Appendix

3 Measurements and Model

In order to assess the nature and extent of the various perceptual processes on constituent perceptions of representative policy positions, a merged data set consisting of 2000 National Election Studies survey and 2000 Americans for Democratic Action scores for House congressional members was used to test the model incorporating the affective and cognitive processes.* This data set includes 1,807 respondents who were selected through a stratified cluster sampling technique. The following model was estimated to assess the impact of relevant psychological factors as well as informational cues:

\[
Perceived \ representative \ ideology = a + b_1(\text{constituent ideology}) + b_2(\text{perceived party ideology}) + b_3(\text{actual representative position}) + b_4(\text{positive projection}) - b_5(\text{negative projection})
\]

Perceptual Processes—Hypotheses and Measurement

*False consensus*: Individuals will presume their position is normative. More liberal individuals will perceive a more liberal representative. The respondent self-placement (v000439) on a seven-point ideological scale was reversed and recoded to a three-point scale similar to the perceived representative ideology scale.³

*Projection*: Individuals will resolve inconsistent attitudes. Liberal individuals will be more likely to perceive liberal
Appendix

positions of representatives of whom they are more favorable. They will be more likely to perceive conservative positions of representatives of whom they are less favorable. This concept is measured by an interactive term combining the modified ideological self-placement (recoded similarly to the other ideological ratings) and the approval rating (feeling thermometer—variable) of the representative. However, because there is the tendency for an asymmetrical impact—positive evaluations outweighing negative—a separate variable is included for each sentiment direction (Kinder 1978; Conover and Feldman 1989; Kenney 1993).

Inference/Political Schema: A member’s partisanship will provide a heuristic with which constituents will infer ideological positions: the more liberal the position of the member’s party, the more liberal the member’s position will be perceived. The measure of partisan inference is a composite measure of the perceived Democratic party ideology (V1382) for Democratic representatives and perceived Republican party ideology (V1383) for Republican Representatives. The variable was recoded into the same three-point scale (1 conservative to 3 liberal) as the ADA scores, perceived member ideology and respondent self-identified ideology.

Representative actual position: The Americans for Democratic Action member score for 2000 serves as a proxy for the member’s general ideological stance. Because the ADA measures are scaled 0–100 and the comparative respondent positions and perceptions of representative positions are drawn on a seven-point scale, each is recoded to a simplified distinction of liberal, moderate, conservative: 0–30 conservative (1), 31–70 moderate (2), 71–100 liberal (3).

Controls: Media exposure, measured by respondents’ indications that they had read about the campaign (V336) or saw campaign ads (V338) increases the likelihood of a more accurate perception as individuals have greater opportunity to receive information relative to representative positions. The model was compared for cases in which the respondents indicated any type of media exposure, either reading or viewing, to the campaign and those who did not have such exposure. A second set of estimates distinguish the effects for those who received information via print or broadcast sources as research has shown that the former sources tend to provide more in-depth information than the latter (Brians and Wattenberg 1996; Wilson and Gronke 2000).
### TABLE A.1 Correlations of perception factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incumbent ideology</th>
<th>Constituent ideology</th>
<th>Party ideology</th>
<th>ADA score</th>
<th>Positive projection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent ideology</td>
<td>□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituent ideology</td>
<td>0.210**</td>
<td>□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ideology</td>
<td>0.476**</td>
<td>0.068*</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.097**</td>
<td>□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADA score</td>
<td>0.387**</td>
<td>0.108**</td>
<td>0.511**</td>
<td>0.068*</td>
<td>0.250**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive projection</td>
<td>0.180**</td>
<td>0.276**</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.097**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative projection</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-0.135**</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.068*</td>
<td>0.250**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.01. **p < 0.001.
4 Measurements and Model

The 1978–1986, 1990, 1994 and 2000 National Elections Studies surveys provide the data to investigate the changing relation between candidate evaluations and national or local factors. Given the wide value range of the dependent variable, Ordinary Least Squares regression was used to test the aforementioned hypotheses.

Dependent Variable

Evaluation of Representative: The feeling thermometer for the incumbent was used as a measure of constituent evaluation. For all years but 1978, there was not an incumbent-specific measure, thus a measure was computed by using the Democratic candidate feeling thermometer where the incumbent was a Democrat and the Republican feeling thermometer where the incumbent was a Republican. Although the measures after 1978 are not exact in comparison, the process for the remaining years extracted only those cases for which the measure was reflective of an incumbent and related evaluations; therefore, they are very proximate to the initial year’s measure.

Independent Variables

Policy responsiveness: The absolute value of the difference between the respondents’ self-placement on the seven-point ideological scale and their perception of the incumbent’s position on the ideological scale.

Casework Satisfaction: Respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with the response if they contacted their member for assistance. This variable was recoded so that the high value (5) indicated high satisfaction with their response. Individuals who did not solicit help were placed in the middle (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) so as to minimize the number of missing cases.

Second-Hand Satisfaction: Respondents were asked whether they knew someone who had contacted their member for assistance and whether they were satisfied with the response. This variable was recoded so that the high value (5) indicated high satisfaction with their response. Individuals who did not solicit help were placed in the middle (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) so as to minimize the number of missing cases.

Expectation of Helpfulness: Respondents were asked whether or not they expected their representative to be helpful with a future problem. The
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coding for this measure was reversed so that the scale ranged from 1 (not at all helpful) to 4 (very helpful). The “depends” and “unsure” categories were coded 2 (neither helpful nor unhelpful).

Keep in Touch: In the 2000 survey, satisfaction and expectation of helpfulness variables were missing. However, to assess the perceived availability of assistance from the member, another variable was substituted. This question asked how well individuals felt the representative did in keeping in touch with the district. The scale ranged from (1) very poorly to (5) very well.

Recall District Service: Respondents were asked whether or not they recalled anything special the incumbent had done for the district. The variable was recoded so that those who responded yes were coded 1 and all others were coded no.

Symbolic Responsiveness/Diffuse Constituent Support: The survey asks respondents if there was anything in particular that they liked/disliked about the House Democratic and Republican candidates. They have the opportunity to list up to five mentions (four in earlier years). To create this measure, it was first necessary to standardize the open-ended responses to this question. Building on Fenno’s (1978) idea of “presentation of self,” symbolic responsiveness includes those responses that indicate trustworthiness (e.g. honesty, integrity, independence from other political actors, and not acting in self-interest), qualification for the job (i.e. experience), identification and empathy. Responses which captured these aspects were scored 1, all other responses were coded 0. The responses were recomputed so that the Democratic candidate scores were used if the incumbent was a Democrat and the Republican responses if the incumbent was a Republican. The positive and negative values were summed to create a scale ranging from −5 (−4 in early years) to 5 (4). Using the master candidate code in the appendix of the National Election Studies code book, the following responses were classified as symbolic considerations: 201, 203, 211–225, 297, 301–320, 334, 335, 397, 401–426, 431, 432, 435–442, 447, 449–457, 459–463, 464–466, 502–505, 603, 604, 609, 610, 613–620, 622, 623, 625, 627, 701–711, 722, 732, 734–735, 807, 808, 829–838, 841, 842, 845, 846, 1201–1206.

Control Variables—National Factors

Party Identification: The standard seven-point party identification summary scale was recoded to reflect closeness of partisan attachment. For those incumbents who were Democrats, the scale (0 strong Democrat
to 6 strong Republican) was left as originally coded. For incumbent Republicans, the scale was reversed. In both coding schemes, members of third parties, apolitical individuals and those who could not identify themselves with a party were placed at the independent value (3).

**Congressional Approval:** Respondents were asked to rate the performance of Congress. The variable was recoded so that 5 represented those who strongly approved and 1 represented those who strongly disapproved. Those who were not sure were assigned the middle value.

**Diffuse System Support:** Respondents were asked two questions consistently across the survey which measured different characteristics of the concept.

**System Trust:** How much of the time the respondent thinks he can trust the government.

**System Responsiveness:** How much attention does the respondent feel the government pays to what people think.
5 Measurements and Model

This chapter used the 2000 American National Election Studies (ANES) data set to assess the impact of group identities on constituent perceptions (Burns et al. 2002). The ANES data includes 1,807 respondents selected through a stratified cluster sampling technique. In order to identify the importance of each facet of representation, this chapter uses an “identity model,” incorporating the group identities discussed earlier to estimate the relevance to constituents of different components of responsiveness.

Components of Responsiveness. The dependent variables, representing each component of responsiveness, are derived from a similar measurement. Because there is no set of questions directly assessing the importance of the various components of representation, it was necessary to construct alternative measures to determine their relevance. In the survey, respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions about Democratic and Republican House candidates. Specifically, they were asked what they liked or disliked about the candidates, in this case, their own representatives. The constituents had an opportunity to mention up to five positive and five negative aspects of the candidate as reported in variables 1,329–1,351. Open-ended questions allow individuals to communicate their ideas freely without having to conform to preselected answers. They also provide an additional benefit in that respondents are able to discuss things important to them. The responses to the open-ended questions are coded with specificity in the ANES code book appendix. These responses were sorted and collapsed into one of four categories based on the fit of the coded open-ended answer with the responsiveness concept. Building on Fenno’s (1978) idea of “presentation of self,” symbolic responsiveness includes those responses that indicate trustworthiness (e.g. honesty, integrity, independence from other political actors and not acting in self-interest), qualification for the job (i.e. experience), identification and empathy. District service responses include mentions of actions on behalf of the district as a whole (e.g. keeping constituents informed and doing things to help the district's economy). Service responses provided indications that the representative had helped individual constituents with problems. Specific policy responses were coded as policy, as were all general ideological responses. A complete listing of the values coded by the author for each category is provided in the appendix.
An individual’s likelihood of mentioning a particular component of responsiveness provides an indicator of those facets of representation that are most important. Although there certainly are alternative ways of assessing the constituent perspective, the model used here is based on the subjective perceptions of the respondents. Although objective actions of House members may contribute to individual constituents’ perceptions of their representative’s behavior, it is ultimately the subjective perceptions that are relevant to constituent evaluations. If the perceptions themselves are skewed by bias or lack of information, the final evaluation itself will be skewed because it will be based more on subjective perceptions of the representative and less on the representative’s objective actions. Although these objective actions are relevant to the larger framework of the representational relationship (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003), this study seeks only to determine what constituents value. It is not concerned with the accuracy of those perceptions.

There are no questions in the survey which ask how important it is that a representative is responsive in one way or another—no ranking of importance of different types of behavior. As a result the only way to determine what was important to whom, was to break down the categories of like/dislike mentions. On one hand, this process provides an advantage over respondent ranking of preferences in that the open-ended questions prevent the survey from biasing the responses by forcing constituents to think about something with which they might not be concerned. On the other hand, this method allows for the exclusion of preferences that were temporarily forgotten. The like/dislike mentions are actually a good source of information, because they allow the respondents to indicated what they think is important, rather than selecting answers which may not be salient.

Identity Characteristics

*Ethnicity:* Non-white individuals are more likely to prefer non-policy behavior, such as group or district benefits, because they have a greater need for tangible benefits. To understand how race affects the importance of each component, individuals were placed into one of two variable categories, white and non-white, based on the coding of responses to variable 1,006.16

*Age:* Individuals at different life stages may have different expectations from their representatives as a result of different needs. Older individuals...
may be more concerned with policy factors due to their greater exposure to and understanding of the impact of government action on their lives. Using variable 908, individuals were grouped into one of three categories corresponding to the three age ranges during which political interest and involvement vary: 18–29, 30–54 and 55 and older.

**Gender:** Women are more likely to prefer member behaviors that are targeted at district and constituent assistance. Variable 1,029 was used to control for the gender of constituents.

**Social Class:** As a matter of self-interest, individuals from lower social classes are more likely to mention particular and general benefits rather than policy, whereas upper-class individuals may prefer policy considerations. This variable was measured by the self-selected social class response ranging from lower working class to upper middle class as reported by variable 1,005.

**Education:** Highly educated individuals are the most likely to mention policy concerns rather than other factors because they are best equipped to understand politics. A collapsed scale of education levels was created from variable 913: no high-school degree (individuals with 11 years or less of schooling); high school (individuals who had completed high school or only a few years of college, but no college degree); college education (individuals with an associate, bachelor or advanced degree).

**Ideology:** Past research has examined the impact of party identification on assessments of member behavior. Ideology is a more appropriate measure than is partisanship, however, because it is a more consistent indicator of political opinions. Conservatives are more likely to prefer district benefits than casework. Ideology is measured with variable 1,370, which provides a seven-point continuum from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.

These variables were recoded so that a high score (5 or 7) represented the most supportive answer. In 1978 and 1982 there was only an agree/disagree response, so this was recoded as 1 if they agreed and 0 if they did not.

**National Economy:** Converse and Markus (1982), as well as several other scholars, note that traditionally elections are impacted by sociotropic economic concerns rather than a voter’s personal financial status. Individuals were asked how they felt the economy had changed over the past year. Because individuals are more likely to assign blame for economic problems than give credit for economic gain, it was necessary
to create separate dummy variables for positive and negative changes to allow for different magnitudes of effect (Kernell 1977). For the “better national economy” dummy variable, individuals who felt the national economy was better off or much better off were coded 1 and all others were coded 0. For the “worse national economy” variable, those who thought the economy was somewhat or much worse off were coded 1 and all others were coded 0.

Presidential Approval: This five-point scale was reversed so that the strongly approve value was 5 and the strongly disapprove value was 1 for those incumbents who were of the same party as the president. For incumbents of the opposite party, the original coding scheme was kept (1—strongly approve and 5—strongly disapprove.

Coding for Like/Dislike Mentions


Service Mentions: 321, 322.


Group Mentions: 207–1236, 1297.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE A.2</th>
<th>Pearson’s correlations: identity characteristics and responsiveness mentions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>−0.125***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>0.096***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>0.134***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>0.089***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.01, **p < 0.001, ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.10.
Notes

1 Ideally, this model is best estimated with lagged variables found in panel data. However, the cross-sectional nature of the survey selected (as part of a larger project on constituent evaluations for which critical variables are not included in the 2002, 2004 or 2006 data sets) hinders the ability to provide appropriately lagged models. However, the constituent ideology and media exposure variables are taken from the pre-election wave of the study, the ADA scores come from bills considered primarily before the time of data collection for the post-election wave, in which the remaining variables are found. The party variable and feeling thermometers—used in the construction of the projection measures—are only available in the post-election wave.

2 Although the values of slightly conservative and liberal indicate some directionality of the respondents’ ideology, this recoding best preserved the fairly normal distribution of the data, which had a slight liberal skew.

3 There was not an incumbent-specific measure, thus a measure was computed by using the Democratic candidate feeling thermometer where the incumbent was a Democrat (V001298) and the Republican feeling thermometer (V001299) where the incumbent was a Republican, determined by the classification of the district by type of race where incumbent was identified as Democrat or Republican (V000194).

4 Individuals rating representatives more warmly—51 and above—are incorporated in the positive measure. Negative evaluations are coded as 0. Individuals rating representatives more coolly—50 or below—are incorporated in the negative measure. Positive evaluations are coded as 0.

5 Brewer, Mariani and Stonecash’s (2002) comparative analysis demonstrates similar trends with both ADA and DW Nominate scores.

6 The variable used to measure the representative’s actual position is the representative’s ADA interest group rating. Although specific issue scales or votes would provide an even more concrete ability to assess the nature of constituent perceptions of member positions, they are not used for several reasons. First, there is difficulty in relying on singular roll-call votes. Absent a consistent statement from representatives, the vote is the best approximation of a member’s position; however, it is not perfect. Dissatisfaction with the means to achieve a particular end or the presence of a distasteful “killer” amendment often requires a representative to vote against a proposal. For example, in the 106th Congress, Democrats who supported the abolition of the marriage tax penalty voted against the measure because it did not also include provision of prescription coverage for those seniors on Medicare. However, over time there should be some level of reliability across measures (Kingdon’s string of votes). In addition, use of specific issues requires
individual ratings of specific issues. Although the NES does contain several issue scales, there are not any scales on which House candidates, including incumbent representatives, are rated.

Patterned after the model used by Conover and Feldman (1989), the inclusion of these factors will allow for the determination as to whether the media itself provides a significant cue.

The 1978 survey is the first to offer substantial questions concerning respondents’ opinions of congressional incumbents and candidates. However, given the absence of central measures, the 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996 and 1998 surveys were excluded. The 2000 survey reintroduced some of the traditional variables, but the specific casework variables were missing. However, in order to incorporate the most recent data, the question which asks how well the incumbent “kept in touch” with the district was substituted.

Many studies have employed feeling thermometers for evaluations. Ideally, the thermometer scores are preferable because there is a larger value range. Although the National Election Studies surveys also include a five-point performance evaluation scale, this measure and the feeling thermometer correlate with the vote at about the same level. Furthermore, more cases are available due to the lower level of missing responses on the thermometer ratings. Both measures have been used in past research, with significant results.

This is the most recent year for which all variables were available.

Only one National Election Study survey provides a measure in which respondents are able to rank various member activities in terms of importance. Although the 1978 NES has a question that allows respondents to rank behaviors, it does not correspond exactly to concepts here. The concepts included: “Helping people in the district who have personal problems with the government,” “Making sure the district gets its fair share of government money and projects,” “Keeping track of the way government agencies are carrying out laws passed by Congress,” “Keeping in touch with the people about what government is doing” and “Working in Congress on bills concerning national policy.”

The responses were not coded specifically with respect to the incumbent. Those respondents who were coded in the race type variable as “Republican, incumbent running” were rated using the House Republican candidate questions and those with a Democratic incumbent running were rated using the House Democratic candidate questions. Whereas this method did not permit the inclusion of those individuals whose incumbent was retiring, there was no measure that would also allow for a similar evaluation. Few cases lacked an incumbent race, so excluding them is not problematic.
This category did not include the comments for whether the representative conveys the views of the district. These responses were considered to be more policy-oriented in nature and were coded accordingly.

Individuals also mentioned the importance of the representative acting on behalf of or against specific groups. Although this categorization does not expressly fit within the framework established, the significant number of mentions suggests that it is a worthwhile consideration to measure. This distinction differs from that of identification, which suggests explicitly that a member is connected in some social grouping to the constituent. Instead, it provides a measure of relevance of group connections irrespective of the characteristics of the constituent. Only a handful of responses were included in this category, however, so a separate model of estimation was not included in this study. The remaining responses were placed in a residual category because they typically bore no relation to any consideration of responsiveness, such as campaign-specific comments indicating support of candidates because they were the underdogs.

In this study, identity serves as a factor influencing the constituent’s opinion, not as a measure of descriptive congruence, as used for example by Box-Steffensmeier et al. (2003). Therefore, whether individuals who share important identity characteristics with their representatives have more favorable evaluations is an issue worth exploring; it is beyond the scope of this particular project.

The decision to place both Hispanic and Asian American individuals in the non-white category was based not on the erroneous assumption that all minorities tend to respond with the same characteristics, but on the small pool of Hispanic and Asian Americans (due to missing values). Analyzing these two groups separately would not produce statistically meaningful results given the limited number of cases.
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