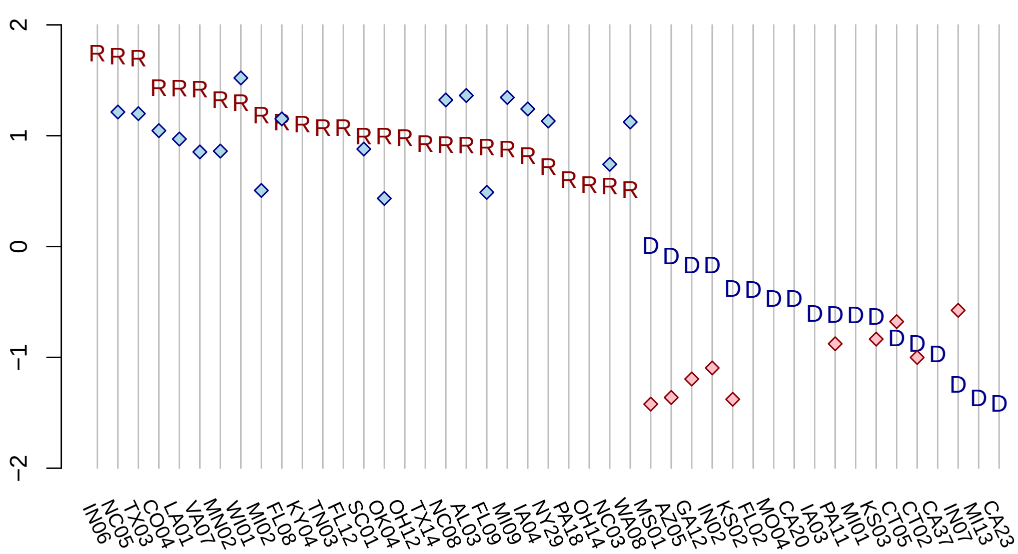


(b) Challengers Promotion Ads

Figure 4.11: District Plots of Incumbent and Challenger Attack Ads: 2008



(a) Incumbents Attack Ads



(b) Challenger Attack Ads

However, these densities do not tell the full story, since they aggregate legislator, advertising, and voter positions across all districts for 2008. Thus, a district-by-district comparison can provide much more detail about which subset of the electorate candidates seem to be courting in their ads or legislative records. Figure 4.10 and Figure 4.11 present incumbent ideal points (indicated by 'D' and 'R') alongside incumbent and challenger ad positions (indicated by $\diamond$) in the 45 most competitive contested races in 2008. Figure 4.10 displays the positive ad positions incumbents 4.10(a) and challengers 4.10(b) aired in these contests, with Republicans in red and Democrats in blue. (Voter ideal points are omitted here but are always in the interior of the incumbent's legislative ideal points.) Quite interestingly, we see a consistent pattern for most of the Republican incumbents to position in their promotion ads close to the center and more moderate than their legislative ideal points. As a consequence, nearly every single Republican incumbent in the sample positioned well towards the middle and away from their own more extreme legislative record. And in some cases this distancing was quite extreme. Yet, Democrats for the most part do not appear to be distancing in their promotion ads, except for the more extreme Democratic incumbents. Indeed, many Democrats appear to be largely running towards their own base of supporters or running more or less faithfully, an interesting, but perhaps not so surprising finding given the Democratic landslide election that 2008 turned out to be.

The distribution of challenger promotion statements in Figure 4.10(b), also appears to be evidence of targeting the center of the district, though these positions appear to be more variable than those for incumbents. Some challengers (especially Democrats) are promoting themselves as quite extreme, often mirroring the extreme records of their opponents. Yet, Republican challengers appear to be responding to district ideological forces and are promoting themselves in ways that closely track their opponents, taking more liberal positions when facing more liberal Democratic incumbents. Challengers are not, however, consistently taking ideological positions as predicted by some scholars (e.g., Grynaviski 2010; Snyder and Ting 2002). While challengers do not seem to be as consistently moderate in their promoton positions as incumbents, this could be due to the fact that they have less need to have to defend a prior record in Congress, are more free to take positions in the election, or are lower quality candidates than incumbents. It could also mean that distancing in elections is more important for polarized incumbents than for newly emerging challengers, whose first priority may be to build credibility as effective or experienced candidates.

In comparison, both parties' incumbents and challengers clearly are attacking their opponents as out of step on the issues. Figure 4.11 displays candidates' efforts to characterize their opponents through negative attacks. As can be seen in Figure 4.11(a), like the pot calling the kettle, incumbents are clearly targeting their opponents as extremists on the issues, and sometimes characterizing them as more extreme than even their own legislative records in the previous Congress. This targeting is found amongst the attack ads of challengers as displayed in Figure 4.11(b), who are also depicting their incumbent opponents as relative extremists. Indeed, this plot clarifies an interesting finding. For the most part, both Democratic and Republican challengers are airing issue attacks that appear to resemble the actual

ideal points of the sitting incumbents they are running against. For losing challengers, it is difficult to know if incumbents' attacks are also accurate reflections of the likely positions these challengers would take in office, though other evidence suggests this is the case.[29] Consequently, candidates and especially incumbents appear to be airing moderate ads in order to respond to these negative attacks by their opponents, which more or less accurately reflect the out of step records being compiled by politicians of both parties.

4.5 Valence, Values and Tradeoffs

The broad conclusion drawn from this examination of campaign position-taking is that competing candidates are essentially fighting for the middle ground in their broadcast communication strategies. Moreover, this electoral impulse amongst candidates appears not to have changed very much over the last few decades, in spite of dramatic changes in the way politicians represent their constituents in Congress. What has changed is candidates' willingness and ability to engage in attacks that portray opponents as out of touch and extreme on policy. However, an important assumption made throughout this analysis is that candidates are presenting policy information in ways that signal something important to voters about their past and likely future legislative priorities (whether accurate or not). While the findings above strongly suggest this is the case, there is some skepticsm amongst campaign observers and scholars that candidates are engaging in meaningful policy conversations in this way (Page 1978; Sides 2006; Simon 2009).

A major part of this skepticsm is that politicians are incentivized to avoid discussing specific votes or positions that split electorates. Though candidates may be able to use compensating information to weaken the severity of voter backlash to taking unpopular or divisive votes (Grose et al. 2013), this may be less effective than refraining from clarifying positions at all (Tomz and Van Houweling 2009, 2012). Instead, candidates could be expected to discuss issues, but in ways that are difficult to pin them down, largely by characterizing issue priorities in universalistic ways.[30] If this is largely the case, what can voters learn about candidate positions from their emphasis of vague or valence issues?

The discussion above highlights some ways that candidates can provide meaningful information simply by prioritizing some issues over others in their campaigns. For example, voters have some underlying expectations about the kinds of issues Democrats emphasize that make them distinct from Republicans, both in general and perhaps along certain issues (Egan 2013). Voters may base their judgements about the ideological positions of candidates on the issues they emphasize using these prior beliefs about the parties' policy reputations.

[29] Though a comparison of challengers' 'CFScores', ideal points estimated from patterns of campaign cash donations, to these incumbent attacks suggest there is a similar degree of accuracy here as well (not shown) (Bonica 2013).

[30] Another version of this point is that candidates may be engaging in policy convseration that is positional in nature, but are doing so on issues that are largely irrelevant or orthogonal to actual partisan conflict in Congress.

Indeed, candidates clearly prioritize some issues that 'go along' with these expectations, at least sometimes. Yet at other times, there is evidence that candidates do not polarize in their issue priorities, and in fact quite the opposite, candidates are frequently willing to emphasize the same issues (Sulkin 2005), or issues voters might typically associate with their partisan opponents (Sides 2006). Further, the way partisan candidates talk about different issues also appears to be distinct overall. Though again there is also strategic overlap here, suggesting that candidates are trying to use the descriptions and phrases of their partisan opponents when this helps them appear more centrist on the issues they emphasize. Finally, even if candidates always communicate in vague or universalist ways and emphasize the same set of issues, this would make it very difficult for voters to be able to discern real policy differences between party candidates, effectively allowing them to polarize without an expected backlash.[31]

However, the evidence uncovered in this and in the previous chapter pushes against this view that campaign ads are essentially about valence or ambiguous appeals. Indeed, voters are getting much more issue information than ever before, and a great deal of this policy talk is centering on the votes, bills, and cosponsorship decisions politicians are making in Congress. Alongside these communications, candidates are making specific references to roll call and bill numbers that could allow voters, opponents, and interest groups to seek out very specific information about a candidates' prior record. In other words, political actors are communicating in increasingly specific ways and linking themselves increasingly to specific actions in an unprecedented manner that, although certainly not in the pursuit enlightened deliberation, could scarcely be described as an exclusive emphasis on ambiguity or universality.

[31]There is a related point as well from the psychology of decision-making that people often must weight computing value claims that emphasize universality. For example, freedom and security are public goods that all voters generally would desire. But, these universal values may be seen as in conflict, so that even through valence issues people can communicate important information about their value-priorities. If these values also correlate with ideology or partisanship, then tradeoffs on these can provide voters with additional relevant policy information without actually discussing specific votes or legislative actions.

Chapter 5

Effects of Distancing on Election Outcomes

An implication of the above findings is that candidates who air more moderate messages should do better on Election Day. If voters update their impressions of incumbents and challengers in light of the give-and-take from the campaign, this new information should be expressed in their later vote behavior. In particular, incumbents who have compiled a more extreme record in Congress should be most likely to engage in issue distancing efforts to help secure an electoral boost for their reelection.

Yet, isolating the effects of campaign positioning is a difficult task. Strategic candidates are expected to act optimally during elections. Thus, candidates may take positions that are likely to cancel-out those of their opponents in competitive equilibrium. Campaign messaging then could have substantial effects on the margin, but there would rarely be an opportunity to observe these effects (Zaller 1996). Further, candidates spend a considerable amount of time, money and expertise developing strategies for targeting and mobilizing voters. Again the choices candidates make are likely to reflect those that best secure their election efforts. Candidates are likely to air more ideological messages to those supporters who are the most likely to respond positively to such positions, while taking a more moderate tack in the messages they send to centrist voters. Without observing these targeting choices it may be difficult to piece apart the effects of taking moderate positions from the selection effects stemming from the original targeting strategies. This task is made even harder when comparing the position-taking of candidates across, rather than within election jurisdictions, due to the myriad differences that characterize the distribution of congressional districts and states, most especially differences in the kinds of candidates that tend to run and win.

This chapter introduces and utilizes a new research design aimed at isolating the effects of campaign position-taking in congressional elections. The design uses the disjuncture between political jurisdictions and media markets to capture variation in the messaging that candidates air across markets, but within their own districts. This design then allows the comparison of otherwise similar voters who are choosing between the *same set of candidates*,

but who are targeted to receive different campaign messages by virtue of residing in different media markets.

The design relies on a previously unobserved feature of congressional campaigning, that candidates and incumbents target media markets with campaign messages that reflect the preferences of average voters in those markets. By scaling voters using a large battery of policy questions from a large sample survey in the CCES, I show that incumbents in the 2008 election target more extreme voters in more extreme media markets with more ideological campaign advertising, yet target more centrist media markets with relatively moderate messages. In other words, candidates tailor their messages at the media market level to take positions that better resonate with different audiences within the electorate, providing for variation in the ideological information distributed. Yet, this targeting is inefficient – candidates would probably prefer to tailor the specific messages that each individual voter would receive based on the latter's attitudes and preferences. However, candidates can only purchase air time in geographies with a diversity of preferences and characteristics, and thus are 'wasting' some of their targeting efforts on voters who would be more responsive to a different message. Being unable to perfectly sort preferences across media markets or individually reach voters, candidates inadvertently target some potentially unreceptive voters with either too moderate or too extreme a message.

In this design, I exploit these political disjunctures by drawing comparisons between voters who are similar in their ideological preferences, political attitudes, and demographics, but inefficiently targeted by candidates to receive different campaign information. People do not randomly choose to live in some places over others, and may be driven by their attitudes, talents, occupations, family ties, and host of other forces when deciding where to reside. If these differences also influence the way people vote in congressional elections, then there is likely to be bias in just comparing differences in incumbent support across media markets. In this chapter, I use genetic matching to restrict comparisons just to those people who are as similar as possible on a range of characteristics that are expected to influence both the probability of being targeted in a media market and subsequent congressional voting behavior.

To do this, I utilize a hierarchical matching algorithm that uses a genetic optimizer to find the best matches on a set of covariates for units assorted over geographies (Diamond and Sekhon 2014; Henderson et al. 2013; Sekhon 2011). The hierarchical component is used due to a novel element of the research design. Different voters receive different *doses* of ideological extremity in ads as a treatment, determined by their residence in fixed markets. These doses can be ranked in an ordinal fashion from moderate to extreme, and thus are not binary interventions. The goal is to see if more extremity (higher doses) influences candidate vote support. Estimating treatment effects from doses in observational data can be challenging since the objective is to find comparable (i.e., very similar) units with incomparable (i.e. very different) amounts of ideological extremity (Lu et al. 2001) when the latter is not randomly assigned. Without restrictions this is task is infeasible (Lu et al. 2011).

The research design used here greatly simplifies this task since voters must be compared to other voters residing within the same districts or states *and* across different media markets. Dissimilarity on doses is defined exactly as being in media markets with different ad exposures, and units in the most extreme market can be compared to those in lesser extreme ones for each level of dose-extremity within each relevant district or state. However, matching units across media markets in this way may not ensure that balance (similarity) is obtained over higher or lower doses across congressional districts or states. The hierarchical matching procedure is used to select matches over markets within districts or states in a hierarchical way so that balance is obtained across treatment (*more extreme message*) and control (*more moderate messages*) for the entire matched sample, rather than just within particular districts or states. Finally, I also evaluate a placebo test to assess the degree to which bias is being removed after matching. I find that more extreme messages in the heat of the campaign correlate with greater early-campaign (before the ads are aired) intentions of incumbent vote support before matching, but that after matching these differences are eliminated. This provides additional evidence that imbalance on any remaining unobserved factors are not contributing to the subsequent differences observed on vote outcomes as a response to ad messages.

After matching using the hierarchical procedure, I find that more extreme messages reduce the vote support for both House and Senate incumbents. I argue that this finding is especially persuasive, not only due to the fact that matching eliminates bias on the variable *most predictive* of actual vote behavior, but also because of the direction of bias that is expected to emerge from the strategic targeting of candidates, who air more extreme messages to extreme voters who are likely to respond positively to such messages. Thus, to the degree any additional bias remains, it is almost certainly attenuating rather than accentuating the magnitude of these negative effects overall recovered here. These findings suggest that candidates can get an electoral boost from taking more moderate positions, and that absent well-devised targeting strategies, would do worse in elections by airing more extreme messages reflective of their polarized and out-of-step records in Congress.

5.1 Difficulty in Studying Ad Effects with Observational Data

Studying the effects of campaign advertising is a difficult empirical challenge. Candidates optimize over campaign choices to maximize their chances at election, given the choices made by opponents and other political actors. Candidates may be choosing how much advertising to purchase, where to air these ads, what messages to include in them, and how much to invest in other campaign activities. All of these choices are likely to take shape as an overall campaign strategy, with each part interrelated with the others, and at best imperfectly (if at all) observed by scholars. Only observing one element of this strategy (e.g., ground mobilization, television ads) may miss the impact of the campaign more broadly, or may lead

to the mistaken inference of attributing an effect to the observed rather than unobserved portion of a campaign.

Further, campaign choices are likely to be made in anticipation of the choices made by opponents. If so, candidates may be getting huge benefits from their campaign investments, but these benefits 'cancel-out' when taken as a whole due to the counteracting impacts of the other candidates' efforts (Gerber 2004; Zaller 1998). For example, take two candidates who aim to just exceed their opponents' level of spending in a campaign, but find fundraising to be costly since it takes away time on other campaign events. In equilibrium, both candidates would spend roughly the same amount and would forgo additional fundraising. In this case, an empirical analysis would show no benefit to the marginal dollar spent, regardless of whether or not each additional dollar had an impact on the vote return for each candidate. Such a strategy may be relevant as well for campaign position-taking, where competing candidates aim to respond to their opponents' statements in order to diminish the latter's impact in an election.

Finally, candidates target voters during the campaign in highly strategic ways, and with considerable sophistication (e.g., Issenberg 2012). Candidates use professional consultants, focus-groups and surveys, and other information-gathering tools to get a sense of what kinds of messages succeed or fail. In more recent elections, these techniques have been merged with massive data collection enterprises, field experiments, and sophisticated voter modeling efforts to greatly expand the success of voter mobilization and targeting during campaigns (e.g., Gerber et al. 2011*b*; Issenberg 2012). As a consequence, the kinds of messages and their volume that get disseminated are likely to be targeted towards the sorts of voters most responsive to those advertisements. Then just comparing voters receiving different kinds or amounts of advertising will not provide an accurate glimpse of the effects of those messages overall since it is difficult to piece apart whether variation in ads have meaningful effects or whether voters get targeted differently based on their preferences over the competing candidates.[1]

In spite of these challenges, scholars have made some headway into studying the impact of campaign choices on election outcomes and behaviors. Recent observational research has used new and better measures of campaign activity to get at the effects of spending (Ansolabehere et al. 2001*a*; Gerber 2004; Shaw 1999), volume (Freedman et al. 2004; Huber and Arceneaux 2007; Krasno and Green 2008), tone (Franz et al. 2007; Geer 2006; Goldstein and Freedman 2002), and mode of delivery (Gerber et al. 2011*a*) on turnout and voter learn-

[1]These obstacles are made even more cumbersome by the feature that most traditional campaign data are often available (or analyses of these data conducted) only at the level of congressional districts or states, rather than within these political units (Ansolabehere et al. 2001*b*; Canes-Wrone et al. 2002; Franklin 1991; Jacobson 1978; Prior 2006; Shaw 1999). Comparisons using these data require scholars to pool their analysis over electoral jurisdictions where very different kinds of candidates may be competing against each other across widely different economic, institutional and political environments. If campaign strategies and voter behaviors are both driven in significant part by these other forces, pooled comparisons over jurisdictions without sufficient controls for these differences will be biased.

ing (Arceneaux 2006; Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Hillygus 2005; Krasno and Green 2008; Lenz 2009; Vavreck 2007), and to a lesser extent attitudes and candidate choices (Beauchamp 2012; Blackwell 2013; Huber and Arceneaux 2007; Johnston et al. 2004). This research is accompanied by a growing emphasis on experimental design to uncover meaningful campaign effects. In this vein, there has been a considerable focus on studying the turnout effects from campaign mobilization through direct contact on the ground (Arceneaux 2007; Green and Gerber 2008), and some limited research on the influence of ad content on candidate choices (Brader 2005, 2006). There are some related studies as well looking at candidate position-taking on voter attitudes through survey experiments as well (e.g., Kelly and Van Houweling 2012; Hillygus and Shields 2009; Tomz and Van Houweling 2008).

A broad summary of the findings from this vast body of research would highlight that candidates can spur greater turnout under certain conditions through television and direct mobilization, and may be able to inform or persuade at least some voters during the campaign. Moreover, voters appear to respond to information provided them about the positions or records of competing candidates, (e.g., Kelly and Van Houweling 2012; Hillygus and Shields 2009; Tomz and Van Houweling 2008), or the way this information is framed (e.g., Brader 2005, 2006; Grose et al. 2013). The latter findings suggest voters often penalize candidates with extreme or divergent records, but that politicians can gain some leeway for being out-of-step in discussing their and their opponents' positions.

For the most part, however, this research has not examined the effect that the issues or positions discussed in ads may have on voter choices, attitudes, or engagement. The most frequently examined type of content is advertising tone, which has been the focus of an enormous amount of study (e.g., Lau et al. 2007). Yet, very little analysis has been directed at evaluating whether the issues candidates emphasize or the positions they take in the campaign influences election outcomes.[2] Moreover, relatively few studies have sought to understand campaign effects in congressional races, with the vast majority of analysis focusing on presidential contests. In part, this latter emphasis is based on the greater availability of data on presidential campaigns, but also on the expectation that voters are most aware or engaged during national elections over the presidency, and are relatively uninterested in congressional politics or even House and Senate races in their state (Jacobson 2009). As a result, we know very little about whether or not congressional candidates can gain an electoral advantage by trying to portray their legislative records in a moderate or extreme light to voters. This study is thus novel in being one of the very first to look explicitly at the way candidates tailor their position-taking activities during the campaign to influence voter choices. Moreover, this is also one of the first studies to develop a research designe aimed at isolating these position-taking effects in House and Senate races.

[2]Of course another vast body of research has sought to understand the impact that position-taking in Congress has on election outcomes.

5.2 Identifying Campaign Effects Through Overlapping Media Markets

In this section, I develop and extend a research design that uses the disjuncture between media markets and political districts to identify the causal effects of candidate position-taking in the campaign on subsequent incumbent vote support in House and Senate elections. The design exploits the feature that candidates can only imperfectly target voters when communicating their positions through broadcast media efforts. Candidates appear to target voters in more polarized or extreme markets with proportionately more ideological messages compared to the targeting of voters residing in more centrist markets. In large part, this strategy may reflect efforts at tailoring messages to appeal to the policy preferences of different sets of voters within the electorate. Nonetheless, rather than airing a consistent message across the entire district or state, candidates in fact vary the ideological content of their advertisements exposing different voters to different information. The inferential goal is to compare the choices voters make in residing across different media markets that receive different kinds of information, and in particular in being exposed to extreme or moderate policy messages.

While strategic, this targeting is inefficient. This is so because candidates cannot target individual voters in media markets. Moreover, these markets are designed, not by political actors, but by decentralized market and consumer forces that determine where they are to be located and who will inhabit them. Though not random, these collective choices are likely to be determined by a myriad of factors that do not include congressional and campaign politics.[3] In trying to reach voters then, candidates may find that some are less responsive to the messages purchased and aired in their living rooms, and potentially would be more persuaded by those sent to people in neighboring markets. This inefficiency in targeting means some messages are 'wasted' for some voters – candidates might prefer to target these voters individually, or to see them better sorted with other voters who more closely reflect their policy preferences. Barring these options, candidates must forgo targeting each voter in order to win the bulk of support.[4]

This research design takes advantage of this imperfect targeting in order to find *comparable* voters who reside in different campaign media environments. If markets are heterogeneous in terms of the preferences and characteristics of those who reside there, this means that candidates may have a harder time appealing to the policy preferences of most voters through a broadcast approach. From an inferential standpoint, this also suggests that there may be similar voters who reside in other markets getting different messages, particularly if the

[3]This does not mean that these consumer and market forces do not correlate with the preferences of voters or the actions of politicians. Rather, media markets segment districts in ways that may make the resulting populations much more comparable than if political actors produced them.

[4]Another kind of inefficiency is that candidates may have imperfect information about the preferences of voters in their districts or states. This would imply an additional amount of leverage since targeting 'errors' made by candidates might be considered haphazard, resulting in a mismatch between messages and the views of voters.

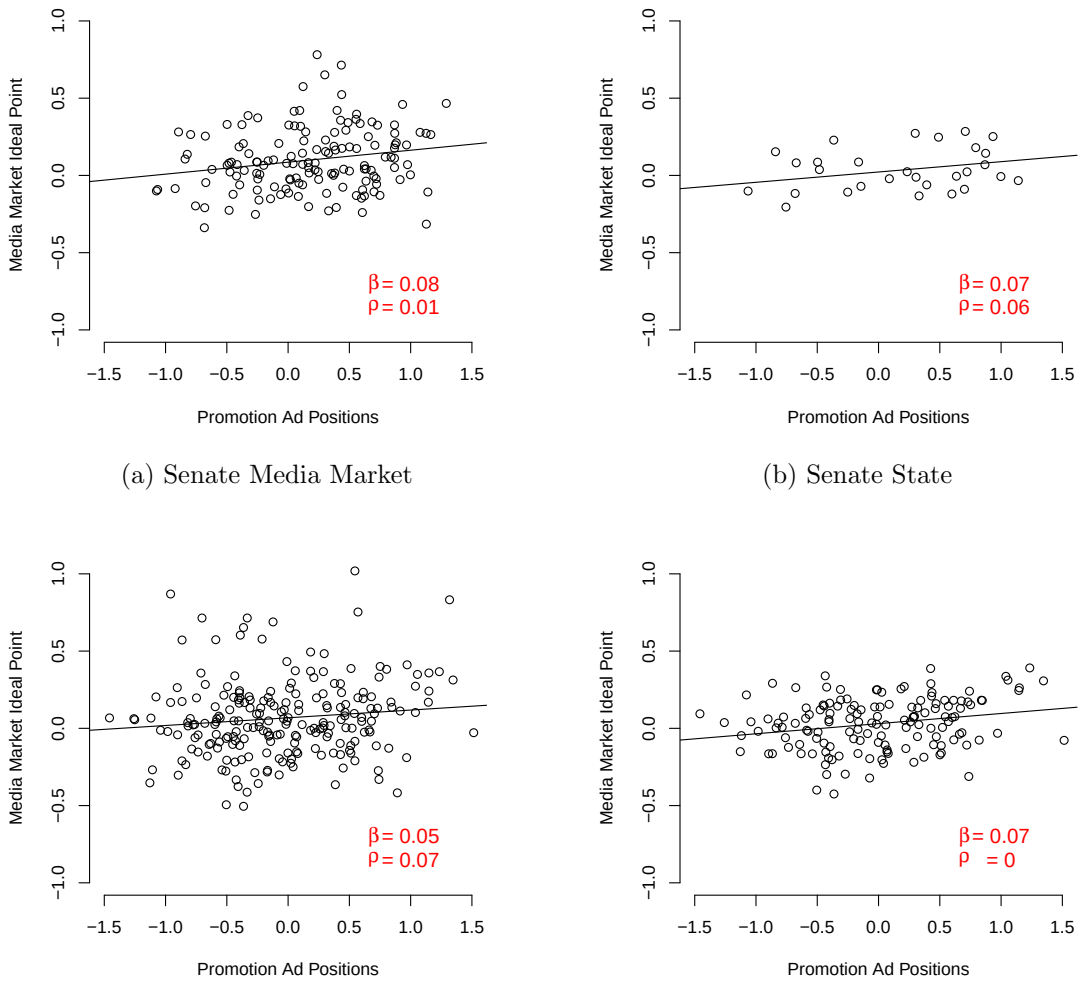
way media markets develop is independent of campaign decisions. On the other hand, if markets are very homogenous or come about due to forces that also influence the kinds of candidates who run for and win offices, this means that voters across media markets may be very different and in ways that are relevant for elections. Thus, although targeting is inefficient, it is an empirical task to ensure that features that distinguish markets do not also correlate with candidate behavior and elections outcomes in intractable ways.

Finally, a core feature of the research design is that it makes explicit comparisons between voters in the *same* jurisdictions and election cycles. In this way, the design holds constant a large number of forces that influence electoral behavior and that may contaminate previous studies of campaign effects. States and congressional districts greatly differ in their electoral rules and institutions, the social, demographic, economic and political characteristics of their populations, and the kinds of candidates that run and win, among many other things. In drawing comparisons across these jurisdictions to isolate the effects of different campaign messages, strong assumptions must be made about the appropriate model of confounding that these forces have on both voting behavior and campaign strategy. In comparison, this design keeps district- and state-level variation fixed, since voters can only be compared within the same election jurisdiction. No model is needed to adjust for these factors since the design ensures they cannot influence estimation.

Evidence of Strategic Targeting in Media Markets

A number of scholars have used related designs in observational data to exploit the idiosyncratic features of campaign advertising (or other media) to study its effects. Huber and Arceneaux (2007) consider the incidental exposure that blocks of voters receive by virtue of being in a market receiving presidential election advertising aimed not at them but at a neighboring battleground state. In this way, they argue that some political advertising is "as-if" randomly designed to certain portions of media markets, which allows them to compare the responses of voters given variation in this incidental exposure. In looking at turnout, Krasno and Green (2008) argue that the boundaries of media markets themselves are determined idiosyncratically so that the way they are designed is unrelated to the preferences and attitudes of their residents. Each of these research designs appeals to an experimental analogue. The former, for instance, could be considered akin to a field experiment where candidates assigned *fixed media markets* to particular advertising content on the basis of some known random process. Here the media markets are the level at which effects should be estimated, and the ad content is random. The latter study on the other hand, makes an assumption that voters effectively are being randomly sorted into different media markets that receive *fixed campaign messaging*. In this case, advertising may be strategic, but market residence is essentially random. Though both studies have developed novel and path-breaking research designs, they each make potentially strong assumptions about the haphazard way in which campaign media reaches and influences voters. This may be particularly so when turning to the study of campaign effects in congressional races.

Figure 5.1: Correlation Between Candidate Promotion Messages and Media Market or Political Jurisdiction Policy Conservatism



(a) Senate Media Market

(b) Senate State

(c) House Media Market

(d) House District

In looking at advertising data in the 2008 House and Senate races, it is clear that candidates do not randomly target media markets to receive extreme or moderate messages. Figure 5.1 shows the bivariate correlation between Senate 5.1(a) and House 5.1(c) candidates' average ad positions and the median ideal points of voters in the media markets. (Voters here are scaled in the same manner as done in Chapter 4 above.) Across both contexts, candidates tend to target more conservative markets with more conservative messages, and similarly for more liberal markets. Thus, voters on average are more likely to be exposed to messages that appeal to their policy preferences, and this likelihood increases the closer they are to the center of opinion in their own markets. Yet, somewhat surprisingly,

the correlation between these two measures is quite weak, although statistically positive. Also, these correlations are virtually indistinguishable from the associations found between preferences and ads in states or districts in Senate 5.1(b) and House 5.1(d) races. While ideological preferences are not the only thing being targeted by candidates, this evidence suggests that candidates do consider voter preferences *in markets* when allocating scarce advertising resources.

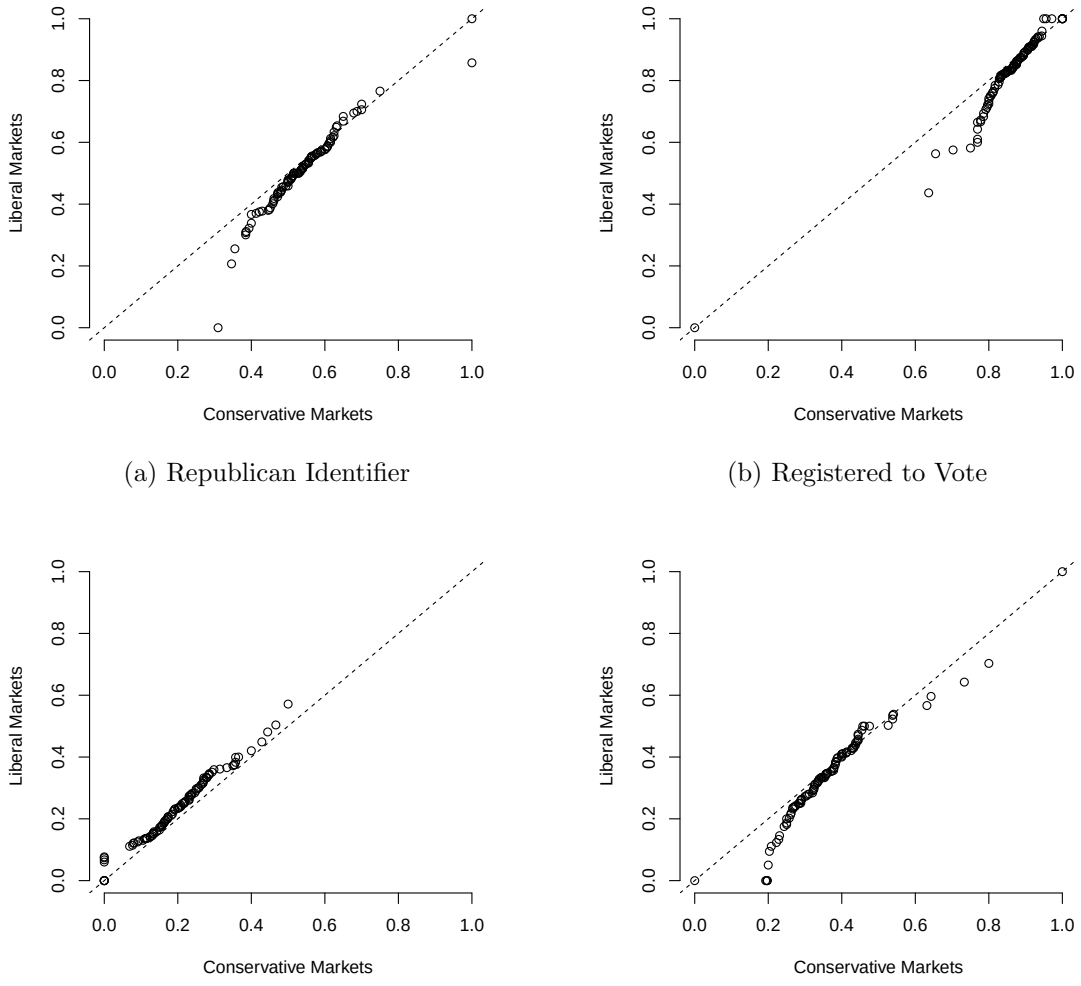
Evidence of Sorting Across Media Markets

Not only do features of markets influence the targeting strategies of candidates, but voters also appear to sort themselves across markets based on their attitudes and characteristics. There is considerable evidence that people tend to locate in places based on a number of political, economic, and social factors that tend to encourage homogeneity across geographies. For example, one long-standing finding is that racial segregation in the 1960s and 1970s led to large relocations of black populations into urban centers, and white populations taking exodus to the suburbs (e.g., Gabriel and Rosenthal 1989; King and Miezkowski 1973). Additional factors leading to geographical sorting also include differences in educational opportunities (Bishop 2008), income and employment (Glaeser and Tobio 2012), and shifts in technology and production flows (Krugman 1995), among other socioeconomic drivers.

There is also evidence that these residential patterns of relocation have consequences for partisanship and election outcomes. Scholars and observers have provided some evidence that people are increasingly locating themselves, often at low levels of geography, into areas with like-minded people who have similar partisan proclivities and issue preferences (e.g., Bishop 2008; Cho et al. 2012). This sorting may have to do with people who share similar economic or social outlooks that shape their political attitudes, making similar choices or having the same constraints about where to live. Or people may act openly on preferences about where to reside due to the political affiliations of their prospective neighbors. Nonetheless, this sorting may create differences across geographies, like media markets, that both influence elite behavior and correlate with voter choices. As a result, this political clustering may reduce the leverage gained from comparing responses across markets without adequate adjustments for those characteristics that differ between them.

The evidence above shows that conservative media markets are more likely to receive conservative political messages in ads aired. How different are inhabitants of conservative media markets compared to those who reside in more liberal ones? One way to assess this is to look at the distribution of politically relevant factors as these differ across both types of markets based on ideological measures of their residents. Again voters in markets are scaled based on their responses on the CCES survey to 19 items that overlap between House and Senate incumbents, and 25 additional items that overlap between respondents across the 2006, 2008, and 2010 samples. This scaling produces an ideal point for each individual ranging from liberal (-) to conservative (+), which are then aggregated by media market membership. A conservative market is one that is characterized by having a median ideal

Figure 5.2: QQ-Plots of Four Political Measures Across Liberal and Conservative Media Markets



(a) Republican Identifier

(b) Registered to Vote

(c) Union Member

(d) Churchgoer

point that is positive, and a liberal market by having a median ideal point that is negative.

The QQ-Plots in Figure 5.2 illustrate some important differences on four measures (*party identification, voter registration, union membership*, *churchgoing behavior*) across liberal and conservative markets.[5] Perhaps not surprisingly, conservative markets are more likely to have residents who identify as Republicans, as seen in 5.2(a). Across most of the distribution, the quantiles for Republicans are larger in conservative as compared to liberal markets,

[5]A QQ-plot compares the quantiles for one distribution against the quantiles of another. Deviations off the 45-degree line in a QQ-Plot indicate that the two distributions are different at those quantiles.

indicating that Republican candidates, of course, are likely to do better in targeting those sets of voters. Interestingly, conservative markets also tend to report higher rates of voter registration, along with other measures of political interest (not shown). This difference is often accounted for by concomitant differences in levels of education or income that tend to be found amongst liberals and conservatives. These differences appear to aggregate to media markets, and suggest there are potentially quite different levels of political engagement across markets that correlate with candidates' targeting strategies. Similar patterns are found for churchgoers as illustrated in 5.2(d), and the mirror image in 5.2(c) for union membership. Thus, conservative and liberal markets also are quite different in their levels of both religiosity and labor affiliation.

Union membership, church attendance, and party identification are some of the strongest predictors of candidate support (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), alongside issue preferences (Jessee 2012). In addition, differences in voter registration (and other forms of political participation) strongly suggest there will be different returns to particular kinds of campaign strategies given the costs to mobilize enough vote support to win. Thus, even if the degree of candidates' strategic targeting is weakly correlated with ideological preferences at the media-market level, there are additional reasons to be cautious about making (un)conditional comparisons of effects across markets. As can be seen here, voters differ across markets on a number of factors that may significantly influence their participation, attitudes, and political interests. These differences may interact with the kinds of information they are exposed to or receive, and thus may also influence the kinds of effects candidates would expect in targeting them in elections.

The research design here does not make the above assumptions that candidates target markets idiosyncratically, or that markets segment comparable populations due to either random residential decisions or exogenous market forces. In contrast, this design conditions on relevant features that are most likely to drive both individual residential decisions and candidate targeting strategies that tend to link similar attitudes to similar messages in the electoral arena.[6] On the other hand, the design does exploit the fact that candidates vary their messages, but cannot target these with precision or efficiency so that finding comparable voters on important covariates is feasible. In general terms, I argue that this research design helps overcome previous obstacles to the study of campaign effects in congressional (and in other) races. The design permits within-district comparisons to ensure voters are only compared if they are making essentially similar choices over the same set of candidates with the same histories and records. Further, competing candidates do not necessarily try to match each other's effort when targeting different media markets, and even if they did, this does not imply the effects would necessarily cancel across markets as opposed to within markets, districts or states.[7] Such a canceling effect would be expected to attenuate

[6]However, I also test whether making these assumptions changes the direction of the resulting inferences, and compare. Generally, doing so does not.

[7]For example, take a moderate voter in a moderate district who gets competing messages that make her indifferent between the candidates. A voter with identical issue preferences who resides in a liberal market

the effects recovered from this design, suggesting the estimates here will be conservative. Finally, by conditioning on factors that are likely to correlate with both the probability of being targeted and of receiving political or campaign information, this design may also be able to correct for confounding due to candidates' efforts on the ground and voters' differences in information exposures. Again, to the degree these biases persist, they should inflate estimates of the *benefits* of extremity since candidates are more likely to target their ideological supporters through ground mobilization efforts and the more political engaged are more likely to receive ad information and support co-partisan candidates.

5.3 Hierarchical Matching for Non-Binary Dose Treatments

In this design, the intervention being studied is a continuous measure of ideological position-taking aired across fixed geographies. A dose is any kind of intervention where units are assigned to one of multiple levels, so that no units are assigned to a "control" condition defined as the lack of any intervention. There are a number of theoretical and technical complications in studying experiments with continuous doses rather than binary treatments as interventions (Imai and Dyke 2004; Lu et al. 2001). With a randomly assigned dose Z, for example, a sufficiently large sample is needed at each sufficiently well-bounded interval of the dose to measure the response effect on Y given different amounts of the intervention. If doses are not perfectly randomly assigned, but are assigned on the basis of some set of covariates X, then stratification or sub-classification is often required (Imai and Dyke 2004; Lu et al. 2001). If X is of low-dimensionality, then one strategy would be to exactly stratify on X, and then measure the conditional response $E[Y|Z, X]$ in each strata.

In high-dimensionality settings, Imai and Dyke (2004) propose a generalized extension of Rosenbaum and Rubin's (1983) propensity score approach. One the major problems with using propensity scores to estimate conditional effects is that 'balance', or similarity on the X covariates, across levels of the intervention is often difficult to obtain after conditioning. For example, in a debate arising from LaLonde's (1986) effort to replicate the experimental finding from a work training intervention, a central disagreement arose over the degree to which matching on a propensity score could obtain balance, and thus exchangeability (Dehejia and Wahba 1999; Smith and Todd 2001). Apparently, good estimates approximating the experimental finding could only reliably be obtained from getting good balance across matched pairs, something propensity score matching did poorly in that case (Diamond and

may receive more liberal messages from both candidates. This voter would be more likely to support the more conservative candidate based on the particular message environment. Even if the aggregate difference in vote outcomes across both markets is exactly zero with candidates sending optimal messages in each market, comparing comparable voters across the markets would give leverage about the effect that a single strategy of extreme messages would have overall on the vote-getting ability of each candidate.

Sekhon 2014).[8] Even if the correct variables are collected and used, issues of common support often arise so that good comparisons simply cannot be made, even for binary interventions. These imbalances across a continuous covariate may be especially pernicious since, lacking very large samples, differences can be difficult to observe in regions of Z, or missed through parametric or non-parametric approaches that extrapolate using data at better balanced regions (e.g., linear regression).

An alternative is to match directly on the X covariates using multivariate distances to minimize these overall after matching. However, doing so effectively can require reducing the continuous intervention into a binary or categorical one, so that matches can be found across relatively few groups (Lu et al. 2001, 2011). The approach used here is an extension of this kind of approach. Following Lu et al. (2001), the basic goal is to match units into pairs based on minimizing distance on X while maximizing distance on Z. The way Lu et al. (2001) propose to do this is by matching optimally using a non-bipartite classification that finds sets of pairs that globally minimize a distance metric of the form

$$\delta_{ij}(X, Z) \quad = \quad \frac{\{f(X_i) - f(X_j)\}^2}{(Z_i - Z_j)^2} \tag{5.1}$$

for all i and j in the sample. Using this metric, potential matches are penalized for having similar levels of the dose, and no units are ever matched that have the same dose level.[9]

In studying campaign ads using the media market design, however, some pairs should never be matched. People who reside in different districts, for example, should not be matched when evaluating effects in House campaigns, and similarly for states and Senate races. This latter feature actually reduces the complexity of the matching since it not only limits the pool of potential matches for each unit, but does so by naturally transforming the continuous ideology intervention into a series of categorial ones. The way the design works is that each media market $m^{(d)}$ in each jurisdiction d is assigned some amount of ideological information $Z_{m,d}$. Each market $m^{(d)}$ can be ranked from most to least extreme $m^{(d)}_{(1)}$, $m^{(d)}_{(2)}$, ..., $m^{(d)}_{(M)}$, if $Z_{1,d} > Z_{2,d} > ... > Z_{M,d}$, based on this information from the candidates' campaign, where extreme is most liberal (-) for a Democrat and most conservative (+) for a Republican.

Every person in a media market is assumed to be equally exposed to $Z_{m,d}$ based on their residence in m producing an indicator $Z_{i,m,d} = Z_{j,m,d}$, $\forall\ i, j \in m^{(d)}$.[10] People can only be matched to each other if they reside in the same jurisdiction and a different market with different levels of exposure. But, individuals should be able to be matched across more than

[8] See also the poor performance of propensity score matching in a recent debate over the political returns to education (Henderson and Chatfield 2011; Kam and Palmer 2008).

[9] The probability of being matched goes to zero as Z_i approaches Z_j.

[10] Though this is a strong assumption, a number of covariates that predict political interest and engagement are balanced after matching which ensure that people are only compared to others with roughly similar rates of information exposure. A placebo check is also conducted to ensure that differences in exposure are not driving the effects recovered here.

one market, so long as this reduces dissimilarities on X and retains differences on Z. For example, take a case with four media markets in a district, $m_{(1)}$, $m_{(2)}$, $m_{(3)}$, and $m_{(4)}$. In making comparisons with units having received *more extreme* exposure, units in $m_{(1)}$ could be matched to units in $m_{(2)}$, $m_{(3)}$ and $m_{(4)}$, whereas units in $m_{(2)}$ could only be matched to those in $m_{(3)}$ and $m_{(4)}$, and so on. Units in $m_{(4)}$, however, could not be matched to any other units since it is the market with the most moderate campaign exposures.[11] Given this structure, there are a number of ways to match units. Matches could be based on the above distance metric, if $\delta_{ij} = \infty$ for any i and j in the same media market or different jurisdiction. However, for large data, matching in this way requires an enormous matrix on which many computations are required. Another way is to break up the matching exercise into a number of discrete matching steps producing multiple matched datasets for each jurisdiction, and then to combine each of these by selecting the best matches overall through hierarchical matching (Diamond and Sekhon 2014; Henderson et al. 2013; Sekhon 2011). Such a hierarchical approach is used here.

Following the above, units in $m_{(1)}$ can be matched to units in $m_{(2)}$, $m_{(3)}$ or $m_{(4)}$, which is designated as $\left\{m_{(1)} \rightarrow m_{(2,3,4)}\right\}$. For units in $m_{(2)}$, this is $\left\{m_{(2)} \rightarrow m_{(3,4)}\right\}$, for those in $m_{(3)}$, $\left\{m_{(3)} \rightarrow m_{(4)}\right\}$, and finally for $m_{(4)}$, $\left\{m_{(4)} \rightarrow \emptyset\right\}$ (typically excluded). Similar matching sets are elaborated for every political jurisdiction producing

$$S = \sum_{d=1}^{D} M_d - 1 \tag{5.2}$$

total sets for all D jurisdictions, and for M_d total markets in each d. Matching is done with replacement over each of these sets. Thus, a unit in $m_{(1)}$ could be matched to one or more units in $m_{(2)}$, $m_{(3)}$, or $m_{(4)}$, obviating the need to break this set into three additional matching exercises. The goal is to obtain balance on X across units with "high" extremism ads ($Tr = 1$) matched with units with "low" extremism ads ($Tr = 0$). For the subset of matches designated by $\left\{m_{(1)} \rightarrow m_{(2,3,4)}\right\}$, each unit in $m_{(1)}$ is considered a treated unit, $Tr = 1$, and each unit in $m_{(2)}$, $m_{(3)}$, and $m_{(4)}$, are potential controls, $Tr = 0$. For the set of matches $\left\{m_{(2)} \rightarrow m_{(3,4)}\right\}$, here units in $m_{(2)}$ are treateds, and units $m_{(3)}$ and $m_{(4)}$ are controls, and so on. Note, that some units overall will be considered both treated *and* control in the final matched sample. Indeed, this is a defining feature of what it means to compare units that all have received some *level* of an intervention, rather than a treatment or the absence of a treatment.

Efficiently choosing matches over dose categories in this way to obtain superior balance requires the use of a genetic algorithm (*GenMatch*) developed by Diamond and Sekhon

[11] This step is analogous to matching to identify the Average Treatment Effect for the Treateds (ATT) where treated indicates more extreme exposure. An equivalent estimator is the Average Treatment Effect for the Controls (ACT). Matching for this estimator would restrict things so that $m_{(4)}$ could be matched to $m_{(3)}$, $m_{(2)}$ and $m_{(1)}$, $m_{(3)}$ could be matched to $m_{(2)}$ and $m_{(1)}$, and $m_{(2)}$ to $m_{(1)}$, but $m_{(1)}$ could not be further matched. The Average Treatment Effect (ATE) would enable such comparisons in "both" directions.

(2014) and Sekhon (2011). GenMatch iteratively minimizes differences on the conditioning set of covariates X across units over multiple generations of matches. Genetic matching in hierarchical form performs two stages of matching. First, units are matched *within* each s matching set defined above, to obtain balance on covariates. Then in a second stage, matched pairs are selected across all S of the sets to ensure balance is obtained over the entire matched-sample.[12] This produces a final data set in which the sample of units designated as treated (*more extreme*) are exchangeable with units designated as control (*less extreme*), except that each treated unit has a greater value on Z than the associated control, so that the sample average of Z amongst treated is greater than that amongst control.

Dose Estimator for Continuous Potential Outcomes

After matching, estimation of causal effects can proceed under a number of assumptions. This approach builds off of the potential outcomes model of counterfactuals to identify causal effects (Rubin 2006). Here each unit i has a surface $Y_i^{(z)}$ of responses that is a continuous function of the continuous intervention Z. These potential outcomes are discretized in response to discrete realizations of possible doses assigned to markets within each political jurisdiction. The central assumption being made is that, conditional on X covariates, each i's surface of potential outcomes is exchangeable with respect to Z, or $\{Y_i^{(z)} \perp\!\!\!\perp Z|X\}$. Stated differently, if i and j have the same multivariate value on X, indicating an identical probability of receiving a particular does ($Pr[Z = z]$), then they are exchangeable across "high" and "low" dose assignments, so that $Y_i^{(high)} = Y_j^{(high)}$ and $Y_i^{(low)} = Y_j^{(low)}$, for any arbitrary designation of high or low doses. The same independence condition holds for discretized transformations of Z. Thus, the selection on observables assumption also holds for units designated as high or low exposures in the binary categorization above: $\{Y_i^{(z)} \perp\!\!\!\perp Tr|X\}$. This is typically called the *selection on observables assumption* (SOA), which requires that there is no remaining unobserved factor U that affects dose assignment and also influences the potential outcomes.[13] Generally, there is no way to assure that SOA holds, but a placebo test after matching can evaluate whether any apparent bias remains on a prior outcome measure that is most strongly correlated with the outcome under study.

Under the design, there are a couple approaches to estimating the effects of ad extremity on vote choices. One way would be to estimate the response of Y to changes in Z in the matched dataset, an estimator in the spirit of that recommended by Ho et al. (2007). However, this estimator is not guaranteed to be unbiased since confounding has been eliminated (under the assumptions) on a function of Z, that is, Tr and not necessarily the dose itself. The alternative approach taken here is to consider the effect of a positive "shift" in the dose on subsequent voting behavior, given the X covariates. Define a potential outcome for i if it is "shifted" to be $Y_i^{(z+)}$, and a potential outcome if i is "unshifted" to be $Y_i^{(z-)}$. The average

[12] See Henderson et al. (2013) for more technical details.

[13] Another is the *stable unit treatment value assumption* (SUTVA) which requires no interference in the assignment of doses across units.

treatment effect for the treated (*shifted*) (ATT) takes a common form:

$$E[Y_i^{(z)}|Tr_i, X_i] = E[Y_i^{(z+)}|Tr_i = 1, X_i] - E[Y_i^{(z-)}|Tr_i = 1, X_i] \tag{5.3}$$

A variant of this estimator is proposed in Rosenbaum (2002) and utilized in Lu et al. (2001). Interestingly, under an additive assumption of the effect of Z on Y, this estimator is in fact identical to the standard instrumental variables estimator, without the normalization in the denominator. However, neither of these previous studies discusses the link between these two dose estimators.[14]

To see the connection, note that the size of the shift on Z_i (also note the explicit indexing) is random since units under the design are being randomly assigned to different fixed exposures conditional on X_i and given "compliance" with the intended shift Tr.[15] The magnitude of this shift is a function of the indicator Tr, which is orthogonal to $Y_i^{(z)}$ under SOA. Moreover, Tr is excluded since the only way the indicator influences $Y_i^{(z)}$ is through the positive shift it "induces" on Z. Finally, since the above design ensures that no units are matched if $Z_i = Z_j$, the shift indicator induces a positive shift in Z_i across the matched pairs, and thus the entire matched sample, providing information about the effects that changes in Z may have on Y.

Rosenbaum (2002) introduces a similar estimator in the context of instrumental variables with the assumption of an additive response between an outcome and some dose. In this setup, a randomly assigned intervention Tr induces a shift in the dose Z for some units, specifically those who comply with the inducement in Tr. This shift in Z is exogenous since Tr is randomized. An estimate of the effect of Z on Y is available for the subset of the population who complied with Tr by increasing their level of Z, assuming Tr can only influence Y through Z. This final assumption of excludability is embodied in the additive model. To see this, using the above notation, $Y_i^{(z+)}$ is the potential outcome for units randomly assigned to treatment ($Tr = 1$), and $Y_i^{(z-)}$ is the outcome for units assigned control ($Tr = 0$). Similarly define potential outcomes for Z doses, so $Z_i^{(+)}$ is the dose taken for those assigned to the treatment inducement, and $Z_i^{(-)}$ is the dose taken for those assigned to control. An additive model makes the following assumption about the relationship between outcome and dose:

$$\left\{Y_i^{(z+)} - Y_i^{(z-)}|X_i\right\} \;=\; \beta\left\{Z_i^{(+)} - Z_i^{(-)}|X_i\right\}. \tag{5.4}$$

As can be seen, the only variation that can influence changes in $Y_i^{(z)}$ are changes in Z through an additive, constant effect β. Thus Tr cannot directly influence $Y_i^{(z)}$, and can only do so through the effect it has on Z.

[14] If the conditional response surface $\mathbb{R}|X$ between Y and Z is arbitrarily non-additive, it can be shown that the estimator in Eq. 5.3 is positive if more of the surface is increasing, and negative if more of the surface is decreasing in changes in Z.

[15] Technically Z is fixed, but Z_i is random and thus so is $Y_i^{(z)}$.

With this model, Rosenbaum (2002) develops a non-parametric approach to estimate the additive effect β. The traditional Wald estimator, however, can be recovered in a straightforward fashion. Using Eq. 5.4,

$$
\begin{aligned}
E[\beta|X] &= E\left[\frac{\left\{ Y_i^{(z+)} - Y_i^{(z-)} \right\}}{\left\{ Z_i^{(+)} - Z_i^{(-)} \right\}} \middle| X_i \right] \\
E[\beta|X] &= \frac{E[Y_i^{(z+)}|X_i] - E[Y_i^{(z-)}|X_i]}{E[Z_i^{(+)}|X_i] - E[Z_i^{(-)}|X_i]} \\
E[\beta|X] &= \frac{\overline{Y}^{(z+)} - \overline{Y}^{(z-)}}{\overline{Z}^{(+)} - \overline{Z}^{(-)}} \qquad (5.5)
\end{aligned}
$$

where the final expectation holds due to conditionally random assignment of Tr. This form of the estimator also illustrates the potential bias associated with regressing Y on Z after conditioning to estimate the dose effect. Only the variance in Z associated with the shift induced by Tr can be considered (conditionally) ignorable with respect to $Y^{(z)}$. In other words, the estimator in Eq. 5.5 is a causal effect only for the the subset of the sample for which $E[Z_i^{(+)} - Z_i^{(-)}|X_i]$ is orthogonal to $Y_i^{(z)}$, and thus is identified.

The analysis here focuses on estimation in the numerator rather than for the entire Wald ratio. Due to the matching restriction above, units are only paired if they have received dissimilar ad doses on Z. As a result, the "effect" of the shift on doses is always significantly positive. Using artificial terminology this implies Tr is a sufficiently informative "instrument". However, the size of this effect varies across matched samples, which could inflate or deflate the estimates relative to each other simply as a result of the conditioning (though the sign remains the same). This fluctuation does not affect the resulting hypotheses tests of statistical significance under the additive model (Rosenbaum 2002). Under the model (actually just assuming a strong enough instrument and excludability) the *intention to treatment* (ITT) estimator is a sufficient statistic for the test of whether Tr affects Y through the shift induced in Z (Rosenbaum 2002). If the ITT is zero, then no amount of influence on Z is propagating into change in Y. The reverse also holds as well.[16] The interpretation of the findings here then refer to the influence of positive shifts in the extremity of advertising on candidate vote support.

[16]Thus, if the ITT is non-zero, this implies that changes in Z induce changes in Y, unless Tr is weak or non-excluded. There could be heterogenous effects that cancel, but the Wald estimator is also statistically zero here.

5.4 Data and Research Design

This section turns to the practicals of implementing the overlapping media market research design to study the effects of advertising extremity in 2008 House and Senate races. Data on voter attitudes, choices and characteristics come from the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES), which sampled 29,872 people covering 208 of the top-210 media markets in the U.S.[17] These data are linked to their respective media markets by the CCES, and merged with advertising data at the media market level using content from the Wisconsin Ads Project (CMAG). The ads data provide information about the ideological information presented to voters across the top-210 markets, and the CCES data provide the covariates that are used during hierarchical matching, as well as the eventual vote choice outcomes under study.

The matching analysis focuses exclusively on the position-taking behavior of *incumbents* in contested races, rather than focusing on open seats or on the positions of challengers. This choice is made since incumbents have clear records from previous congresses that might constrain how they position, or how well their positioning works, whereas challengers and open seat candidates may be freer to take positions. A focus on incumbents with meaningful challengers then sharpens the analysis over whether or not out of step politicians can convince voters to reelect them in spite of their relative extremity given a real alternative. Challenger messages can be used later to evaluate whether, after matching, extreme incumbent messages help or hurt, conditional on the kinds of statements aired by their opponents.[18]

The intervention Z is measured similarly as above, using the same topic model scaling approached developed and implemented in Chapter 4. Thus, the ads are scaled to predict the partisan membership of House and Senate candidates, when the phrases from ads and bill titles are combined and analyzed simultaneously. Ads are scaled and then weighted by frequency of airing at the media market level to measure the average weighted ideological message sent to particular areas. Moreover, early and late campaign messages are separately measured. The late campaign is defined as all the ads aired in the last two weeks of the election starting on Monday. The early campaign includes all ads aired after the state's primary took place and before the last two weeks. Thus, the early campaign timing does vary across races, providing an additional rationale for ensuring within-district comparisons.

The treatment indicator Tr is first built from the distribution of this ideological content across markets as aired in the late campaign, and thus the last two weeks in the election.[19]

[17]The survey originally included 32,800 respondents of which only 29,872 had valid media market indicators.

[18]It is also difficult to simultaneously disentangle the effects from opponent and incumbent messages since these both are targeting media markets simultaneously. One way would be to consider the *difference* in messages, or to compare voters across environments driven by the interaction of incumbent and challenger messages. On the latter, given the limited number of media markets, such a segmentation would severely limit the possible comparisons.

[19]This is done so that vote intentions early on can serve as a placebo that could not have been influenced

More or less extreme markets, as defined by their receipt of ads, are ranked within states or congressional districts. A baseline binary indicator is then created for all units based on their market membership when these are compared to all the other markets within that political jurisdiction following the above design. Units in the most extreme market are compared to those in all the lesser extreme ones, then those in somewhat extreme markets are compared to those in more moderate markets, and so on, creating the S matching sets. This is done separately for House and Senate races, which are also matched and analyzed separately. This is the indicator that is used during hierarchical matching to find pairs that are as similar as possible on X covariates across higher and lower levels of ad extremity.

Prior to baseline analysis and matching on Tr, units that had indicated they had already voted are excluded from the analysis. Within each of these matching sets, units with higher doses are trimmed if they have values on Z that are less than one standard deviation of Z similar to units with lower doses, so that only units with meaningfully different ad content are compared. Finally, matching sets s themselves are trimmed if the number of units with higher doses is less than number of units with lower doses in them. This final choice is made to ensure that there are enough controls in the sample to match to treateds to obtain sufficient levels of balance on the covariates. Hierarchical matching then proceeds on the conditioning set of covariates.[20] Again matches are found within each matching set to compare different sets of units with higher or lower doses with similar pre-campaign characteristics. Then matches are selected over all of the sets in order to maximize balance across the entire matched data.

Evaluation of the quality of the matches, and estimation of matched effects proceed after the matching analysis is complete. Note that outcomes are never used in the matching process. Matches are only made based on whether or not they produce a set of pairs that are very similar on the X covariates used. The outcomes are only analyzed once the matched datasets have been produced. Here the main outcome is a measure of House or Senate incumbent vote choice, which is given by a follow-up survey after the election. The outcome is coded to be a binary measure indicating a vote for or against the incumbent.[21] A prior vote intention measure is also available from the pre-election survey, which measures the intention to vote for the incumbent later on Election Day. (The pre-election survey also contains all of the covariates used during matching.) Since the dates the survey was in the field are known, this prior vote intention can be used as a placebo to verify that biases have been removed after matching. Also, to the degree biases remain, this prior outcome permits the use of a *difference-in-difference* estimator, so that any remaining differences in prior vote intentions can be used to adjust the subsequent estimation taking these biased into account.

as a result of ads aired after these attitudes were expressed.

[20]These are found in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 which display balance on covariates in the Senate and House before and after matching.

[21]If the respondent did not vote, but expressed a willingness to vote for a particular candidate, they were recorded as such.

Table 5.1: Covariate Balance Tests for Census-Block Level Analysis: Senate

	Before				After			
	Mean		P-value		Mean		P-value	
	Tr	Co	μ-test	ks-test	Tr	Co	μ-test	ks-test
Senate Covariates								
Race	2.19	1.93	0.00	0.00	2.67	2.62	0.07	0.07
Gender	0.91	0.94	0.66	0.80	0.91	0.95	0.42	0.42
Age	3.06	2.98	0.15	0.03	3.11	3.15	0.22	0.07
High School Education	5.52	5.52	0.97	0.05	5.29	5.26	0.56	0.56
Some College Education	1.04	1.19	0.00	0.00	1.03	1.11	0.07	0.07
Income	2.16	2.31	0.00	0.00	2.35	2.34	0.84	0.06
Employed	0.95	0.95	0.98	0.93	0.95	0.93	0.68	0.68
Unemployed	0.19	0.24	0.25	0.97	0.22	0.18	0.49	0.49
Married	1.48	1.37	0.02	0.11	1.52	1.46	0.08	0.08
Parent	0.69	0.77	0.11	0.14	0.71	0.69	0.41	0.41
Attend Church	0.92	0.73	0.00	0.00	0.90	0.86	0.20	0.20
Born Again Christian	1.08	0.83	0.00	0.00	1.07	1.03	0.11	0.11
Member of Military	0.59	0.66	0.16	0.33	0.61	0.55	0.28	0.28
Member of Union	0.53	0.47	0.22	0.25	0.52	0.47	0.09	0.09
Scaled Ideology	0.26	0.22	0.45	0.20	0.25	0.27	0.57	0.07
Ideology Reported	3.23	3.06	0.00	0.04	3.21	3.15	0.17	0.56
Ideology Placed	2.29	2.11	0.00	0.00	2.38	2.32	0.10	0.06
Party ID	0.19	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.20	0.13	0.17	0.71
Registered Voter	2.31	2.23	0.09	0.31	2.52	2.55	0.40	0.40
Political Interest	1.78	1.76	0.58	0.75	1.78	1.76	0.54	0.21
Read Newspaper	1.36	1.33	0.62	0.74	1.37	1.38	0.79	0.79
Watch TV News	2.12	2.25	0.02	0.15	1.99	2.04	0.10	0.10
Listen Radio News	0.95	0.99	0.41	0.62	0.95	0.98	0.51	0.51

P-values are t-test or ks-test differences for means or distribution moments.

5.5 Findings

Balance and Placebo Results

The initial constraints imposed by the design itself appear to reduce differences across media markets receiving more compared to less extreme messages. However, clear differences still remain. Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 present balance results across media markets before and after matching for Senate and House races, respectively. Again the treatment indicator

Table 5.2: Covariate Balance Tests for Census-Block Level Analysis: House

	Before				After			
	Mean		P-value		Mean		P-value	
	Tr	Co	μ-test	ks-test	Tr	Co	μ-test	ks-test
House Covariates								
Race	2.78	2.86	0.10	0.84	2.73	2.76	0.28	0.28
Gender	0.99	0.93	0.24	0.79	0.99	0.96	0.47	0.47
Age	3.02	3.07	0.31	0.35	3.15	3.16	0.88	0.19
High School Education	5.04	5.10	0.14	0.03	5.45	5.58	0.00	0.00
Some College Education	1.12	1.16	0.40	0.16	1.12	1.08	0.35	0.35
Income	2.35	2.32	0.49	0.42	2.35	2.38	0.46	0.36
Employed	1.05	0.95	0.04	0.03	1.05	1.01	0.33	0.33
Unemployed	0.22	0.21	0.87	0.57	0.23	0.18	0.29	0.29
Married	1.44	1.39	0.35	0.80	1.46	1.49	0.33	0.33
Parent	0.79	0.68	0.02	0.06	0.78	0.75	0.31	0.31
Attend Church	0.76	0.75	0.76	0.57	0.76	0.73	0.32	0.32
Born Again Christian	0.81	0.77	0.37	0.40	0.80	0.82	0.62	0.62
Member of Military	0.74	0.68	0.22	0.17	0.74	0.70	0.31	0.31
Member of Union	0.51	0.68	0.00	0.02	0.55	0.51	0.31	0.31
Scaled Ideology	0.22	0.14	0.12	0.36	0.23	0.21	0.71	0.16
Ideology Reported	3.08	3.00	0.09	0.09	3.05	2.90	0.00	0.14
Ideology Placed	2.16	2.13	0.56	0.74	2.18	2.17	0.90	0.16
Party ID	0.09	0.04	0.23	0.40	0.10	0.10	0.91	0.92
Registered Voter	2.44	2.44	0.99	0.86	2.44	2.44	0.94	0.94
Political Interest	1.78	1.84	0.22	0.60	1.76	1.80	0.31	0.57
Read Newspaper	1.38	1.39	0.76	0.63	1.38	1.41	0.31	0.31
Watch TV News	2.21	2.22	0.88	0.71	2.22	2.24	0.60	0.60
Listen Radio News	1.04	0.90	0.01	0.03	1.03	1.00	0.30	0.30

P-values are t-test or ks-test differences for means or distribution moments.

is built from the doses of ad extremity distributed across media markets and constrained so that units are only compared to units in other media markets following the design above. The values for treatment in the first column and control in the second column of both tables are the average moments for those in more or less extreme markets across a series of covariates used in the matching process, before matching takes place. (All moments are normalized by the standard deviations of each respective covariate.)

As can be seen in Table 5.1, there are a number of differences across people residing in markets exposed to extreme messages compared to those residing in markets targeted with

more moderate messages in Senate races. For example, voters in Senate markets targeted with extreme messages are more likely to be white, churchgoing, ideologically extreme, and Republican, but have lower levels of income and education. While there are similar differences across markets in House races as seen in 5.2, these are much more modest. People in House markets targeted with extreme messages are less educated, more ideological and more politically engaged. Yet, these respondents are surprisingly similar to those in moderately targeted markets even before matching takes place. In part, this similarity may be due to the feature that House candidates appear to target media markets in more haphazard ways than Senate incumbents. Moreover, by virtue of the research design, differences across electorates for both Senate and House races may be minimized since people can only be compared to those in the same jurisdiction. This feature may also help reduce differences across respondents exposed to different kinds of campaign messages.

On the other hand, the treatment indicator pools over respondents residing in markets targeted by extremely liberal and extremely conservative messages, and compares these populations to those residing in markets targeted by more centrist ads. It is likely that differences across respondents in extreme- and moderate-targeted markets are being diminished by this pooling. Thus, those in extremely liberal markets may be quite different from those in moderate ones, and also for extremely conservative ones, but that these voters may be different in different ways. Matching not also reduces differences across extremely and moderately targeted respondents, but also does so for those targeted by liberal or conservative messages. This ensures that subsequent comparisons of this targeting do not depend on biases from these original targeting strategies.

After matching, differences across a wide range of covariates are very well-balanced as illustrated in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2. Column seven of both tables present t-test p-values, and column eight shows ks-test p-values, which assess differences across the whole distribution of covariates for those in markets targeted by extreme or moderate messages. For the Senate, every covariate is balanced at the $p < .05$ level (and most are in fact better balanced), for both differences in means and differences across the whole covariate distribution. These tests show that after matching, people exposed to extreme or moderate messages in Senate campaigns are very similar across a range of covariates most relevant to their incumbent vote decisions. Balance is also obtained after matching across markets in House races. With the exception of *high school education* and *reported ideology*, every covariate is balanced at the $p < .10$ level. Also, the whole distribution is balance at $p = .14$ for *reported ideology*, and the other two ideology measures are also very similar after matching. While the whole distribution is imbalanced for *high school education*, the variable *some college* is balanced. Overall after matching, respondents are very similar across markets within districts targeted with differing amounts of ideological information in House and Senate contests. This suggests that a great deal of bias has been eliminated on a range of important covariates from both the implementation of the research design and the hierarchical matching procedure.

Although levels of balance are very good after matching, there could still be remaining

Table 5.3: Early Campaign Vote-Intention Placebo

	Senate		House	
	Tr - Ct	P-Value	Tr - Ct	P-Value
BEFORE				
Vote Intention	0.075	0.00	0.039	0.10
AFTER				
Vote Intention	0.022	0.34	-0.004	0.09

P-values are t-test for a difference in means.

bias, either due to some unobserved confounder or due to the above imbalances on the matching covariates. In order to assess whether any bias remains that may influence the resulting estimation, I conduct a placebo test. In this test, I estimate the effect of being targeted by *more extreme* messages late in the campaign on early campaign incumbent vote intentions. In the weeks leading up to the heat of the campaign, respondents in the CCES are asked to express an intention to vote for their House or Senate incumbent, or to support another candidate. (People who voted early are excluded.) The survey is no longer in the field in the last two weeks of the campaign. Since the ad messages are being aired *after* respondents express their intentions to vote for the incumbent or not, these latter ads could not have any effect on this prior support. Further, this prior intention strongly predicts subsequent vote intention, and may in fact be the strongest predictor collected in the survey. Thus, if any differences persist on this placebo after matching on ad extremity, this is evidence that bias has not been removed, and that the resulting estimates of ad effects may be confounded.

Table 5.3 presents the results of the placebo test before and after matching for both House and Senate elections. Before matching there is clear evidence that likely supporters are being targeted with more ideologically extreme messages from incumbents. Again this confirms the targeting evidence uncovered above that more extreme voters, who are more likely to support polarized or co-party incumbents, also receive more ideological messages during the campaign. Apparently, this is the case even in the final push over the last two weeks of the election. This bias, however, is largely removed after matching. For Senate contests, voters receiving more extreme messages are more likely to support an incumbent, but this difference is not statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level. The difference is also much smaller in magnitude after matching than before, and is still positive. If this very small bias persists it is likely to attenuate the resulting estimates.

Bias is also substantially removed for House races as shown in the third and fourth

columns of Table 5.3. Before matching, people targeted with more extreme ad content are also more likely to support their House incumbents, though this difference is just not significant at the $p < .10$ level. These differences are also largely removed after matching, reducing the magnitude of these selection effects by a factor of ten. However, small differences do remain, though in this case the differences after matching are negative. Also, this negative difference is statistically different from zero with a p-value of 0.09. While in both cases, pre-campaign targeted biases have been significantly removed, there may still be small differences in baseline levels of incumbent support that require additional adjustment through the use of a *difference-in-difference* estimator. An additional justification for including these baseline differences in the estimator is that differences may persist within particular strata in the data (e.g., Republican or Democratic incumbents), even though they are negligible for the sample as a whole.

Main Findings

In general, the findings indicate that being exposed to extreme ad messages actually *reduces*, rather than increases incumbent vote support. The goal of the research design is to compare the incumbent support of similar voters who reside in the same jurisdictions and thus are deciding between the same set of candidates, yet have received different advertising content. In this vein, after reducing the differences between voters exposed to moderate and extreme messages that emerge due to residential choices and candidate targeting strategies, voters appear more likely to punish incumbents by voting for their opponents. The reverse interpretation also holds, that voters are willing to provide greater support for incumbents when they air more moderate rather than more extreme messages in their reelection campaigns.

The main results, before and after matching, are displayed in Table 5.4. As can be seen, the effects of more extreme messaging in the sample, before matching, still reflect selection effects also apparent in the placebo test above. The ATT estimate for *Bivariate* is a standard bivariate model regressing the post-election vote support outcome on the ad extremity binary indicator just imposing the within-district (or within-state) design.[22] Here units with missing values on the incumbent vote support measure are removed from the analysis. As can been for both the House and Senate, voters are more likely to support an incumbent if they receive more extreme ad messages, at a rate of 0.080 for Senate and 0.019 for House races. However, the magnitude of these differences are very similar to those recovered for the placebo test in Table 5.3. Indeed, the difference on the pre-campaign vote intention variable for the Senate is 0.075 and is 0.039 for the House. Thus, it appears that biases in the unmatched sample could very well be inducing these differences recovered in subsequent vote support.

One way to verify this is to estimate treatment effects after differencing off baseline imbalances on the prior vote intention measure. A difference-in-difference (*Dif-in-Dif*) estimator

[22]Note, this regression is interpreted under a linear probability model. In bivariate form, this model is equivalent to an unconditional test of difference in means.

Table 5.4: Effects of Extreme Ads on Incumbent Vote Support in House and Senate Races, Deleting Missing Responses

	Senate		House	
	ATT	P-Value	ATT	P-Value
BEFORE				
Bivariate	0.080	0.00	0.019	0.46
Dif-in-Dif	0.004	0.91	-0.024	0.49
AFTER				
Bivariate	-0.043	0.08	-0.009	0.74
Dif-in-Dif	-0.078	0.02	-0.013	0.70

P-values are OLS with Huber-White standard errors. Dif-in-Dif includes interacted time fixed effects, and state or district fixed-effects.

does this, making a slightly different assumption about confounding. Rather than assuming that the potential outcomes $Y_i^{(z)}$ are exchangeable with respect to Tr given X, this estimator allows for differences to persist in pre-treatment prior outcomes $Y_{it}^{(z)}$ at time $t-1$. However, the difference in potential outcomes between t and $t-1$ must be exchangeable across treatment assignment, or $\left\{Y_{it}^{(z)} - Y_{it-1}^{(z)} \perp\!\!\!\perp Tr|X\right\}$. This assumption means that whatever change unit i would have experienced on Y having been assigned to treatment between the two periods, is the same change that unit j, being assigned to control, would have experienced if she received the treatment condition instead. Thus, as long as the path between t and $t-1$ are parallel across treatment and control, conditional on X, the *Dif-in-Dif* estimator is a causal estimate of the treatment effect.[23]

In estimating the *Dif-in-Dif* in the sample before matching, we see much of the selection effect being removed. Not surprisingly, the resulting estimates before matching both either shrink considerably or even become negative after difference off baseline imbalances. However, this is before any conditioning has taken place. After matching, the results point to consistent evidence that extremity in the campaign hurts incumbents. And this negative effect is especially apparent in Senate races. In Table 5.4, both the *Bivariate* and *Dif-in-Dif* estimates of the effects of ad extremity in Senate races are negative and statistically significant, with p-values of .08 and .02 respectively. In the bivariate comparison, the magnitude of the effect is a -4.3 percentage point loss of incumbent vote support. After differencing off any remaining baseline bias, the change in incumbent vote support in the Senate drops off much

[23]See Abadie (2005) for more details on the estimator and assumptions.

Table 5.5: Effects of Extreme Ads on Incumbent Vote Support in House and Senate Races, Imputing Missing Responses

	Senate		House	
	ATT	P-Value	ATT	P-Value
BEFORE				
Bivariate	0.072	0.00	0.015	0.04
Dif-in-Dif	-0.004	0.33	-0.024	0.00
AFTER				
Bivariate	-0.020	0.01	-0.012	0.09
Dif-in-Dif	-0.052	0.00	-0.025	0.00

P-values are non-parametric bootstrap probabilities with ten multiple imputed datasets

more dramatically at -7.8 percentage points for voters receiving extreme compared to moderate messages. Smaller effects are also recovered for voters in House races, with losses ranging from about -0.9 to -1.3 percentage points associated with more extreme strategies. Thus, after matching, there are consistently negative effects of being exposed to more partisan or ideological messaging, though these effects are small in magnitude for House races.

One issue in the above analysis, is that there is some item and unit attrition in the CCES post-election sample. As a result, 25.3% of respondents do not have valid responses for whether they voted for or against their House incumbent, and 18.5% do not have valid responses for Senate incumbents. In part, this rate of respondent non-response may lead to a reduction in statistical power, so that the above analysis may not be able to discern small differences, for example those recovered in House races. Potentially more troubling, however, is that this non-response is correlated with both prior incumbent vote intentions *and* the extremity of targeted advertisements. Voters more likely to receive extreme messages and support their incumbent are also more likely to remain in the sample and have valid post-election outcomes. If these differences propagate into the estimation in this study, attrition is likely to dampen the magnitude of the recovered effects.

To check if missing data are influencing the resulting estimates, I impute values for missing incumbent vote outcomes using the same covariates in Table 5.1 and 5.2 to model the conditional non-response process. In particular, I use multiple imputation by chained equations that uses an iterative approach that regresses each prior imputed covariate on the remaining covariates (either whole or also imputed) to make imputation predictions in successive

cycles (Azur et al. 2011).[24] Ten different imputed outcome measures then are created in the process for those units with missing data. In this way, imputing multiple outcomes allow for the uncertainty in the imputation model to propagate into the estimator variance, rather than to assume these are data measured without error. Bootstrap estimates and standard errors are recovered by randomly sampling from each units' ten different outcomes, which is done 1,000 times.[25] One thousand *bivariate* and *Dif-in-Dif* estimates are then recovered for the sampling set, producing a distribution of each given the uncertainty underlying the imputation model. Moments of these bootstrap sample estimator distributions are used to estimate the standard errors and p-values for these estimators and tests.

Indeed, after matching there is a much more consistently negative effect of ad extremity on incumbent vote support. Table 5.5 reports the effects before and after matching including the imputed outcomes. In the design after matching, negative and significant declines are recovered for incumbents targeting voters with more extreme messages in Senate races, as seen in the data with missings deleted. For the House, statistically significant and negative effects are also recovered after matching. While the *Bivariate* effects are just significant for the House at the $p < .10$ level, the *Dif-in-Dif* estimates are statistically different at the $p < .001$ level.

5.6 Concluding Thoughts

This analysis, alongside the findings above, both strongly point to important losses to candidate strategies emphasizing more polarized or extreme messages when these are exposed to a broader array of voters outside the most extreme markets. These findings also suggest that if candidates altered their campaign strategies to target the entire district or state with more extreme messages, they would likely lose voter support in the process and especially in more centrist markets. Thus, candidates can potentially make important gains at election time by tailoring their ads to reflect greater moderation, in spite of their more polarized records.

Moreover, these benefits to moderation point to quite substantive and tangible advantages from issue distancing in securing reelection. In 2008, 11 House races were decided by less than a margin of 5% (or a 2.5% vote swing), and 3 Senate races were decided by a margin of 5.2% or less. Consequently, had candidates in these close races not engaged in distancing strategies, it is possible that their campaign positions could have seriously contributed to the unmaking of their political careers. While the numbers of close races may not appear significant in total terms, these and other races may have been even tighter had incumbents (and especially Republicans) chose to run faithfully on their out of step records. Further, even this small margin of vote seat control can certainly determine which party holds the

[24]The central assumption is that missingness is random conditional on X covariates.

[25]This assumes that each unit's imputed values are independent of the other unit's imputations, which holds under the missing conditionally at random assumption behind multiple imputation.

majority when the balance of power in Congress is close, and even when it is not, such a shift could move the the policy medians in both chambers towards one end of the aisle or the other.

More generally, however, it is difficult to interpret these findings outside the bounds of real campaign choices. In the design, voters who get exposed to moderate and extreme ad environments, are compared based on information that could plausibly arise in actual elections. There may be very real limits to how moderate or extreme candidate messages may be able to be, before additional losses are felt. In a similar way, if a Democratic candidate tried to position far to the right of her Republican opponent, or vice versa, this kind of "moderation" would very likely hurt her reelection chances (Sniderman 2011). Thus, though moderate campaign strategies appear to help candidates, the positive benefits are liable to rest on other factors that may very well be fixed across markets, districts and states, and that constrain how much distancing is in fact possible.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The growing representational disconnect in Congress has both puzzled scholars and troubled commentators in recent years. Prominent observers, for example, worry that polarization is making Washington a more hostile, combative, and obstinate environment to conduct the people's business (e.g., Mann and Ornstein 2012). Indeed, according to some commentators, *the* defining feature lawmaking in the 112th (and now 113th) Congress has been partisan gridlock, obstruction and confrontation (Klein 2012). From violations of decorum (e.g., "You Lie!") to unprecedented legislative confrontations (e.g., the Senate's ongoing refusal to confirm routine court appointments), polarized partisanship seems to have found its way into nearly every aspect of political life.

In the 112th Congress, House Members voted 33 times to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), an entirely symbolic expression of the Republican's strenuous opposition to President Obama's signature policy achievement. As if that weren't enough, the 113th House continued right where the 112th left off, with the first bill introduced in the session being a repeal of ACA, and 40 more repeal votes before the 2013 summer break. A consequence of this heightened partisan effort is that the 112th (and now again the 113th) has been one of the least productive Congresses, in terms of passing public laws, in the last century.

This is not to say that Congress has done nothing since the start of divided government with the Republican House takeover in 2010. In fact, perhaps the most dramatic moment in the 112th Congress was the showdown over the debt limit ceiling. The Republican House majority took a typically routine vote to authorize the executive to borrow to meet already-allocated congressional expenditures, and turned it into an all-out confrontation, risking a government shutdown, in an effort to force Obama and the Democrats to agree to major cuts to federal spending. For their part, the Democrats were accused of shifting the spending goalposts throughout the ensuing negotiations, acting in bad faith until a shutdown was averted with a deal at the last minute. Ominously, similar storms are brewing on the horizon over the upcoming sequester budget cuts, and perhaps a sequel to the prior debt limit brawl.

This sustained process of polarization has puzzled scholars in significant part because

voters say that they want less partisan confrontation, appear to prefer much more moderate legislative action, and strongly disapprove of Congress and its performance. Ever since the work of Downs (1957), there has also been a strong expectation that in two candidate competition, candidates and parties should converge to the center of opinion to maximize their electoral chances. In contrast, a more recent argument for why the parties have engaged in these very public spats of obstruction and confrontation, is that doing so can help the electoral chances of the members of one party by bolstering their own and tarnishing their opponents' party reputations (Groeling 2010; Lee 2009). Accordingly, voters then punish one side based not on the substance of policy, but on which side is winning partisan battles. An alternative to this view is that under divided government, polarized parties have little room to compromise on policy since they can agree on so little. Due to these major policy disagreements, other confrontations about outcomes tend to erupt over process as well. Of course it is likely that both motivations are at work. But if so, then why do moderate voters continue to reward this immoderate policy and partisan activity in elections?

The answer provided here is that candidates are capable of moderating the *messages* they communicate to voters, and thus can be freed from having to closely follow the policy demands of their centrist electorates. While previous scholars saw polarization as evidence against the convergence prediction of the Downsian spatial model, in an ironic turn, politicians appear to be responding to electoral pressure to converge in their campaign statements. By imparting an image of moderation, bipartisanship, and responsiveness, individual candidates can get away with more partisan and ideological effort during the legislative process. In this way, campaign communication and legislative representation should be seen as distinct though related activities, that in combination provide politicians with some room to dampen constituency control over their actions.

To test this prediction, I examine forty years of congressional campaign behavior. In particular, I analyze the positions House and Senate candidates take in their television advertisements to assess whether representatives are running on their legislative records in elections. Scant scholarly attention has been given to studying position-taking during congressional elections to understand the evolving representational link between legislative behavior and the preferences of voters, especially prior to the 1990s. Indeed, a large part of this is due to a fundamental lack of data available from previous congressional campaigns. To overcome this limitation, I collect and code 12,692 congressional commercials from over 3,500 House and Senate races in the *Congressional Ads Project*. The data are an effort to provide the first-ever glimpse into the changing communication choices candidates make in elections over the last four decades. In addition to addressing the kinds of positions featured in congressional campaigns, the data will help unlock new insights into the kinds of information candidates present to voters, the way congressional battles spill over into elections, the role that scandal and corruption plays in influencing voters, and a whole host of other important representational phenomena.

From this new dataset, I find that candidates are discussing issues in specific ways at

much higher rates than they did in the 1970s. Voters appear to be picking up on this shift in the campaign as well, similarly emphasizing issues as the basis for their evaluations of incumbents and challengers. This latter finding is particularly interesting given that voters believe issues are increasingly important to their evaluations, but that the importance they attach to the ideological extremity of incumbents has not changed. In discussing issues in the campaign, politicians appear to be casting their polarized records in a much more moderate light. I also find that these moderating campaign communications can have meaningful effects in improving the election goals of out-of-step politicians. In this way, candidates may be able to simultaneously satisfy their own policy or partisan interests and reelection goals through crafted campaign messaging.

6.1 Implications for Representation In An Era of Polarized Parties

Party Responsibility in Candidate-Centered Elections

These findings have important implications for democratic governance and representation in the U.S., especially in light of the development and maintenance of responsible party government American-style. In its 1950 report, the American Political Science Association (APSA) lamented the lack of responsible parties in the U.S., characterizing the party system as having a weak opposition party, few policy disagreements between the two parties, minimal party loyalty amongst its members, and the inability of voters to enforce collective party discipline in the legislature (APSA Committee on Political Parties 1950). One of the critiques of the American party system offered in the report at mid-century was its fundamental basis in a decentralized and federal political system that promoted considerable independence amongst the local parties from the national party organization. Although an assessment of the electoral process was more subdued in the initial report, subsequent scholars also noted the weakness of the national party in its ability to enforce party discipline due to the growing candidate-centered nature of congressional campaigning (Jacobson 2009; Polsby 1983).

Mann and Ornstein (2012) argue that the super-majoritarian and divided powers system in the U.S. appears to be functioning quite poorly in having collided with polarized and 'responsible' parties in Washington. Perhaps equally as problematic is that America's basic electoral institutions have not fundamentally changed, while parties and party candidates have managed to greatly expand the sophistication of their campaign targeting efforts. American elections are candidate-centered events that aggregate voter preferences into seat shares through (largely) plurality voting across 535 single member districts. Politicians each derive their political authority independently through the binary endorsements of their constituents. While voters can and do use the party label to make vote decisions, unlike proportional systems, the parties themselves are never on the ballot. Many incumbents have a constituency of supporters that can insulate them from the vagaries of bad years for their

party, insulation that may emerge from being in the majority party in that district, having cultivated a personal vote, or being advantaged in campaign messaging and organizing. Thus, party vote swings may barely be felt by some incumbents, and the evidence above suggests candidates can help dampen the local effects of these national swings anyway.

Further, unlike parliamentary systems, the voters are the ones who choose which candidates run. As a result, party leaders can do very little to punish politicians and enforce discipline. This lack of punishment extends not only to their legislative actions, but also their electoral behavior. One of the concerns amongst scholars and observers is that this lack of control appears to have resulted in parties ceding the ability for ideological voters, activists, and donors to determine candidate selection and to screen out moderates through the primary process. An implication from this dissertation is that, while perhaps party leaders have ceded this ability to influence candidate selection,[1] they have not ceded control to primary electorates (or other constituency interests) over the messages candidates communicate in the general election. If anything, there is accumulating evidence that party organizations are helping facilitiate this distancing process given their fundraising and ad spending efforts to help defeat the other party's candidates. Lacking major changes to America's basic candidate-centered electoral systems, the findings from this dissertation paint a somewhat pessimistic view about the ability for party reputations to provide a basis for collective responsibility through shared punishment.

Any Penalty for Being Out of Step?

An important feature of this dissertation is an explicit effort to bridge the representational choices candidates make across legislative and electoral domains. Further, this dissertation is interested in expanding the ways political scientists approach the study of campaign effects, both theoretically and methodologically. In terms of theory, one of the contributions of this project to the study of campaign effects is a focus on the way candidates tailor their communication agendas to signal information about their issue positions, and to uncover what effects this positional information has on incumbent vote support. Further, the research design introduced above provides a way forward to studying the effects of position-taking (and other kinds of exposures) in advertisements using inefficient and varied exposure to different kinds of political messages within the same electoral jurisdictions. Though making comparisons over, rather than within electorates can be illustrative, there is an-ever present worry that candidates' strategic targeting based on features that differ across electorates, are confounding subsequent measures of advertising effects. Future work should be done that uses this or a similar research design to restrict comparisons of ad exposures just to voters facing the same candidate choices in the same elections. At the very least, future scholars should verify that the distribution of advertising exposures under study do not significantly correlate with the ideological and demographic characteristics of voters being targeted and exposed.

[1] Though maybe not (Cohen et al. 2008).

Nevertheless, one interesting implication of the advertising effects uncovered here, is that out-of-step candidates may in fact be receiving no electoral penalty after conditioning on the extremity of their campaign advertising. A now-famous finding by Canes-Wrone et al. (2002) is that more extreme House incumbents lose votes in elections. An assumption made by Canes-Wrone et al. (2002) is that voters are getting relatively faithful messages about candidates' records to base their judgements. Does this out-of-step finding also hold with better information about the kinds of messages candidates communicate to voters?

Table 6.1 presents a straightforward regression analysis that replicates the original model used by Canes-Wrone et al. (2002) to assess the effects of roll call extremity on incumbent vote returns. The model presented here, however, departs in two significant ways. First, rather than using interest group ratings from the Americans for Democratic Action to judge the ideological positions of Members of Congress, this model uses DW-NOMINATE scores from Poole and Rosenthal (1997). The second difference is that the regression models (2) - (5) also include measures of candidate advertising extremity using the scaled positions for House incumbents in the CAP dataset. (Other models also include controls for PARTY UNITY VOTING, district-level demographics, as well as state-year fixed effects, to reduce the influence of trends over geographies or time.) As can be seen in the first column of Table 6.1, an incumbent's roll call extremity is negatively correlated with her later vote returns over the period between 1968 and 2000. Note, this negative effect is on the same scale as that recovered by Canes-Wrone et al. (2002) in their specification that also uses DW-NOMINATE.

However, by including the CAP measure for incumbent *Issue Extremity*, this cost to taking extreme roll call positions entirely vanishes. One way to interpret this finding is that conditioning on similar levels of extreme advertising content, an out of step record has no independent influence on aggregate election outcomes for House incumbents. In terms of equilibrium behavior, incumbent moderation in the campaign could effectively zero-out the advantage a challenger might have had due to an incumbent being too extreme. A part of the basis for the significant out-of-step finding in model (1) and in Canes-Wrone et al. (2002) could very well be that candidates face some constraint on their ad choices. Certain extreme candidates might lose some votes in not being able to take as moderate positions as others, for example, if some of the media markets in their district are more polarized, compared to those for otherwise similarly extreme incumbents. Another view is that very safe incumbents in extreme districts may not have to distance as much as relatively similar incumbents in more marginal districts, and thus would appear to do worse from due to optimal (and previously unobserved) advertising choices.

Of course caution should be used in interpreting this finding. For example, extreme candidates tend to air extreme advertising, so that these factors may be confounded in a non-linear way that could potentially bias the estimates of the roll call effect. Further, it is not entirely clear why a linear estimator of extremity is most appropriate given the underlying spatial model that relies on cutpoints between two candidates, which here are assumed to be linearly proportional to incumbent positioning. Yet, one interesting feature of

the estimate for *Issue Extremity* is its stability across all of the models, and especially after flattening temporal and geographic trends in model (5). Similar to the finding in Chapter 5, airing more extreme ads negatively correlates with incumbent vote returns, at a per-unit loss of about -2.2 percentage points, or -4.5 points going from most moderate to most extreme within each party on average over the entire period. While future work should be devoted to evaluating the robustness of both the roll call and advertising effects, the evidence here places the out-of-step finding on much more tenuous ground given the previous lack of controls measuring the ad positions of candidates in earlier studies.

Voter Information, Choice and Mobilization

There is a growing appreciation from a normative perspective of the role communication plays as a form of and in facilitating representation between politicians and constituents (e.g., Mansbridge 2003). In this regard, the findings of this dissertation are somewhat pessimistic. Candidates appear to be able to position themselves in elections in ways that reduce their apparent policy responsiveness in Congress. An alternative view might be however that too much democracy is bad for a liberal or republican public, or perhaps that voters prefer moderate campaign communications as a kind of representational benefit in itself. For example, the American Founders had considerable skepticism about the wisdom of electorates to make enlightened decisions through collective action, particularly in preserving liberal values and property rights. They also had serious worries about the prospects of demagogues using democratic trappings to level society or propel themselves to power.

One of their solutions to address these concerns was the crafting of the extended republic that divided power over a number of geographies and political offices, as well as numerous institutional devices to insulate elected officials from their electorates. A major consequence of democratization across the modern extended republic is that voters must now participate in an endless slew of electoral contests, about which they have virtually no information available as guide. Voters remain relatively uninformed about even House and Senate contests, often not being able to recall their incumbent's names (Jacobson 2009). With fewer low-stake elections, it might be possible for voters to become better informed and equipped to participate, especially if this also resulted in lower costs to information gathering. Yet, the one source that voters often do turn to to get information, is the campaign during the heat of an election. In this regard, the information candidates air may have meaningful impacts on what voters know about Congress, the parties, and competing candidates.

The core finding here from studying position taking in congressional campaigns is that selective exposure matters in the kinds of information voters might be receiving. For starters, the campaigns are airing much more policy information, which could potentially help voters make better decisions. Yet, this information, and especially positive ads, paint misleading pictures of incumbents' actual policy records. Campaign information then may result in less informed voters rendering the growth of issue content moot. On the other hand, attack ads appear to be much more accurate in depicting the ideological content of congressional

activity, and especially partisan polarization. But, there is growing evidence that different voters are likely to respond in different ways to negative information. Thus, those voters only targeted with or selecting positive ad information might see the two parties' candidates as Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum, offering no real differences on policies. Comparatively, other voters might see stark policy differences between competing candidates, adjusting their behavior accordingly.

From a representation perspective, issue distancing seems normatively troublesome for two reasons. First, a prerequisite for voters to make effective choices is to be able to collect reliable information about competing candidates. If the candidates themselves make this endeavor even harder through their strategic actions, this suggests a deficit to the well-functioning of democracy and elections. Secondly, if different voters are targeted and receive different kinds of information, some of whom make better use of or receive higher quality information, this points to a potential inequality in influence that may tarnish equal participation in elections (Schlozman et al. 2012). From a theoretical perspective, this inequality in information may also explain, at least in part, why certain voters do not participate in elections or do so at lower rates. And it may also suggest that certain voters face additional costs not previously anticipated in the collection of reliable information. For example, if issue distancing ads subsidize voter confusion, some people may start on the negative side of the ledger in the amount of effort needed to come to a sound voting decision.

The Future of Polarization

The findings of this dissertation suggest that polarization in Congress is likely to persist into the foreseeable future. Moreover, we may even see a new period of *hyperpolarization* unfold, where partisan politicians outstrip the policy demands of even their own partisan supporters. Recent findings also suggest that polarized politics has taken on a new and personal hue producing corresponding emotional motivations to support party combat, over just policy ones. This process may be limited by the extent to which campaigns can moderate voter impressions of their partisanship, as well as of their policy positions. Yet, with the rise of the Tea Party and Occupy movements, and other forces within both parties, there is no obvious sign that the extents of polarization have yet been reached.

In broad terms, the findings from this dissertation provide additional evidence that polarization is an elite-led process driven by the policy demands of elected officials or their most ideological supporters. The findings suggest that candidate-centered competition between sorted party candidates may produce poor representation outcomes, since it permits shirking by politicians capable of mitigating the fallout from their polarized records. Finally, this study also uncovers evidence for an important electoral mechanism (*issue distancing*) that may sustain polarized parties in spite of their growing unpopularity and potentially troublesome effects on governance in America's anti-majoritarian system. More generally, the findings have significant consequences for congressional representation, and may shed new light on the informational challenges that voters face in contemporary elections.

Table 6.1: The Impact of Roll Call Extremity on Incumbent Vote Shares, Controlling for Issue Extremity in Ads: 1968 to 2000

	Out of Step Models			Additional Controls	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
INCUMBENT VOTE					
Issue Extremity	–	-0.022	-0.023	-0.022	-0.014
		(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.025)
Vote Extremity	-0.017***	-0.006	-0.003	0.005	0.021
	(0.003)	(0.010)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.023)
Presidential Vote	0.347***	0.297***	0.301***	0.347***	0.332**
	(0.016)	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.115)
Prior Incumbent Vote	0.390***	0.429***	0.426***	0.418***	-0.068
	(0.013)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.106)
Spending Advantage	0.002	0.005	0.006	0.005	0.023
	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.012)
Freshman	-0.127***	-0.115***	-0.114***	-0.116***	-0.063*
	(0.008)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.027)
Δ Income	0.159**	0.104	0.095	0.116	0.041
	(0.057)	(0.296)	(0.299)	(0.297)	(0.43)
Republican	-0.026***	-0.046**	-0.045**	-0.049***	0.012
	(0.004)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.053)
Presidential Approval	-0.020**	-0.037	-0.039	-0.036	-0.063
(by Party)	(0.007)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.046)
Midterm Loss	-0.005	0.01	0.009	0.01	-0.02
(by Party)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.016)
In-Party	-0.012***	-0.029*	-0.029*	-0.028*	-0.021
(by Party)	(0.003)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.019)
N	6115	3007	3003	3003	2841
R^2	0.512	0.458	0.448	0.457	0.626

P-values are standard OLS. Model (3) includes controls for PARTY UNITY VOTING, (4) includes additional district-level demographic and socioeconomic controls, and (5) includes these controls in addition to state-year fixed effects.

Bibliography

Abadie, Alberto. 2005. "Semiparametric Difference-in-Differences Estimators." *Review of Economic Studies* 72:1–19.

Abramowitz, Alan. 2008. "Don't Blame Primary Voters for Polarization." *The Forum* 5(4).

Abramowitz, Alan. 2010. *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Abramowitz, Alan I. and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics* 70(2):542–555.

Abrams, Samuel J. and Morris P. Fiornia. 2012. ""The Big Sort" That Wasn't: A Skeptical Reexamination." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45(2):203–210.

Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels. 2002. "Blind Retrospection: Electoral Responses to Drought, Flu, and Shark Attacks." Working Paper.

Adler, E. Scott, Chariti E. Gent and Cary B. Overmeyer. 1998. "The Home Style Homepage: Legislator Use of the World Wide Web for Constituency Contact." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23(4):585–595.

Adler, E. Scott and John Wilkerson. 2009. "Congressional Bills Project: 93rd to 110th Congress." NSF 00880066 and 00880061.

Aldrich, John. 1983. "A Downsian Spatial Model with Party Activism." *American Political Science Review* 77(4):974–90.

Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Aldrich, John H. and Richard D. McKelvey. 1977. "A Method of Scaling with Applications to the 1968 and 1972 Presidential Elections." *American Political Science Review* 71(1):111 – 130.

Alesina, Alberto. 1988. "Credibility and Policy Convergence in a Two-Party System with Rational Voters." *American Economic Review* 78(4):796–805.

Alesina, Alberto and Richard Holden. 2008. "Ambiguity and Extremism in Elections." Working Paper.

Alvarez, R. Michael. 1999. *Information and Elections*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Alan S. Gerber and James M. Snyder, Jr. 2001*a*. "Does TV Advertising Explain the Rise of Campaign Spending? A Study of Campaign Spending and Broadcast Advertising Prices in US House Elections the 1990s and the 1970s." Working Paper.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, Jr. and Charles Stewart, III. 2001*b*. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1):136–159.

Ansolabehere, Stephen and Philip E. Jones. 2010. "Constituents' Responses to Congressional Roll-Call Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(3):583–597.

Ansolabehere, Stephen and Shanto Iyengar. 1995. *Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate*. New York: Free Press.

APSA Committee on Political Parties. 1950. *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*. New York: Rinehart.

Arceneaux, Kevin. 2006. "Do Campaigns Help Voters Learn? A Cross-National Analysis." *British Journal of Political Science* 36(1):159–73.

Arceneaux, Kevin. 2007. "I'm Asking for Your Support: The Effects of Personally Delivered Campaign Messages on Voting Decisions and Opinion Formation." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2(1):43–65.

Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Azur, Melissa J., Elizabeth A. Stuart, Constantine Frangakis and Philip J. Leaf. 2011. "Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations: What Is It And How Does It Work?" *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research* 20(1):40–49.

Bafumi, Joseph, Andrew Gelman, David K. Park and Noah Kaplan. 2005. "Practical Issues in Implementing and Understanding Bayesian Ideal Point Estimation." *Political Analysis* 13(2):171–187.

Bafumi, Joseph and Michael C. Herron. 2010. "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 104(3):519–542.

Baker, Jr., Howard H. 1998. "On Herding Cats." Farewell Address.

Balasubramanyan, Ramnath, William W. Cohen, Doug Pierce and David P. Redlawsk. 2012. "Modeling Polarizing Topics: When Do Different Political Communities Respond Differently to the Same News?" *Proceedings of the Sixth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media* .

Barro, Robert J. 1973. "The Control of Politicians: An Economic Model." *Public Choice* 14:19–42.

Bartels, Larry. 1993. "Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure." *American Political Science Review* 87(2):276–285.

Bartels, Larry M. 1988. *Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bartels, Larry M. 2008. "The Irrational Electorate: Many of Our Worst Fears About America's Voters Are True." *Wilson Quarterly* pp. 44–50.

Bawn, Kathleen, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel and John Zaller. 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3).

Beauchamp, Nicholas. 2011. "Using Text to Scale Legislatures with Uninformative Voting.". Working Paper.

Beauchamp, Nick. 2012. "A Bottom-Up Approach to Linguistic Persuasion in Advertising: Predicting and explaining the effects of TV ads using automated text analysis." Working Paper.

Berelson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld and William N. McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bishop, Bill. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Blackwell, Matthew. 2013. "A Framework for Dynamic Causal Inference in Political Science." *American Journal of Political Science* 00:1–17.

Blei, David M., Andrwe Y. Ng and Michael I. Jordan. 2002. "Latent Dirichlet Allocation." *Journal of Machine Learning Research* 3:993–1022.

Blei, David M. and Jon D. McAuliffe. 2007. "Supervised Topic Models." *Neural Information Processing Systems* 21:1–8.

Bonica, Adam. 2013. "Ideology and Interests in the Political Marketplace." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(2):294–311.

Brader, Ted. 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2):388–405.

Brader, Ted. 2006. *Campaigning for Hearts and Minds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brady, David W., Hahrie Han and Jeremy C. Pope. 2007. "Primary Elections and Candidate Ideology: Out of Step with the Primary Electorate?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32(1):79–105.

Brady, David W., John Ferejohn and Laurel Harbridge. 2008. Polarization and Public Policy: A General Assessment. In *Red and Blue Nation?: Consequences and Correction of America's Polarized Politics*, ed. Pietro S. Nivola and David W. Brady. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute.

Brady, Henry E. and Stephen Ansolabehere. 1989. "The Nature of Utility Functions in Mass Publics." *American Political Science Review* 83(1):143–163.

Brasher, Holly. 2003. "Capitalizing on Contention: Issue Agendas in U.S. Senate Campaigns." *Political Communication* 20(4):453–471.

Burden, Barry C. 2001. The Polarizing Effects of Congressional Primaries. In *Congressional Primaries and the Politics of Representation*, ed. Peter F. Galderisi, Marni Ezra and Michael Lyons. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Burden, Barry C. 2004. "Candidate Positioning in US Congressional Elections." *British Journal of Political Science* 34(2):211–227.

Butler, Daniel M., Christopher F. Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope. 2012. "A Field Experiment on Legislators Home Styles: Service versus Policy." *Journal of Politics* 74(3):474–486.

Cain, Bruce, John Ferejohn and Morris Fiorina. 1987. *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cambpell, James E. 1982. "Cosponsoring Legislation in the U.S. Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 7(3):415–422.

Campbell, Angus, Philip Converse, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Campbell, James E. 1983. "Ambiguity in the Issue Positions of Presidential Candidates: A Causal Analysis." *American Journal of Political Science* 27(2):284–293.

Campbell, James E. 2008. *The American Campaign: U.S. Presidential Campaigns and the National Vote*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David W. Brady and John F. Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review* 96(1):127–140.

Carroll, Royce and Henry A. Kim. 2010. "Party Government and the Cohesive Power of Public Plunder." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(1):34–44.

Carsey, Thomas M. and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2006. "Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2):464–477.

Carson, Jamie L., Gregory Koger, Matthew J. Lebo and Everett Young. 2010. "The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(3):598–616.

Carson, Jamie L., Michael H. Crespin, Charles J. Finocchiaro and David W. Rohd. 2007. "Redistricting and Party Polarization in the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Politics Research* 35(6).

Carson, Jamie L., Michael H. Crespin, Charles J. Finocchiaro and David W. Rohde. 2004. "Linking Congressional Districts Across Time: Redistricting and Party Polarization in Congress." Working Paper.

Cho, Wendy K. Tam, James G. Gimpel, and Iris S. Hui. 2012. "Voter Migration and the Geographic Sorting of the American Electorate." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* X(X):1–15.

Claggett, William, William Flanigan and Nancy Zingale. 1984. "Nationalization of the American Electorate." *American Political Science Review* 78:77–91.

Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel and John Zaller. 2008. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." *Critical Review* 18(1):1–74.

Cox, Gary W. and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cox, Gary W. and Matthew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Crespin, Michael H., Suzanne M. Gold and David W. Rohde. 2006. "Ideology, Electoral Incentives, and Congressional Politics The Republican House Class of 1994." *American Politics Research* 34(2):135–158.

Damore, David F. 2004. "The Dynamics of Issue Ownership in Presidential Campaigns." *Political Research Quarterly* 57(3):391–397.

Dehejia, Rajeev and Sadek Wahba. 1999. "Causal Effects in Non-Experimental Studies: Re-Evaluating the Evaluation of Training Programs." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 94(448):1053–1062.

Diamond, Alexis and Jasjeet S. Sekhon. 2014. "Genetic Matching for Estimating Causal Effects: A General Multivariate Matching Method for Achieving Balance in Observational Studies.". Review of Economics and Statistics.

Doherty, Brendan J. 2012. *The Rise of the President's Permanent Campaign*. Topkea: University Press of Kansas.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.

Druckman, James N., Martin J. Kifer and Michael Parkin. 2009. "Campaign Communications in U.S. Congressional Elections." *American Political Science Review* 103(3):343–366.

Egan, Patrick J. 2013. *Partisan Priorities: How Issue Ownership Drives and Distorts American Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Enelow, James M. and Melvin J. Hinich. 1984. *The Spatial Theory of Voting*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Erikson, Robert S. and Christopher Wlezien. 2012. *The Timeline of Presidential Elections: How Campaigns Do (And Do Not) Matter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fenno, Richard F. 1973. *Congressment in Committees*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company.

Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company.

Finkel, Steven E. 1993. "Reexamining the "Minimal Effects" Model in Recent Presidential Campaigns." *Journal of Politics* 55(1).

Fiorina, Morris. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Fiorina, Morris P. 1980. "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics." *Daedalus* 109(3):25–45.

Fiorina, Morris and Samuel Abrams. 2009. *Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics*. Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press.

Fiorina, Morris, Samuel Abrams and Jeremy Pope. 2005. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Pearson Longman.

Fiornia, Morris P. 1975. *Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Fowler, James H. 2006. "Connecting the Congress: A Study of Cosponsorship Networks." *Political Analysis* 14(4):456–487.

Franklin, Charles H. 1991. "Eschewing Obsfuscation? Campaigns and the Perception of U.S. Senate Incumbents." *American Political Science Review* 85(4):1193–1214.

Franz, Michael M., Paul B. Freedman, Kenneth M. Goldstein and Travis N. Ridout. 2007. *Campaign Advertising and American Democracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Freedman, Paul, Michael Franz and Kenneth Goldstein. 2004. "Campaign Advertising and Democratic Citizenship." *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4):723–741.

Gabriel, Stuart A. and Stuart S. Rosenthal. 1989. "Household Location and Race: Estimates of a Multinomial Logit Model." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 71(2):240–249.

Geer, John G. 1998. Campaigns, Party Competition, and Political Advertising. In *Politicians and Party Politics*, ed. John G. Geer. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Geer, John G. 2006. *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gelman, Andrew and Gary King. 1993. "Why Are American Presidential Polls so Variable When Voters Are so Predictible." *British Journal of Political Science* 23(2):409–451.

Gerber, Alan S. 2004. "Does Campaign Spending Work? Field Experiments Provide Evidence and Suggest New Theory." *American Behavioral Scientis* 47:541–574.

Gerber, Alan S., Daniel P. Kessler and Marc Meredith. 2011*a*. "The Persuasive Effects of Direct Mail: A Regression Discontinuity Approach." *Journal of Politics* 73(1):140–155.

Gerber, Alan S., James G. Gimpel, Donald P. Green and Daron R. Shaw. 2011*b*. "How Large and Long-lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 105(01):135–150.

Gerrish, Sean M. and David M. Blei. 2011. Predicting Legislative Roll Calls from Text. In *In Proc. of ICML*.

Gerrish, Sean M. and David M. Blei. 2012. The Issue-Adjusted Ideal Point Model. In *In Proc. of ICML*.

Gilens, Martin. 2012. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gilens, Martin, Lynn Vavreck and Martin Cohen. 2007. "The Mass Media and the Publics Assessments of Presidential Candidates, 1952–2000." *Journal of Politics* 69(4):1160–1175.

Glaeser, Edward L. and Kristina Tobio. 2012. "The Rise of the Sunbelt." Harvard Institute of Economic Research.

Goldenberg, Edie N. and Michael W. Traugott. 1978. "Congressional Campaign Study, 1978." Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, ICPSR08431-v1.

Goldstein, Ken and Paul Freedman. 2002. "Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect." *Journal of Politics* 64(03):721–740.

Green, Donald P. and Alan S. Gerber. 2008. *Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute.

Green, Donald P., Bradley Palmquist and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Grimmer, Justin. 2011. *Representational Style: What Legislators Say and Why It Matters*. Book Manuscript.

Groeling, Tim. 2010. *When Politicians Attack: Party Cohesion in the Media*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Grofman, Bernard. 2004. "Downs and TwoParty Convergence." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7:25–46.

Grose, Christian, Neil Malhotra and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2013. "Explaining Explanations: How Legislators Explain their Policy Positions and How Citizens React." Working Paper.

Grynaviski, Jeffrey D. 2010. *Partisan Bonds: Political Reputations and Legislative Accountability*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hall, Richard L. 1996. *Participation in Congress*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Harbridge, Laurel. 2012. "Congressional Agenda Control and the Decline of Bipartisan Cooperation." Working Paper.

Hartog, Chris Den and Nathan W. Monroe. 2011. *Agenda Setting in the U.S. Senate: Costly Consideration and Majority Party Advantage*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Healy, Andrew and Neil Malhotra. 2010. "Random Events, Economic Losses, and Retrospective Voting: Implications for Democratic Competence." Working Paper.

Henderson, John, Jasjeet S. Sekhon and Rocío Titiunik. 2013. "Cause or Effect? Turnout in Hispanic Majority-Minority Districts." Working Paper.

Henderson, John and Sara Chatfield. 2011. "Who Matches? Propensity Scores and Bias in the Causal Effects of Education on Participation." *The Journal of Politics* 73(3):646–658.

Hillygus, D. Sunshine. 2005. "Campaign Effects and the Dynamics of Turnout Intention in Election 2000." *Journal of Politics* 67(1):50–68.

Hillygus, D. Sunshine and Todd G. Shields. 2009. *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hirano, Shigeo, Jr. James M. Snyder, Stephen Ansolabehere and John Mark Hansen. 2010. "Primary Elections and Partisan Polarization in the U.S. Congress." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 5:169–191.

Ho, Daniel E., Kosuke Imai, Gary King and Elizabeth A. Stuart. 2007. "Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing for Reducing Model Dependence in Parametric Causal Inference." *Political Analysis* 15(3):199–236.

Holian, David B. 2004. "He's Stealing My Issues! Clinton's Crime Rhetoric and the Dynamics of Issue Ownership." *Political Behavior* 26(2):95–124.

Huber, Gregory A. and John S. Lapinski. 2006. "The 'Race Card' Revisited: Assessing Racial Priming in Policy Contests." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2):421–440.

Huber, Gregory A. and Kevin Arceneaux. 2007. "Identifying the Persuasive Effects of Presidential Advertising." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(4):976–981.

Imai, Kosuke and David A. van Dyke. 2004. "Causal Inference With General Treatment Regimes: Generalizing the Propensity Score." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 99(4):854–866.

Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald R. Kinder. 1998. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jackson, John E. 1975. "Issues, Party Choices, and Presidential Votes." *American Journal of Political Science* 19(1):161–185.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: University of California Press.

Jacobson, Gary. 2009. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. New York: Pearson Longman.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1987. *Running Scared: Elections and Congressional Politics in the 1980s*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Jacobson, Gary C. and Samuel Kernell. 1983. *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jacobson, Gary S. 1978. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections." *American Political Science Review* 72(2):469–491.

Jessee, Stephen A. 2012. *Ideology and Spatial Voting in American Elections*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Johnston, Richard, Michael G. Hagen and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2004. *The 2000 Presidential Election and the Foundations of Party Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Johnston, Travis. 2013. "Credit for What? Reexamining the Effects of Congressional Credit Claiming." Working Paper.

Jones, David R. 2010. "Partisa nPolarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2):323–337.

Jones, David R. and Monika L. McDermott. 2010. *Americans, Congress, and Democratic Responsiveness: Publican Evaluations of Congress and Electoral Consequences*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kahn, Kim F. and Patrick J. Kenney. 1999. *The Spectacle of U.S. Senate Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kalt, Joseph P. and Mark A. Zupan. 1984. "Capture and Ideology in the Economic Theory of Politics." *American Economic Review* 74:279–300.

Kam, Cindy and Carl Palmer. 2008. "Reconsidering the Effects of Education on Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 70:612–631.

Kaplan, Noah, David K. Park and Travis N. Ridout. 2006. "Dialogue in American Political Campaigns? An Examination of Issue Convergence in Candidate Television Advertising." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3):724–736.

Karol, David. 2009. *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kau, James B. and Paul H. Rubin. 1979. "Self-Interest, Ideology, and Logrolling in Congressional Voting." *Journal of Law and Economics* 22:365–384.

Kelly, Andrew P. and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2012. "Roll Calls and Representation." Working Paper.

Kessler, Daniel and Keith Krehbiel. 1996. "Dynamics of Cosponsorship." *American Political Science Review* 90(3):555–566.

Key, Jr, V. O. 1966. *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting 1936–1960*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

King, A. Thomas and Peter Miezkowski. 1973. "Racial Discrimination, Segregation, and the Price of Housing." *The Journal of Political Economy* 81(3):590–606.

King, Anthony. 1997. *Running Scared: Why America's Politicians Camppaign Too Much and Govern Too Little*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

King, David C. 2012. "Congress, Polarization, and Fidelity to the Median Voter." Working Paper.

King, Gary. 1991. "Constituency Service and Incumbency Advantage." *British Journal of Political Science* 21(1):119–128.

Kingdon, John W. 1977. "Models of Legislative Voting." *Journal of Politics* 39(3):563–595.

Kingdon, John W. 1989. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*. 3rd ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Klein, Ezra. 2012. "14 Reasons Why This Is The Worst Congress Ever." *Washington Post*, Wonkblog, July 13, 2012.

Koger, Gregory. 2003. "Position Taking and Cosponsorship in the U.S. House." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 28(2):225–246.

Krasno, Jonathan S. and Donald P. Green. 2008. "Do Televised Presidential Ads Increase Voter Turnout? Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *Journal of Politics* 70(1):245–261.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1990. "Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?" *American Political Science Review* 81(1):149–163.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23(2):235–266.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Krugman, Paul. 1995. *Development, Geography and Economic Theory*. cam: MIT Press.

LaLonde, Robert. 1986. "Evaluating the Econometric Evaluations of Training Programs with Experimental Data." *American Economic Review* 76(4):604–620.

Lapinski, Daniel W. 2004. *Congressional Communication: Content and Consequences*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman and Ivy Brown Rovner. 2007. "The Effects of Negative Political Campaigns: A Meta-Analytic Reassessment." *Journal of Politics* 69(4):1176–1209.

Lauderdale, Benjamin E. and Tom S. Clark. 2012. "Scaling Politically Meaningful Dimensions Using Texts and Votes." Working Paper.

Laver, Michael, Kenneth Benoit and John Garry. 2011. "Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data." *American Political Science Review* 92(2):311–331.

Layman, Geoffrey C., Thomas M. Carsey, John C. Green, Richard Herrera and Rosalyn Cooperman. 2010. "Activists and Conflict Extension in American Party Politics." *American Political Science Review* 104(2):324–346.

Lazarus, Jeffrey. 2009. "Party, Electoral Vulnerability, and Earmarks in the U.S. House of Representatives." *The Journal of Politics* 71(3):1050–1061.

Lebo, Matthew J., Adam J. McGlynn and Gregory Koger. 2007. "Strategic Party Government: Party Influence in Congress, 1789–2000." *American Journal of Political Science* 51(3):464–481.

Lee, Francis E. 2009. *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lenz, Gabriel S. 2009. "Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Priming Hypothesis." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4):821–837.

Lenz, Gabriel S. 2012. *Follow the Leader: How Voters Respond to Politicians' Performance and Policies*. chic: uchp.

Lenz, Gabriel S. and Chappell Lawson. 2011. "Looking the Part: Television Leads Less Informed Citizens to Vote Based on Candidates' Appearance." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3):574–89.

Levendusky, Matthew. 2009. *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levitt, Stephen D. and James M. Snyder. 1997. "The Impact of Federal Spending on House Election Outcomes." *Journal of Political Economy* 105(1):30–53.

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Lipinski, Daniel. 2004. *Congressional Communication: Content and Consequences*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Longregan, John and Thomas Romer. 1993. Polarization, Incumbency, and the Personal Vote. In *Political Economy: Institutions, Competition, and Representation*, ed. William A. Barnett, Melvin J. Hinich and Norman J. Schofield. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lu, Bo, Elaine Zanutto, Robert C. Hornik and Paul R. Rosenbaum. 2001. "Matching With Doses in an Observational Study of a Media Campaign Against Drug Abuse." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 96(6):1245–1253.

Lu, Bo, Elaine Zanutto, Robert C. Hornik and Paul R. Rosenbaum. 2011. "Optimal Nonbipartite Matching and Its Statistical Applications." *The American Statistician* 65(1):21–30.

Lupia, Arthur and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Mann, Thomas E. and Norm J. Ornstein. 2012. *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Colluded With the New Politics of Extremism*. New York: Basic Books.

Mansbridge, Jane. 2003. "Rethinking Representation." *American Political Science Review* 97(4):515–528.

Markus, Prior. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3):577–592.

Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Mayhew, David R. 2011. *Partisan Balance: Why Political Parties Don't Kill the U.S. Constitutional System*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

McCarty, Nolan M., Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized American: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

McCarty, Nolan M., Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal. 2009. "Does Gerrymander Cause Polarization?" *American Journal of Political Science* 53(3):666–680.

McCurley, Carl and Jeffery J. Mondak. 1995. "Inspected by #1184063113: The Influence of Incumbents Competence and Integrity in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 39(3):864–885.

McGhee, Eric and Daniel Krimm. 2009. "Party Registration and the Geography of Party Polarization." *Polity* 41(2):345–367.

McGhee, Eric, Seth Masket, Boris Shor, Steven Rogers and Nolan McCarty. 2011. "A Primary Cause of Partisanship? Nomination Systems and Legislator Ideology." Working Paper.

McGraw, Kathleen M., Richard Timpone and Gabor Bruck. 1993. "Justifying Controversial Political Decisions: Home Style in the Laboratory." *Political Behavior* 15(3):289–308.

Meirowitz, Adam. 2005. "Informational Party Primaries and Strategic Ambiguity." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17(1):107–136.

Merrill, Samuel. 1993. "Voting Behavior Under the Directional Spatial Model of Electoral Competition." *Public Choice* 77(1):739–756.

Miller, Gary and Norman Schofield. 2003. "Activists and Partisan Realignment in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 97(2):245–260.

Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *The American Political Science Review* 57(1):45–56.

Miller, Warren and J. Merrill Shanks. 1996. *The New American Voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Minozzi, William. 2011. "A Jamming Theory of Politics." *Journal of Politics* 73(2):301–315.

Moser, Scott and Shinya Wakao. 2012. "Is Campaigning Local? Campaign Strategy in the 2010 Congressional Race." Working Paper.

Nie, Norman H., Sidney Verba and John R. Petrocik. 1999. *The Changing American Voter*. New York: toExcel Press.

Office of the Press Secretary. 2009. "Press Briefing By Press Secretary Robert Gibbs." The White House.

Page, Benjamin I. 1978. *Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections: Rational Man and Electoral Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Patty, John W. 2008. "Equilibrium Party Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 52(3):636–655.

Pearson, Kathryn and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2008. "Primary Competition and Polarization in the U.S. House of Representatives." Working Paper.

Peress, Michael. 2010. "Estimating Proposal and Status Quo Locations Using Voting and Cosponsorship Data." Working Paper.

Petrocik, John R. 1996. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study." *American Journal of Political Science* 3(40):825–850.

Petrocik, John R., William L. Benoit and Glenn J. Hansen. 2003. "Issue Ownership and Presidential Campaigning, 1952–2000." *Political Science Quarterly* 4(118):599–626.

Pew Research Center. 2010. "Little Compromose On Compromising." http://www.pewresearch.org/2010/09/20/little-compromise-on-compromising/.

Pierson, Paul. 2004. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions and Social Analysis*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Polsby, Nelson W. 1983. *Consequences of Party Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pomper, Gerald M. 1972. "From Confusion to Clarity: Issues and American Voters, 1956–1968." *American Political Science Review* 66(2):415–428.

Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 1997. *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Popkin, Samuel L. 1994. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Powell, Lynda W. 1982. "Issue Representation in Congress." *Journal of Politics* 44(4):658–78.

Prior, Markus. 2006. "The Incumbent in the Living Room–The Rise of Television and the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Politics* 68(1):657–73.

Rabinowitz, George and Stuart E. MacDonald. 2002. "A Directional Theory of Issue Voting." *American Political Science Review* 83(1):93–121.

Riker, William H. 1986. *The Art of Political Manipulation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Riker, William H. 1996. *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Rogers, Todd and David W. Nickerson. 2013. "Can Inaccurate Beliefs About Incumbents be Changed? And Can Reframing Change Votes?" Working Paper.

Rohde, David W. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rosenbaum, Paul R. 2002. *Observational Studies*. 2nd ed. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Rosenbaum, Paul R. and Donald Rubin. 1983. "The Central Role of the Propensity Score in Observational Studies for Causal Effects." *Biometrika* 70(1):41–55.

Rubin, Donald B. 2006. *Matched Sampling for Causal Effects*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Saunders, Kyle L. and Alan I. Abramowitz. 2004. "Ideological Realignment and Active Partisans in the American Electorate." *American Politics Research* 32(2):285–309.

Schattschneider, E. E. 1960. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Chicago: Rinehart and Winston.

Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schlozman, Kay L., Sidney Verba and Henry E. Brady. 2012. *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sekhon, Jasjeet S. 2011. "Matching: Multivariate and Propensity Score Matching with Automated Balance Search." *Journal of Statistical Software* 42(7):1–52.

Sellers, Patrick J. 1998. "Strategy and Background in Congressional Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 92(1):159–171.

Shaw, Daron R. 1999. "The Effects of TV Ads and Candidate AppearKing2012ances on Statewide Presidential Votes." *American Political Science Review* 93(2):345–361.

Shepsle, Kenneth A. 1989. Congressional Institutions and Behavior: The Changing Textbook Congress. In *American Political Institutions and the Problems of Our Time*, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Sides, John. 2006. "The Origins of Campaign Agenda." *British Journal of Political Science* 36:407–436.

Sigelman, Lee and Emmett H. Buell, Jr. 2004. "Avoidance or Engagement? Issue Convergence in U.S. Presidential Campaigns, 1960-2000." *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4):650–661.

Simon, Adam F. 2009. *The Winning Message: Candidate Behavior, Campaign Discourse, and Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Slapin, Jonathan B. and Sven-Oliver Proksch. 2008. "A Scaling Model for Estimating Time-Series Party Positions from Texts." *American Journal of Political Science* 52(3):705–772.

Smith, Jeffrey A. and Petra E. Todd. 2001. "Reconciling Conflicting Evidence on the Performance of Propensity Score Matching Methods." *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 91(2):112–118.

Sniderman, Paul M. 2011. *The Reputation Premium: A Theory of Party Identification and Spatial Reasoning*. Book Manuscript.

Snyder, James M. 1994. "Safe Seats, Marginal Seats, and Party Platforms: The Logic of Platform Differentiation." *Economics & Politics* 6(3):201–213.

Snyder, Jr., James M. and Michael M. Ting. 2002. "An Informational Rationale for Political Parties." *American Journal of Political Science* 46(1).

Spilotes, Constantine J. and Lynn Vavreck. 2002. "Campaign Advertising: Partisan Convergence or Divergence?" *Journal of Politics* 64(1):249–261.

Stein, Robert M. and Kenneth N. Bickers. 1994. "Congressional Elections and the Pork Barrel." *Journal of Politics* 56(2):377–399.

Stokes, Donald E. 1963. "Spatial Models of Party Competition." *American Political Science Review* 57(2):368–77.

Stokes, Donald E. 1992. Valence Politics. In *Electoral Politics*, ed. Dennis Kavanaugh. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stone, Walter J. and Elizabeth N. Simas. 2010. "Candidate Valence and Ideological Positions in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2):371–388.

Sulkin, Tracy. 2005. *Issue Politics in Congress*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Sulkin, Tracy. 2009. "Campaign Appeals and Legislative Action." *Journal of Politics* 71(3):1093–1108.

Tausanovitch, Christopher and Christopher Warshaw. 2013. "Measuring Constituent Policy Preferences in Congress, State Legislatures, and Cities." *Journal of Politics* XX(X).

Theodoridis, Alex G. 2012. "Party Identity in Political Cognition." Unpublished Manuscript.

Theriault, Sean M. 2008. *Party Polarization in Congress*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, Scott and Bernard Grofman. 1993. "The Effects of Congressional Rules about Bill Cosponsorship on Duplicate Bills: Changing Incentives for Credit Claiming." *Public Choice* 75(1):93–98.

Tomz, Michael and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2008. "Candidate Positioning and Voter Choice." *American Political Science Review* 102(3):303–318.

Tomz, Michael and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2009. "The Electoral Implications of Candidate Ambiguity." *American Political Science Review* 103(1):83–98.

Tomz, Michael and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2012. "Candidate Repositioning." Working Paper.

Van Houweling, Robert P. 2012. *Parties as Enablers: Individaul Incentives for Partisan Legislative Organization*. Book Manuscript.

Van Houweling, Robert P. and Paul M. Sniderman. 2005. "The Political Logic of a Downsian Space." Working Paper.

Vavreck, Lynn. 2007. "The Exaggerated Effects of Advertising on Turnout: The Dangers of Self-Reports." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2(4):325–343.

Vavreck, Lynn. 2009. *The Message Matters: The Economy and Presidential Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wand, Jonathan. 2012. "The Allocation of Campaign Contributions by Interest Groups and the Rise of Elite Polarization." Working Paper.

Warshaw, Christopher and Jonathan Rodden. 2012. "How Should We Measure District-Level Pulbic Opinion on Individual Issues." *Journal of Politics* 74(1):203–219.

Wattenberg, Martin P. 1998. *The Decline of American Political Parties, 1952-1996*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wawro, Greg J. and Eric Schickler. 2007. *Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Sena*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Williamson, Vanessa, Theda Skocpol and John Coggin. 2011. "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(1):25–43.

Wilson, James Q. 1962. *Amateur Democrat: Club Politics in Three Cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wright, Matthew B. 1993. "Shirking, Political Support and Agency Costs in Political Markets." *Public Choice* 76:103–124.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Zaller, John. 1998. Politicians as Prize Fighters: Electoral Selection and Incumbency Advantage. In *Party Politics and Politicians*, ed. John Geer. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Zaller, John R. 1996. The Myth of Massive Media Impact Revived: New Support for a Discredited Idea. In *In Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*, ed. Diana C. Mutz, Paul M. Sniderman and Richard A. Brody. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Appendix A

Congressional Ads Project: Sampling Frame

The *Congressional Ads Project* (CAP) data are drawn from a sample of all House and Senate races held between 1968 and 2008. The commercials were collected, stored, and digitized by the Julian P. Kanter Political Commercials Archive at the University of Oklahoma. The Archive itself houses over 100,000 television and radio ads (about 40,000 of which are from House and Senate elections) from races as early as the 1940s, though the coverage for these data is spotty until the early 1970s. A number of other scholars have used this data source in projects on presidential elections (Geer 2006) and a few senate races (Kahn and Kenney 1999). However, the analysis in this project is the first to take a serious look at the data as a resource for studying congressional races over multiple decades.

Concerns about data coverage and the daunting task of analyzing a large number of ads may have prevented scholars from using this resource in the past. However, the digitization of all of the advertising materials has made the process of requesting and watching a large number of ads feasible within a modest amount of time.[1] Also, the advertising data does not come from a random sampling frame of races or ads, nor does it contain the universe of all ads produced for any election year. On the other hand, the Archive contains the only surviving ads from any races prior to the mid-1990s.

In collecting the data, I sampled ads from all 9,135 House and 715 Senate general election races from 1968 to 2008, for which the Archive has advertisements. The sample of 12,692 ads is built by randomly sampling up to four ads for every major party House candidate and up to six ads for every major party Senate candidate.[2] This totals 7,680 House ads and 5,012 Senate ads. In terms of coverage, 21.7% of all House races have at least one ad from

[1] I spent over 5 months in the Archive, coding the 12,692 ads.

[2] I also include winning Independents in this sample, though of course these are rare. The Independents included Harry Byrd (I-VA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Joe Lieberman (I-CT).

Table A.1: Coverage of House Races in the *Congressional Ads Project*: 1968 – 2008

	Sampled Races	Excluded Races	*P*-value
Presidential Vote Share (Dem)	0.480	0.489	0.005
Candidate Vote Share (Dem)	0.514	0.552	0.000
Open Races	0.132	0.136	0.725
Competition (CQ)	0.552	0.474	0.001
Incumbent Spending	$672,898	642,307	0.115
Challenger Spending	$356,594	364,145	0.734
Democratic Incumbent	0.448	0.500	0.000
Democratic Wins	0.489	0.557	0.000
N	1985 (22%)	7150	

Note: The p-values are from a difference in means t-test. Similar differences are found using ks-tests.

a candidate, though only 7.2% of races have ads from both. For the Senate, the coverage is much better, with 81.1% of races having at least one ad from a candidate, and 56.2% having one ad from both competitors.

In looking at the characteristics of sampled races, both the Senate and House data samples appear to favor more competitive contests. The sample for the Senate contains at least one ad from 85.8% of all Senate elections decided by less than a 20 percentage point difference, though it only contains one ad for 73.7% of less competitive contests. The coverage for the House appears to be somewhat more haphazard. About 14% of competitive races have ads in the sample, while about 13% of less competitive races make it into the sample as well. Fortunately, where the coverage is low in the House, the selection seems to be relatively unbiased, and where selection is somewhat biased in the Senate, the coverage is pretty good, at least with respect to all races.[3]

One difficulty in evaluating the quality of the sampling is that it is impossible to know the full universe of ads actually produced. Thus, it is not clear if the findings from the ads data could generalize to the population of all House and Senate races or just contests where any ads were aired. Nonetheless, it is worth investigating the degree to which the ads collected come from races that are very different from those excluded from the study. Table

[3]Whether this is a representative sample of the universe of all ads produced however is much more uncertain.

Table A.2: Coverage of House Races in the *Congressional Ads Project*, Conditioning on Competition (CQ): 1968 – 2008

	Sampled Races	Excluded Races	*P*-value
Presidential Vote Share (Dem)	0.480	0.482	0.631
Candidate Vote Share (Dem)	0.514	0.528	0.124
Open Races	0.132	0.133	0.963
Competition (CQ)	0.552	0.525	0.380
Incumbent Spending	$672,898	650,576	0.377
Challenger Spending	$356,594	402,610	0.114
Democratic Incumbent	0.448	0.449	0.949
Democratic Wins	0.489	0.514	0.139
N	1985 (22%)	1985	

Note: The p-values are from a difference in means t-test. Similar differences are found using ks-tests.

A.1 shows the differences between House races sampled in the *Congressional Ads Project* and those races not sampled. Table A.3 presents a similar comparison for Senate contests. As can be seen for both the House and Senate, sampled races are somewhat more competitive as measured by the absolute value of the biannual Congressional Quarterly (CQ) ratings that evaluate the risk-level of seats. There also appears to be a slight bias in sampling from conservative and Republican races. This bias largely arises in ads early on in the period, however, and may be the result in part of the way the ads were collected before the process was routinized in the 1980s.

An interesting feature in this data, perhaps not surprisingly, is that the collection of ads appears to be largely driven by the level of competition in the race. When conditioning on the CQ ratings, House races included in the study look very similar to those not sampled, as show in Table A.2. Indeed, Republicans are still slightly favored in the House sample, but these differences in Presidential vote share, party of incumbency, and party of winning candidate are not statistically different from zero. Senate races in the study also look much more similar than those excluded after conditioning on CQ ratings, with the notable exception of candidate spending. Table A.2 shows that candidates look quite similar in contesting races, their party membership, and their party's chances of winning, given similar levels of competitiveness. Howevever, large differences persist for incumbents ($1.8 mil) with ads in the sample to those without, and a similar difference emerges for challengers ($1.7 mil) as

Table A.3: Coverage of Senate Races in the *Congressional Ads Project*: 1968 – 2008

	Sampled Races	Excluded Races	*P*-value
Presidential Vote Share (Dem)	0.470	0.445	0.019
Candidate Vote Share (Dem)	0.511	0.546	0.042
Open Races	0.236	0.148	0.134
Competition (CQ)	1.840	1.542	0.003
Incumbent Spending	$4,870,514	2,239,061	0.000
Challenger Spending	$2,951,886	652,270	0.000
Democratic Incumbent	0.405	0.444	0.410
Democratic Wins	0.528	0.548	0.667
N	580 (81%)	715	

Note: The p-values are from a difference in means t-test. Similar differences are found using ks-tests.

well. These differences are instructive about the biases apparent in Senate races. It is very costly to run a Senate campaign, and especially after the 1970s to run television advertising. Senate candidates with limited fundraising likely produce few if any ads, making it difficult to collect these for many cash-poor candidates.

It is true that these differences may reduce how general the overall patterns of advertising might be in the population of congressional races, especially for those that are uncompetitive and low-salience. On the other hand, the included races are those that speak to some of the most interesting questions in campaign and congressional politics, and that are most relevant for deciding party control in Congress, that are the focus of the most intense campaigning efforts, that attract the most campaign cash, and that now see candidates most of of step with their districts. The CAP data may offer only a limited glimpse into candidate strategies in less competitive and more party-dominant elections. But, other data sources, most notably the National Political Awareness Test (NPAT) provide much better coverage of these less competitive races. The major criticism of NPAT is that it seriously undersamples competitive races, largely drawing from challengers in all-but-decided elections who have little to lose from taking clear positions in a survey. Perhaps NPAT and CAP may be used in combination to a draw broader glimps of campaign behavior across U.S. congressional elections.

Overall, the sampling of ads in the *Congressional Ads Project* constitutes the largest endeavor to date to compile advertising data on historical House and Senate elections. While

Table A.4: Coverage of Senate Races in the *Congressional Ads Project*, Conditioning on Competition (CQ): 1968 – 2008

	Sampled Races	Excluded Races	*P*-value
Presidential Vote Share (Dem)	0.460	0.437	0.004
Candidate Vote Share (Dem)	0.505	0.510	0.762
Open Races	0.216	0.172	0.145
Competition (CQ)	1.692	1.697	0.690
Incumbent Spending	$4,172,760	2,309,380	0.000
Challenger Spending	$2,409,867	688,742	0.000
Democratic Incumbent	0.414	0.541	0.485
Democratic Wins	0.524	0.521	0.939
N	580 (81%)	580	

Note: The p-values are from a difference in means t-test. Similar differences are found using ks-tests.

there are some differences across included and excluded races, these appear to be largely based on the competitiveness of the election. In other words, at the same level of electoral competition, House and Senate races that are sampled are otherwise representative of the population of races as a whole (with the exceptions noted above). This similarity appears especially so for the House, which has a lower proportion of coverage of races overall, in comparison to the Senate which may have greater differences, but also much better coverage. The CAP data provides the only glimpse into the campaign communication choices of congressional candidates over multiple decades, and also provides coverage over a wide swath of races in a way that is somewhat idiosyncratic to underlying features in the races.

Appendix B

Congressional Ads Project: Rubric for Coding

The coding of the ads was done by using a rubric designed in part based on the one used by CMAG, though there are a couple important differences. First, I transcribe every issue position and credit statement made in the ads. Second, I also include information describing the visual content of the ads, as well as detailed instruments capturing a variety of party-based appeals and attacks. The design of the rubric is intentionally similar to CMAG in order to maximize the ability to make comparisons across the latter data, and to improve the potential for panel-like integration of at least some of the ad data. Below is the rubric used to code the 12,692 ads in the *Congressional Ads Project*.

I. Front Matter

1. DVD PPCOPY ID (provided)
2. Ad ID (provided)
3. Candidate (provided)
4. State (provided)
5. Party (provided)
6a. Chamber (provided)
6b. Year (provided)

7. Ad ID and Date
   7.a. Verify Ad ID
   7.b. Verify Date of Ad

II. Candidate Characteristics

8. Does the supported candidate appear in the ad?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	likeness of supported candidate appears name of supported candidate appears
2. No	otherwise

9. Does the supported candidate speak or get quoted in the ad?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	supported candidate speaks supported candidate's voice is heard
2. No	otherwise

10. Does the opposed candidate appear in the ad?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	likeness of opposed candidate appears name of opposed candidate appears ad airs portion of an opponent's ad
2. No	otherwise

11. Does the opposed candidate speak or get quoted in the ad?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	likeness of opposed candidate speaks voice of opposed candidate is heard ad airs portion of an opponent's ad
2. No	otherwise

12. Are any of the listed characterizations used to describe the supported candidate? (Select only if the word or a minor variation thereof is mentioned directly.)

12.a. 1st mention

12.b. 2nd mention

Coding rule:

Value	If Words Used For Supported Candidate Include:
1. Bold/Leader	bold, leader, lead, leadership
2. Caring/Compassionate/Listener	care, caring, listen, compassionate
3. Competent/Experienced/Proven	capable, experience, proven, competent
4. Conservative	conservative
5. Honest/Principled	honest, truthful, trust, principled, honorable
6. Independent/Courageous	independent, courage, stand up to
7. Liberal	liberal
8. Moderate/Centrist	moderate, centrist
9. Bipartisan/Works Across the Aisle	bipartisan, work with both parties, non-partisan
10. Religious/Moral	religious, moral, traditional values
11. Fighter/Tough	fought, fighter, tough, not give up
12. Effective/Problem Solver	effective, problem solver, get things done, successful
13. Hard Worker/Determined/Dedicated	works hard, determined, dedicated
14. Patriotic	patriot, patriotic, american hero
15. Reformer/New Ideas/Changer	reform, reformer, change, new ideas
16. Smart/Intelligent	smart, intelligent, talented
17. One of Us/Neighbor	one of us, neighbor
18. Common Sense	common sense, sensible, reasonable
19. Family Man/Woman	family, family man/woman
20. Of the People/Responsive	responds, serves the people, of the people
21. Original/Visionary	original, vision, visionary, big thinking
22. None	otherwise

13. Are any of the listed characterizations used to describe the opposed candidate? (Select only if the word or a minor variation thereof is mentioned directly.)

13.a. 1st mention

13.b. 2nd mention

Coding rule:

Value	If Words Used For Opposed Candidate Include:
1 Career Politician/Insider/Out of Touch	career politician, insider, out of touch
2 Dishonest/Corrupt	dishonest, liar, lied, corrupt, cannot trust
3 Failure/Unaccomplished/Incompetent	failed, unaccomplished, incompetent
4 Conservative/Right Wing	conservative, too conservative, right wing
5 Liberal/Left Wing	liberal, too liberal, left wing, socialist
6 Partisan/Uncompromising	partisan, uncompromising, votes with party
7 Risky/Inexperienced	inexperienced, risky, untested
8 Special Interests/Beholden to	special interests, not independent, listens to
9 Soft/Weak	soft, weak, lax
10 Outsider/Stranger	outsider, stranger, not one of us/from district
11 Heartless/Does not Care	heartless, does not care, ignores, indifferent
12 Tax and Spender	for tax and spend govt
13 Flipflopper	flipflopper, inconsistent, unprincipled
14 Extremist	extremist, radical, support extremist groups
15. None	otherwise

III. Issues and Positions

14. Does the supported candidate take a position on an issue?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes, for or against a particular vote or bill	candidate is for or against a specific law, bill, or vote or says voted for or voted against something in Congress
2. Yes, for or against some govt action or agency	candidate is for or against a particular government agency, or an existing or proposed governmental action
3. Yes, for or against a general issue or policy	candidate is for or against some general policy issue
4. Yes, for or against some status quo condition	candidate is for or against a broad or vague set of conditions, but that refer to a political issue
5. No	candidate does not state a position for or against anything

15. Does the opposed candidate take a position on an issue?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes, for or against a particular vote or bill	opponent is for or against a specific law, bill, or vote or is said to have voted for or voted against something in Congress
2. Yes, for or against some govt action or agency	opponent is for or against a particular government agency, or an existing or proposed governmental action
3. Yes, for or against a general issue or policy	opponent is for or against some general policy issue
4. Yes, for or against some status quo condition	opponent is for or against a broad or vague set of conditions, but that refer to a political issue
5. No	opponent is not portrayed as for or against anything

16. Does the supported candidate take credit for congressional action?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes, credit for a project in home district or state	candidate takes credit for some accomplishment about a particularistic project (e.g., dollars, jobs, highways, industries, etc) brought to the constituency
2. Yes, credit for constituency service	candidate takes credit for some accomplishment about the constituent problems address or solved by the representative
3. Yes, credit for a bill or policy enacted or cosponsored in Congress	candidate takes credit for some accomplishment about the passage or (co)sponsorship of some bill or law in Congress (or in another law-making body); – also if the candidate claims to have been decisive in voting for or voting against some bill
4. Yes, credit for a general outcome	candidate takes credit for some accomplishment about some general outcome or event
5. No	candidate does not take credit for some accomplishment

17. Does the opposed candidate receive blame for congressional action?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes, blame for a project in home district or state	opponent is blamed for some action or failure about a particularistic project (e.g., dollars, jobs, highways, industries, etc) not brought to the constituency; rarely will involve bringing, rather than failing to bring, such projects to the district
2. Yes, blame for constituency service	opponent is blamed for some action or failure about the constituent problems not address or solved by the representative; rarely will involve bringing, rather than failing to bring, constituency services to the district
3. Yes, blame for a bill or policy enacted or cosponsored in Congress	opponent is blamed for some action or failure about the passage or (co)sponsorship of some bill or law in Congress (or in another law-making body); also if the opponent is blamed for being decisive in voting for or voting against some bill
4. Yes, blame for a general outcome	opponent is blamed for some action or failure about some general outcome or event
5. No	opponent is not blamed for some action or failure

18. List the issues that come up in the ad.
    18.a. 1st Issue
    18.b. 2nd Issue
    18.c. 3rd Issue

    Coding rule:

Value	If Ad Refers to:
100. ——	[never coded]
110. Economy	the economy, general economic conditions, economic performance, economy policy
120. Taxes	tax policy, tax rates, raising or lowering taxes, cut or hike taxes, kept taxes low, mentions specific taxes (e.g., income, sales, gas, property, etc)
130. Deficit/Budget/Spending	federal budget, increase the budget, government or congressional spending, the deficit, deficit spending, reduce the deficit, grow the deficit, balanced budget, balanced budget amendment
140. Employment/Jobs	jobs, unemployment, the unemployed, brought jobs to district, people back to work, fighting for jobs, fighting for the jobless, unemployment insurance
141. Wages/Minimum Wage	minimum wage, increasing minimum wage, better wages, fair wages
142. Inflation/Gas/Food Prices	inflation, inflationary policy, interest rates, rising prices, lower value of dollar, price of goods (e.g., gas, food, or medicine, etc)
150. Farmers/Agriculture/ Rural Issues	farm economy, farmers, family farm, agricultural policy, disaster relief for farmers, farm wages, farm prices, rural transportation, rural hospitals, rural development, general rural issues
160. Business/Small Businesses/ Entrepreneurs	small business, business growth, entrepreneurship, startups, small business loan, small business contracting with government
161. Big Business/Banks/ Corporations	big business, banks, tax breaks for rich, loopholes for rich, Wall Street, finance, corporations, corporate influence
170. Workers/Labor	unions, labor policy, collective bargaining rights, union-busting

Value	If Ad Refers to:
180. Middle Class	middle class, working families, tax breaks for middle class, average people, homeownership
181. Consumer Issues	consumers, consumer protection, consumer protection agencies
182. Transportation/ Infrastructure/Development	transportation, infrastructure, public works, development, bridges, roads, interstates, highways, federal or state highway funding, municipal or public transportation, railroad, Amtrak, major property development or improvement projects
190. Immigration	immigrants, illegal immigration, border, patrol, crime by illegal immigrants, deportation
200. ——	[never coded]
210. Social Issues/Morality	obscenity, violence in media, prayer in school, traditional family values, social, moral
220. Abortion	abortion, abortion rights, federal funding of abortion, right to choose, pro-life, pro-choice
230. Homosexuality/Gay Rights	homosexuality, gay rights, gays in the military, gay marriage, gay teachers
231. Disorder/Law and Order/ Student Protests	social decline, disorder, law and order, student protests, violent protest
240. Crime/Death Penalty	crime, criminals, crime policy, tough/weak on crime, death penalty, three strikes, life in prison, crime penalties, criminal prosecution or defense record, record on crime
241. Law Enforcement/Courts	law enforcement, courts, police, policing, funding for police, prisons
250. Drugs/Narcotics	drugs, drug use, drugs and gangs, drug kingpins, drug sales, drug policy, for/against legalizing drugs, drug enforcement, drug penalties
260. Civil Liberties/Privacy	civil liberties, privacy, freedoms, free speech issues
270. Gun Control	gun control, right to bear arms/own guns, gun ownership, Brady bill

Value	If Ad Refers to:
280. Civil Rights/ Affirmative Action	civil rights, affirmative action, racism, preferential treatment on the basis of race, poll taxes, voter disenfranchisement, Jim Crow, segregation
290. Equality/Equal Rights	equality, equal rights, equality of opportunity
291. Busing	busing, busing our kids, busing in schools
300. ——	[never coded]
310. Children/Family	children, protecting kids, fight crime against kids, child predators, children's health care, SCHIP, family issues, take care of parents, domestic violence, dead-beat parents
320. Women/ Women's Issues	women's rights, breast cancer, women's health care, working women, crime against women
321. Young People/ Next Generation	young people, next generation, voting rights for 18 year olds
330. Education	education, schools, Department of Education, federal funding of education, education spending, teachers, classrooms, class sizes, class resources, building new schools, school reform, education policy, No Child Left Behind, standardized testing, test scores, school performance
340. Environment	environment, environmental protection, protection of natural areas (e.g., lakes, streams, mountains, natural areas, etc), preserve wildlife, offshore, oil spills, environmental disasters, cleanup, environmental legislation (e.g. Clean Air Act, Clean Water, etc), climate change, oil drilling in Alaska/ANWR, conservation
350. Energy	energy, energy policy, oil, gas, or nuclear power, energy prices, foreign dependence on oil
351. Mining/Industry	mining, miners, industry, industrial manufacturing, auto-manufacturers
360. Health Care	health care, medicine, hospitals, patients, doctors, patients bill of rights, prescription drugs, right to health care, insurance, expanding insurance, individual mandate, health exchanges
370. Elderly/Aging	seniors issues, crime against seniors, hospice, home care for seniors

Value	If Ad Refers to:
380. Social Security/ Medicare	social security, medicare, medicare premiums, social security gap, prescription drug coverage
390. Welfare/Medicaid/ Poverty	welfare, food stamps, medicaid health care for poor, poverty, public housing, the poor
400. ——	[never coded]
410. Foreign Policy	foreign policy, treaties, United Nations, America's image abroad, Panama Canal
401. Foreign Aid	aid to other nations, spending for defense of foreign nations (e.g., japan, germany, egypt, etc), foreign humanitarian aid
411. War/Vietnam/ Iraq/Afghanistan	war, anti-war, wars in vietnam, nicaragua, grenada, el salvador, persian gulf, iraq, afghanistan, sanctions
412. Draft/Draft Dodgers	military draft, draft dodgers, for or against pardon, reinstate the draft
420. Defense/Military/ Missile Defense	defense, military, defense/military spending, nuclear weapons treaties, weapons limitations, military base closings, missile defense, defense spending projects, B1 bomber, AX missile, star wars, weapons, satellite missile defense, SDI
430. Veterans	veterans, families of veterans, veterans benefits, Veterans Administration, veterans health care, veterans Social Security/pensions
440. Trade/ Globalization/ NAFTA	trade, trade deficit, balance of payments, fair trade, free trade, NAFTA, globalization, most favored trade status, trade with China, unfair foreign competition, made in USA
450. Terrorism	terrorism, terrorists, Osama Bin Laden, 9-11, Al-Qaeda, World Trade Center bombing
460. Communism/ Socialism	communism, socialism, Soviet Union, Soviet block countries, expansion/collapse of communism, Cuba

Value	If Ad Refers to:
500. ——	[never coded]
510. Reform/Change/ Good Govt	reform, good government, make government work, congressional pay raise, congressional perks, franking/mailing privilege, congressional office funds, office spending, taxpayer funded travel, general government ethics, congressional exemptions, congress follow the same laws as the people, open government/sunshine laws, public hearings/government records
520. Scandal/Government Ethics/Impeachment/ President	scandal, ethics investigations/scandals, impeachment, Savings and Loan, S&L scandal, check writing scandal, Monica Lewinsky, Watergate, Whitewater, every iteration of "something-gate", Iran-Contra, sex scandal
521. Corruption/ Corporate Fraud	corruption, bribery, corrupt or unethical business practices, financial mismanagement, Enron
530. Campaign Finance/ Elections/Term Limits	campaign finance, public finance of elections, election reform, publicizing tax filings of candidates, term limits
540. Special Interests/ Washington/Congress	special interests, anti-Washington, anti-Congress message
541. Big Government/ Bureaucracy/Red Tape	big government, bureaucracy, bureaucrats in Washington, red tape
550. Party/Partisanship	partisanship, party polarization, candidate-party ties, significant party information in ad
551. Bipartisanship	works with both parties, non-partisan, bipartisan, if citizens of both parties endorse the candidate (i.e., "I'm a Republican, but I endorse candidate X, even though she's a Democrat")
552. Negative Campaigning	negative/attack ads, false campaigning, dirty tricks
560. Candidate Experience/Record	candidate qualities of experience, overall legislative record, vote attendance
561. Candidate Values/ Characteristics	candidate values, characteristics, or beliefs

Value	If Ad Refers to:
570. Constituent Service/ Casework	case work, constituency service, voter contact, constituency problems, congressional offices in district, congressional travel to meet with constituents
580. Special Projects/ Earmarks	particularistic projects in district or state, earmarks, special projects, money, projects, or goods for district
590. Patriotism/ Flag Burning	patriotism, flag burning, flag burning amendment, made in USA
600. ——	[never coded]
601. Federalism/States Rights/Delegation	states rights, decentralizing to the states, state grants, protect states from federal encroachment
610. Other/Local	local or other issues
611. Vote Explanation	main focus is of the candidate explaining a particular vote in the ad
612. Background	main focus is of the ad providing the history or biography of the candidate
700. ——	[never coded]
701. None	otherwise

IV. Ad Tone and Information

19. What is the primary tone of the ad?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Attack	most of the time or information in the ad is spent opposing the opponent candidate; most is quantified at roughly 75% of the ad
2. Contrast	roughly equal time or information in the ad is spent opposing the opponent candidate and supported the supported candidate; roughly equal is quantified as each being <75% and >25% of the ad
3. Promote	most of the time or information in the ad is spent supporting the supported candidate; most is quantified at roughly 75% of the ad

---

20. Is the primary focus of the ad on policy or the personal characteristics of the candidates?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Candidate Qualities	the main focus of the ad is on candidate quality information; main focus is quantified as no less than 85% of the ad
2. Policies or Issues	the main focus of the ad is on policy information; main focus is quantified as no less than 85% of the ad
3. Both	the focus of the ad is on both policy and candidate quality information; both means policy and candidate quality information each being <85% and >15% of the ad – also issue codes: 510 (Reform), 520 (Scandal), 521 (Corruption), 540 (Special Interests)
4. Neither	the focus of the ad is on neither policy nor candidate quality information; neither means less than 5% of ad information or time is spent on candidate quality or policy content

Issue Codes	Issue(s)	Policy, Candidate Quality, or Both
110 - 460 530, 541, 550 551, 580, 590 601, 610, 611	Economy to Communism Campaigns, Big Government, Partisanship, Bipartisanship, Special Projects, Patriotism, Federalism, Other, Vote Explanation	Unambiguously refers to ISSUE information
552, 560, 561 570, 612	Negative Campaigning Experience, Characteristics Constituent Service Background	Unambiguously refers to CANDIDATE information
510	Reform/Change/Good Govt	BOTH; Refers most frequently to candidate information; this is so when describing congressional perks, congressional pay raises, taxpayer funded travel, congressional office expenses, congressional exemptions to the law, and so on Refers to policy information when describing sunshine laws or open government policies
520	Scandal/Government Ethics	BOTH; Refers about equally to candidate information; this is so when describing particular scandals that involve the participation of the candidate or opponent Refers about equally to policy information; this is so when describing scandals that involve Congress more generally

Issue Codes	Issue(s)	Policy, Candidate Quality, or Both (Continued)
521	Corruption/Corporate Fraud	BOTH; Refers about equally to candidate information; this is so when describing particular frauds that involve the participation of the candidate or opponent
		Refers about equally to policy information; this is so when describing frauds that involve Congress in general
540	Special Interests/Washington	BOTH; Refers about equally to candidate information; this is so when describing particular candidates' or opponents' ties to special interest groups
		Refers about equally to policy information; this is so when describing the general influence these groups carry in Congress

21. Does the ad cite supporting sources to bolster its claims?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes, newspaper	source information is provided; the ad uses an image of a newspaper source or includes text that refers to a newspaper article
2. Yes, television	source information is provided; the ad uses an image or video of a television source or includes text that refers to a television news story; this includes presenting a portion or image of an opponent's ad
3. Yes, political figure	source information is provided; the ad sources information to a political figure (other than the supported or opposed candidate) or to a political organization (e.g. interest group)
4. Yes, roll call number or official record	source information is provided; the ad uses an image of the congressional record or another official governmental document or includes text that refers to a particular roll cal number or public statute
5. No	no source information is provided;

22. Does the ad cite any endorsements?
    22.a. 1st Endorsement
    22.b. 2nd Endorsement

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Newspaper	a newspaper is endorsing the candidate
2. Political figure	a political figure or candidate is endorsing the candidate; (when in doubt, if a well-dressed individual is endorsing a candidate, this person is coded as a political figure)
3. Interest Group	a general interest group or organization is endorsing the candidate
4. Business group	a business or business group is endorsing the candidate; (when in doubt, if a business-type interest group is endorsing a candidate, this group is coded as a business group)
5. Labor organization	a labor organization or union is endorsing the candidate; (when in doubt, if a labor-type interest group is endorsing a candidate, this group is coded as a labor organization)
6. Constituency group (e.g. nurses, police, workers, families, teachers, etc)	a constituency group or unorganized constituency interest is endorsing the candidate; (when in doubt, if a constituency-type interest group is endorsing a candidate, this group is coded as a constituency group)
7. None	no endorsements are presented in the ad

23. Does the ad mention candidate membership to a committee or other congressional activity, or the seniority of the member?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	the supported candidate is said to serve on one or more congressional committees; the supported candidate's seniority in office is mentioned
2. No	otherwise

V. Partisanship

24. Does the ad mention the party label (i.e., Democrat or Republican) of the supported candidate?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	the supported candidate's party affiliation is presented in the ad
2. No	otherwise

---

25. Does the ad mention the party label (i.e., Democrat or Republican) of the opposed candidate?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	the opposed candidate's party affiliation is presented in the ad
2. No	otherwise

---

26. Does the ad mention the party team or platform?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	the ad mentions the party 'team', or refers to the 'team effort' of party members the ad mentions a common party platform, either by name or generally
2. No	otherwise

27. Does the ad refer to the partisan control of Congress or a candidate endorsing the majority party?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	the ad refers to the party in control of Congress in some way especially by describing the influence of the majority party, or the role that a candidate might play in providing for this influence by virtue of its control of the majority of seats or control over the Speakership
2. No	otherwise

28. Does the supported candidate stand up to leaders of the opposed party? Or run against the other party?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Yes	the ad refers to the candidate 'standing up to', 'fighting', 'stopping', or 'working against' the opposite party, or the opposing party's leadership or its legislative efforts; also, the ad attacks or criticizes the opposing party as a whole, rather than just the opposing candidates' partisan activity
2. No	otherwise

---

29. Do any party figures appear in the ad?
    29.a. 1st Figure
    29.b. 2nd Figure

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. President or VP	incumbent President or Vice President appears; candidate running for President or Vice President in presidential election
2. Speaker of the House/ Majority or Minority Leader	House Speaker, Majority or Minority Leader in House or Senate appears
3. Other House or Senate Figure	other House or Senate member appears
4. State or Other	state or local party official appears
5. None	otherwise

30. Are these figures generally of the supported or opposed candidate's party?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Supported	political figures that appear are of the supported candidate's party
2. Opposed	political figures that appear are of the opposed candidate's party
3. Neither	political figures that appear are of neither the supported nor the opposed candidates' party
4. Both	multiple political figures appear, these figures represent both the supported and the opposed candidates' party

31. Are these figures generally portrayed in a positive or negative light?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Positive	each of the political figures that appear are cast in a positive light positive words and images accompany the presentation of the party figures
2. Negative	each of the political figures that appear are cast in a negative light negative words and images accompany the presentation of the party figures
3. Neither	each of the political figures that appear are cast in a neutral way neither positive nor negative words and images accompany the presentation of the party figures
4. Both	the political figures that appear are cast in either a positive or negative way positive and negative words and images accompany the presentation of the party figures

32. Generally, which candidate(s) does the ad try to link to their party?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Supported	ONLY the supported candidate appears closely with own positively portrayed supported party figures OR ONLY the supported candidate is portrayed as effectively helping own positively portrayed party's policy or political efforts in Congress
2. Opposed	ONLY the opposed candidate appears closely with own negatively portrayed opposed party figures OR ONLY the opposed candidate is portrayed as effectively helping own negatively portrayed party's policy or political efforts in Congress
3. Neither	NEITHER the supported nor opposed candidate appears closely with own party figures AND NEITHER the supported nor opposed candidate is portrayed as effectively helping own party's policy or political efforts in Congress
4. Both	BOTH the supported and opposed candidate appears closely with own positively and negatively portrayed party figures OR BOTH the supported nor opposed candidate is portrayed as effectively helping own positively and negatively portrayed party's policy or political efforts in Congress

33. Generally, which candidate(s) does the ad try to distance from their party?

Coding rule:

Value	If Condition(s):
1. Supported	ONLY the supported candidate appears closely with positively portrayed opposed party figures OR ONLY the supported candidate is portrayed as effectively blocking own negatively portrayed party's policy or political efforts in Congress
2. Opposed	ONLY the opposed candidate appears closely with negatively portrayed supported party figures OR ONLY the opposed candidate is portrayed as effectively blocking own positively portrayed party's policy or political efforts in Congress
3. Neither	NEITHER the supported nor opposed candidate appears closely with party figures AND NEITHER the supported nor opposed candidate is portrayed as effectively blocking a party's policy or political efforts in Congress
4. Both	BOTH the supported and opposed candidate appears closely with other positively and negatively portrayed party figures OR BOTH the supported nor opposed candidate is portrayed as effectively blocking other positively and negatively portrayed party's policy or political efforts in Congress

Appendix C

Validity and Assumptions of the Scaling Methods

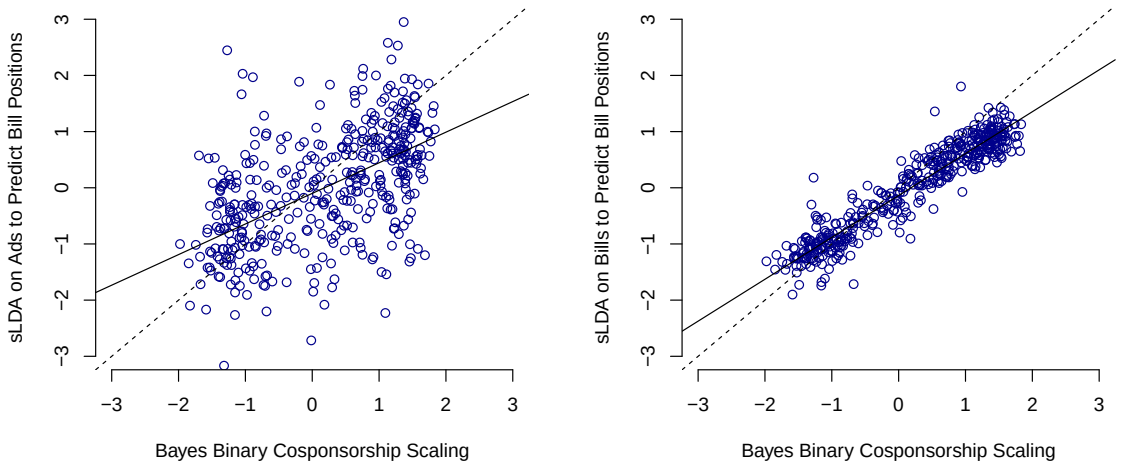
The bridging method to link phrases in ads to bill titles in Congress make three crucial assumptions. First, issue positions in ads and bill titles are both assumed to reveal spatial information, and not just valence or other strategic considerations. Secondly, under the sLDA model, ads and bill titles are assumed to contain a similar latent topic structure, based on a common clustering of politically meaningful words. Finally, the method assumes that words in ads and bills can be meaningfully scored along a single dimension and that this partisanship score is essentially analogous to a spatial, left-right dimension. I address each of these below.

In this project, I primarily use the supervised LDA approach to find topics that predict party membership, and then interpret the predicted values of partisanship as a measure of ideology amongst partisans. The core assumption behind this interpretation is that it is 'easier' to identify a candidate as a member of one or the other party, the more ideologically extreme they are in their policy statements. For instance, if a candidate says they are "for a government-run health care plan that provides insurance coverage for everyone" we would infer that this candidate is more likely to be a Democrat than a candidate who is "against socialized medicine in all its forms." Positions that are more 'moderate' on this dimension are those that are often taken by members of both parties, such as being "for a plan to reduce the medical costs for families and seniors". Thus, this approach assumes positions that are strongly predictive of one party are those that are least likely to be taken by members of the other party, which is informative about a position's ideological extremity in spatial terms.

However, interpreting 'partisanship' as a left-right measure of ideology may be flawed since these only correlate imperfectly, especially prior to polarization. Moreover, this assumption may fail if candidates choose to talk about issues in ways that do not signal ideological information. For instance, campaign ads are often viewed as about largely non-policy or valence issues (Page 1978; Sides 2006). Similarly, bill short titles may be rather bland statements that do not readily admit ideological dimensionality. To verify that words

carry tractable ideological meaning, I first compare the scaling of MCs (a) using bill short titles in sLDA to (b) using binary cosponsor choices. After scaling, the two dimensions are highly correlated, with $\alpha_j^{(1)}$ and $\alpha_j^{(2)}$ (over bills) correlated at 0.93 on average from the 93rd to 110th Congress.

Figure C.1: Modeling Only Ads and Only Titles to Predict Cosponsorship Bill Locations in the 104th House



(a) Ad Words to Bills

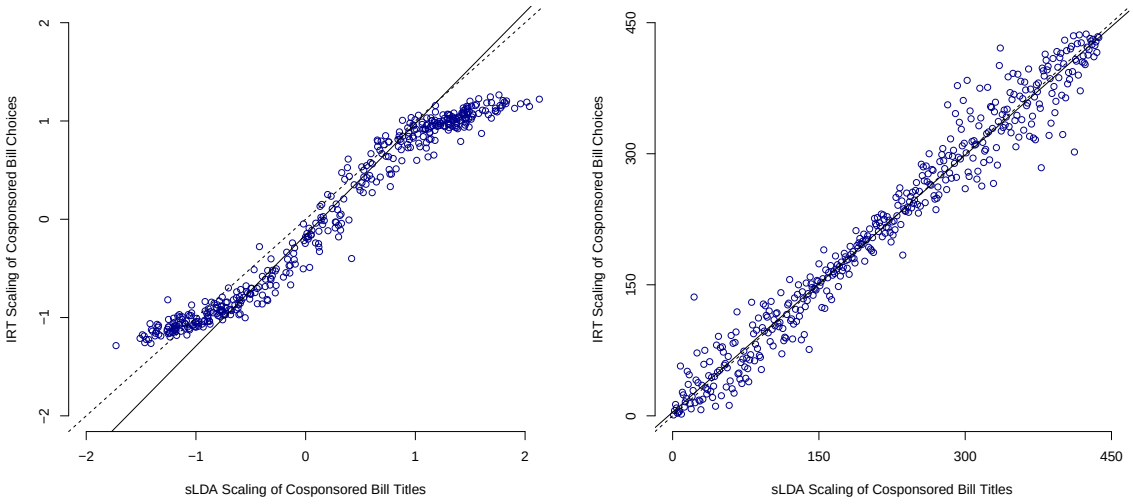
(b) Bills Titles to Bills

The sLDA scaling method also assumes that both ads and bill titles originate from the same corpora generating process. This essentially means that both sets of documents share the same latent topics, and thus that words cluster with similar meanings across both sources. This assumption is impossible to test, though we can assess the degree to which its violation affects prediction in a cross-validation design. The design randomly splits ad documents (ad) and cosponsor bill ($bill$) documents each into two groups: $ad^{(1)}$, $ad^{(2)}$, $bill^{(1)}$, and $bill^{(2)}$. The sLDA model is then estimated on each of the groups by themselves, and then assessed on the other two 'held out' groups. This is repeated 1,000 times. The object is to observe prediction rates using ads to model bills, and vice versa. Over the iterations, modeling $ad^{(1)}$ accurately predicts outcomes in the held out $ad^{(2)}$ group at a rate of 62% compared to 54% prediction for $bill^{(2)}$. Conversely, modeling $bill^{(1)}$ accurately predicts outcomes on held out $bill^{(2)}$ at 72%, but only 48% for held out $ad^{(2)}$. Although imperfect, this accuracy in prediction is suggestive that ad phrases do provide information about ideological conflict in Congress.

To verify this, I compare the results from (a) a model of only ad words to predict bill word locations against the binary cosponsor scaling to (b) a model of only bill words to predict bill word locations against cosponsorsip. Figure C.1(a) presents the correlation predicting bills through ad words. Here we can see a linear association between the two dimensions, though

this does appear to be quite noisy.[1] The linearity seems to be largely driven by two clusters of liberal and conservative bills that are especially well predicted using ads. Similarly, Figure C.1(b) shows the correlation predicting bills through a model of bill words, which shows a much tighter association. The results from this validation analysis confirm that scaling words can predict bills quite well, though using just words in ads may be somewhat less informative overall.

Figure C.2: Correlation Between Scaling Bills Using sLDA on Titles and IRT on Cosponsorship Choices: 106th House



(a) Cardinal Scores

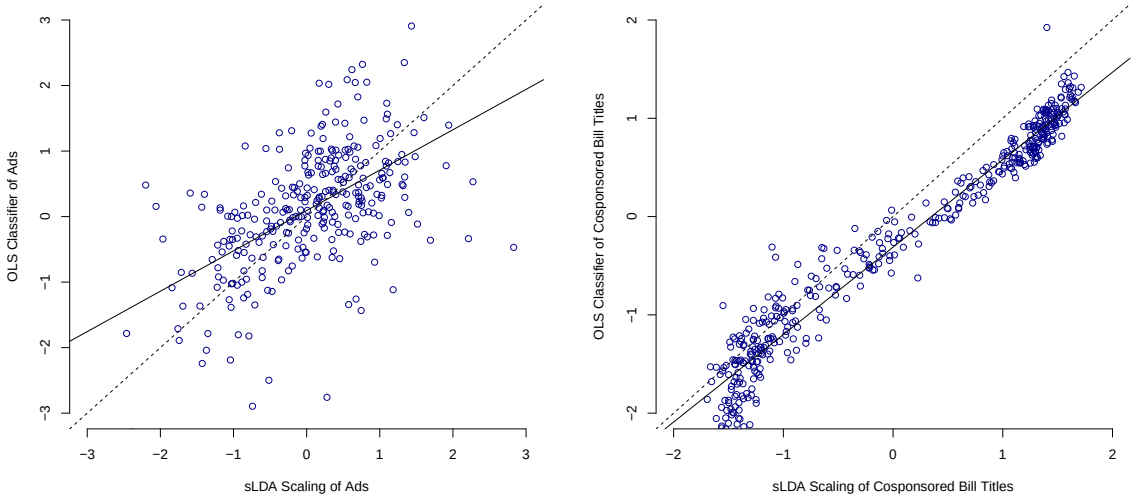
(b) Ranked Scores

I conduct two final validation checks. First, I examine whether scaling bill titles using the sLDA procedure produces similar or different measures of bill locations than using a more standard item response model like that from Eq. 2.1 in Chapter 2. Secondly, I conduct a much simpler version of topic modeling to verify that the sLDA approach is not scaling ads or bills in ways that are inconsistent with other methods. This latter method used is to predict scores for phrases by conducting a series of bivariate regressions, regressing party of candidate on a count of the phrases used by each. Each coefficient is taken as a 'partisan scoring' that is used to score each candidate on the basis of their frequency using each scored phrase.

Figure C.2 presents the correlation between scaling bills using sLDA and using a standard IRT approach. In Figure C.2(a) the cardinal scores are presented. As can be seen the association is monotonic and highly correlated, though there are some non-linearities in the tails of the distribution. This likely has to do with the Bayesian implementaiton of the IRT

[1]There may also be higher dimensionality not being adequately captured in the word scaling models.

Figure C.3: Correlation Between Scaling Bills and Ads Using sLDA and a Bivariate Regression Approach: 106th House



(a) Ads Scaled

(b) Bills Scaled

model that imposes a Normal prior on the ideal points of bills, a prior that is never assumed for sLDA. Interestingly, to the degree this illustrates a difference, the sLDA model tends to score extreme bills as *more extreme* than the IRT model, suggesting that a similar scoring would also propagate into the analysis of ads. This strong association between sLDA and IRT is clearly illustrated in the ranked scores in Figure C.2(b).

Finally, Figure C.3 presents the correlation with the scaling of ads and bills using an OLS approach and sLDA. Figure C.3(a) shows the correlation for ads and Figure C.3(b) shows this for bills. As can be seen the association is stronger for bills, largely due to the greater degree of information available. Yet, across both sets of documents, the sLDA and regression approaches produce similar scalings of candidates. This finding shores up the concern that scaling by using a complex topic model to predict partisanship produces a dimension that essentially recoverable by more simple regression techniques. This strongly suggests that words and phrases chosen by candidates do contain important information that can be used to predict their positions in a political space.

Appendix D

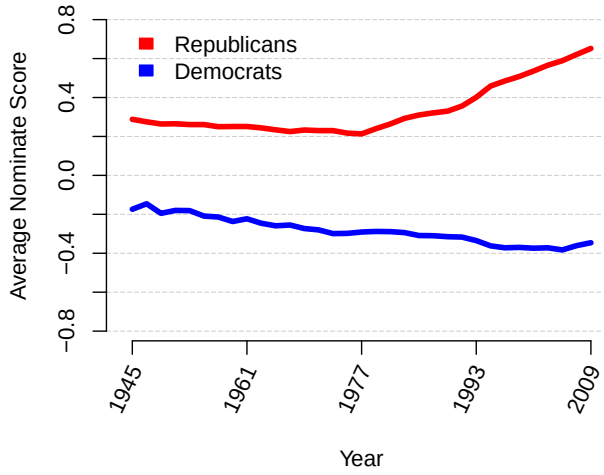
Additional Tables and Figures

Table D.1: Effects of Extreme Ads on Incumbent Vote Support in House and Senate Races, Imputing Missing Responses, by Party

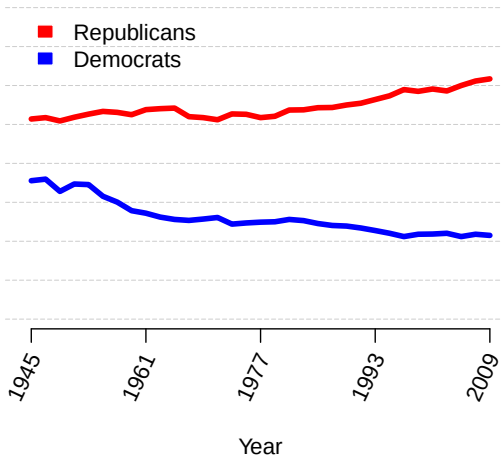
	Senate		House	
	ATT	P-Value	ATT	P-Value
Republicans				
Bivariate	-0.018	0.03	-0.007	0.32
Dif-in-Dif	-0.049	0.00	-0.081	0.00
Democrats				
Bivariate	-0.160	0.00	-0.016	0.08
Dif-in-Dif	–	–	-0.062	0.00

P-values are non-parametric bootstrap probabilities with ten multiple imputed datasets

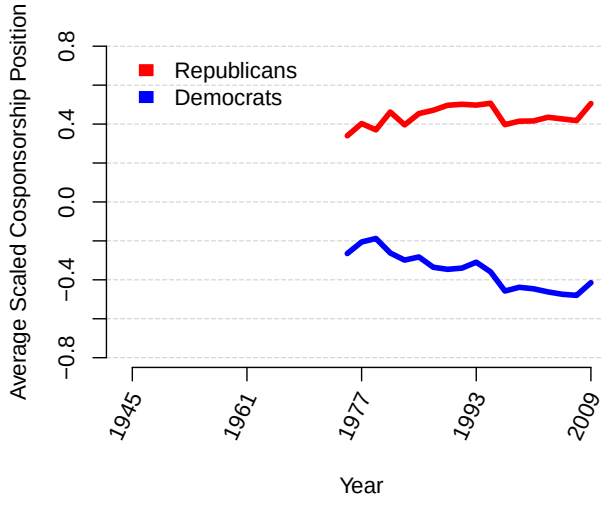
Figure D.1: Polarization in House Roll Call and Cosponsorship Behavior, By Party: 1945 to 2009



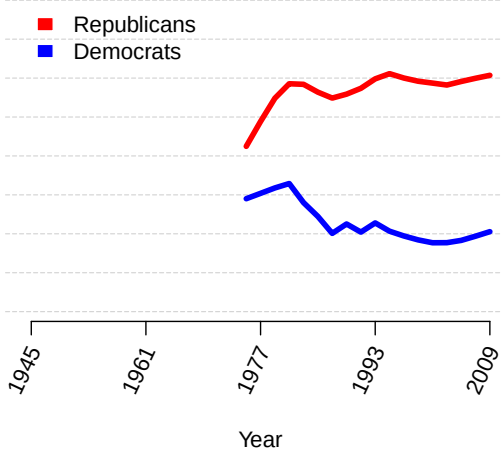
(a) House – Roll Calls



(b) Senate – Roll Calls

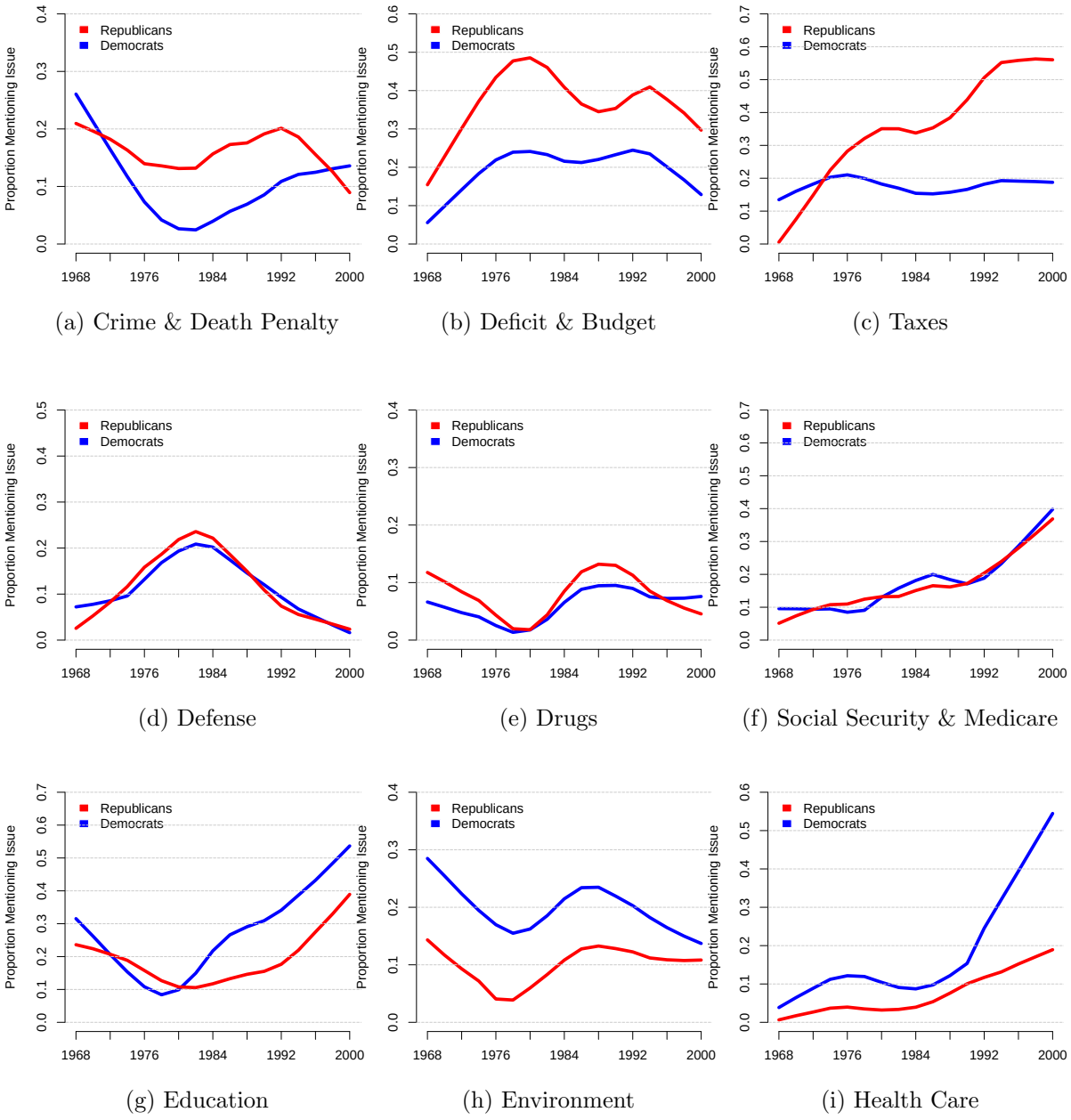


(c) House – Cosponsorship



(d) Senate – Cosponsorship

Figure D.2: Polarization in Issue Agendas By Topic Frequency

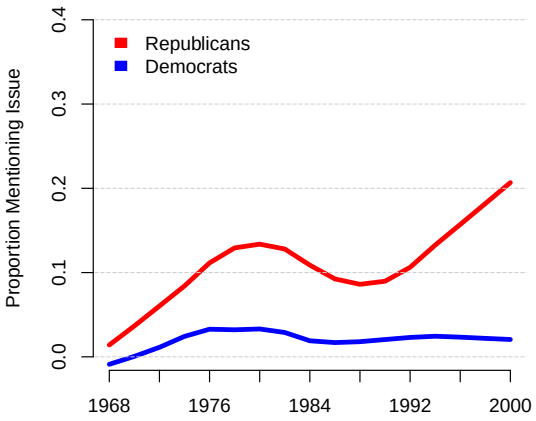


(a) Crime & Death Penalty (b) Deficit & Budget (c) Taxes

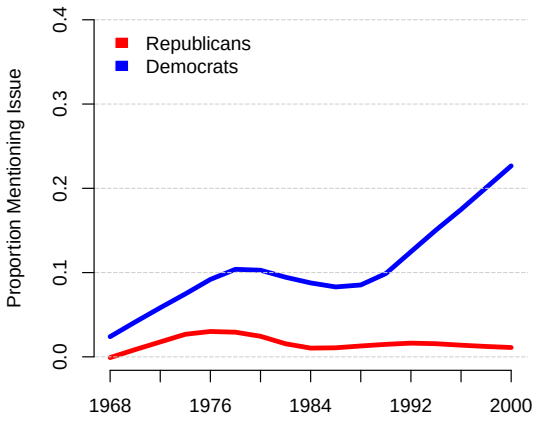
(d) Defense (e) Drugs (f) Social Security & Medicare

(g) Education (h) Environment (i) Health Care

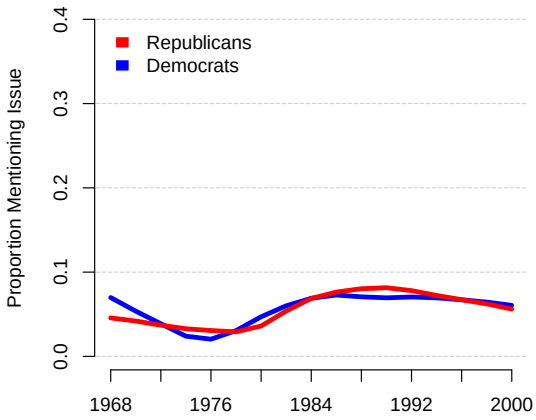
Figure D.3: Partisan and Bipartisan Issue Agendas



(a) Big Government

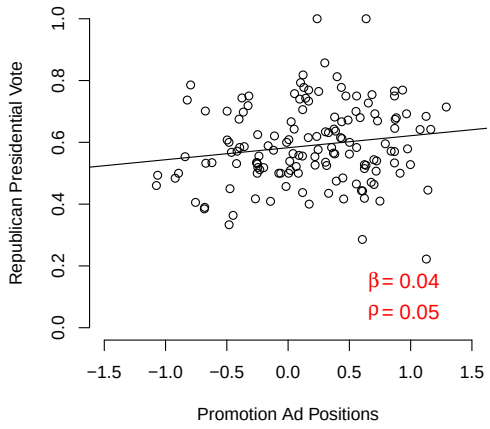


(b) Big Business

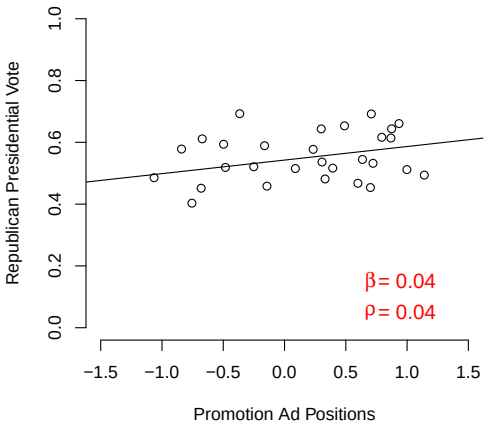


(c) Bipartisanship

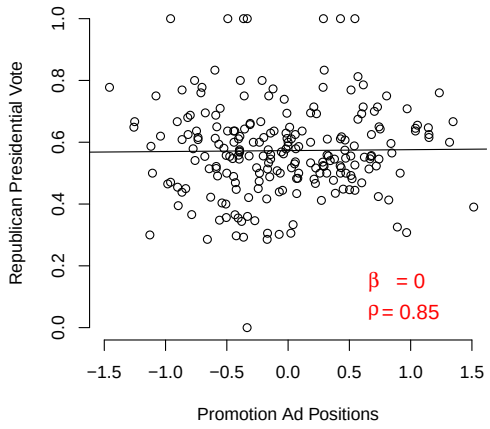
Figure D.4: Correlation Between Candidate Promotion Messages and Media Market or Political Jurisdiction Republican Presidential Choice



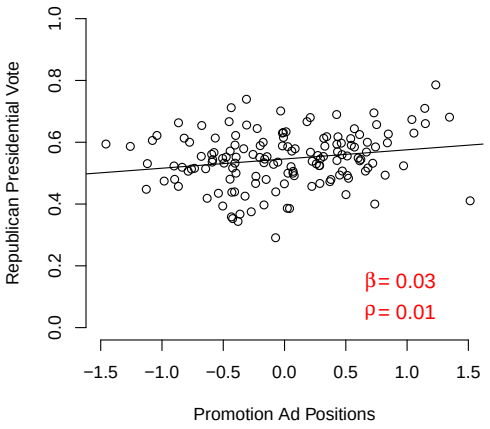
(a) Senate Media Market



(b) Senate State



(c) House Media Market



(d) House District

Table D.2: Effects of Extreme Ads on Incumbent Vote Support in House and Senate Races, Deleting Missing Responses, by Party

	Senate		House	
	ATT	P-Value	ATT	P-Value
REPUBLICANS				
Bivariate	-0.041	0.09	0.021	0.56
Dif-in-Dif	-0.074	0.03	-0.061	0.01
DEMOCRATS				
Bivariate	-0.103	0.47	-0.037	0.28
Dif-in-Dif	–	–	0.033	0.46

P-values are OLS with Huber-White standard errors. Dif-in-Dif includes interacted time fixed effects, and state or district fixed-effects.