Legislator Effort and Policy Representation

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Abstract

I address competing theories regarding the role policy plays in citizens' evaluations of their legislators. I argue that, even with overwhelming evidence regarding the public's limited ablities to understand the issues, congruence in policy remains an important standard by which citizens evaluate legislators. I provide empirical evidence using panel data that demonstrates changes in beliefs regarding policy congruence are statistically related to changes in overall approval. I also examine what drives perceptions of policy congruence. Using data that captures citizens' beliefs about the content, frequency, and type of interaction they have with their representatives, I argue that the change in perceptions of policy congruence is not one of persuasion. Representatives do not necessarily hold the power to persuade with their constituents, but rather they create reputations that facilitate citizen projection of their own views onto the legislator.

Elite Behavior and Policy Congruence

As outlined by Fenno (1978) legislators devote much of their home style, or presentation self in their home districts, to symbolic, non-ideological gestures. An equally important part of the Home Style theory deals with how members of Congress discuss their policy positions with their constituents. Whether through correspondence, media interviews, or personal interactions, members of Congress are often asked to explain their roll call votes (Kingdon 1989). As important studies demonstrate, members make voting decisions with their ability to explain their actions to their constituencies in mind (Kingdon 1989, Arnold 1990). Legislators strategically highlight those policy positions that will provide them the greatest benefits (Hillygus and Shields 2009, Grose, Mahlotra, and Van Houweling 2015). When certainty of the audience's preferences is clear, representatives will provide clear positions, possibly taking the position to an extreme (Grimmer 2013ab). If the legislator believes the constituency has a high degree of uncertainty, the legislator will engage in "waffling" (Mayhew 1974, 63). Mayhew (1974) and Fiorina (1989) note that legislative offices typically draft multiple letters regarding the same piece of legislation: often these letters are subsetted based upon the position of the constituent.

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

consequences. (Fenno 1978, 141-143).

Fenno's analysis stands in stark contrast to that of Fiorina and Mayhew. While legislators' presentation of self varies with the audience, he argues that explanations of policy stances tend to be consistent. Expecting to find demagoguery and position changing when explaining their roll call voting, Fenno notes that he "found little trace of such explanatory chameleons in my travels. House members give the same explanations for their Washington activity before people who disagree with them as they give before the people who agree with them" (Fenno 1978, 157). In Fenno's view, consistency is essential to trust, which if earned, makes a legislator's explanations more acceptable and may yield leeway in the acceptance of votes that otherwise would not be accepted. Coming into contact with the legislator's clear positions could lead the citizen to defer to his authority as a policy expert (Fenno 1978, 169, Mansbridge 2003, Gabel and Scheve 2007, Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012, Lenz 2012).

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

At the same time, research suggests that many citizens are likely to be influenced by the cues of their legislators. Rather than following the demand-input model (Wahlke

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

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

While the literature tends to focus on the two main mechanisms of adopting a specific policy position or changing one's mind on a particular issue, a third process, projection, may be at work. A legislator who is well liked because of an effective home style may find constituents attributing their own policy positions to him. Frequent positive contacts with a public official appear to be related to projection (Brody and Page 1972, Markus and Converse 1979, Visser 1994, Vecchione et al. 2013). One study argues that attentive representation and a more active home style may work as a form of "attributional persuasion" (Minozzi, Neblo, Esterling, and Lazer 2015, see also Bianco 1994). In this process, a legislator makes a good impression by reaching out to the constituent.

While testing for experimental evidence of the effects of attending town hall meetings on constituents, Minozzi and his coauthors (2015) attempted to measure substantive and attributional persuasion.[1] They found that listening to town hall meetings with one's representatives had a significant effect on perceptions of policy congruence, but at the same time the effect was of the same magnitude and direction as positive feelings toward the legislator. That is, just coming into contact with the legislator increased the perception of policy congruence. These effects held for senators and House members. Legislators who are more likely to reach constituents more frequently through media and maintain larger staffs to help with casework are more likely to build up positive feelings with respect to policy positions (Parker and Goodman 2009, 2013). Evidence of these effects also holds for both House and Senate.

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

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

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

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

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[1] The authors also measured changes in the political behaviors.

Policy Congruence and the Evaluations of Legislators

Many studies restrict their focus of representation to the concept of policy congruence. Legislators are evaluated based upon their ablity to serve as a "delegate, a subordinate substitute for the those who sent him" to the legislature (Pitkin 1967, 146). This approach suggests that legislators' roll call activities will reflect the will of their constituents (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). In this way, responsive legislators with vote the way their constituents would if they were in the same position, while less responsive legislators stray from the preferences of their voters (Powell 2004). This form of an electoral connection is considered the "policy-demand-input" model; the origin of governmental behavior is found within the public's preferences, or demands, and the outcomes of legislation reflect the supply (Wahlke 1971, Harden 2016). Subsequently, at the aggregate level legislatures which accurately reflect the geographic constituency should produce policy outcomes that match the overall liberal or conservative mood at that time (Erickson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002).

The assumption that policy proximity influences voter choice motivates many representation models (Black 1948, Downs 1957, Davis, Hinich, and Ordeshook 1970, etc.). In a unidimensional policy space, voters will choose the candidate that is closest to their policy preferences based on the candidates' announced positions (Merrill and Grofman, 1999). The spatial model posited by Downs and Black has been extended and tested empirically with varying results(Miller and Stokes 1963, Achen 1978, Powell 2004). Even though voters may lack knowledge or fully formed opinions on each issue that faces Congress, they can still rely upon partisan and ideological cues to accurately identify how well candidates reflect their views (Converse 1964). Still, Ansolabehere and Jones (2010) find that policy representation has an independent effect on constituents' level of approval of their legislators. It is also the case that the effect increases as the elected official's visibility increases; the independent effect of perceived policy agreement is much

stronger for senators than members of the House (Roberts and Smith 2013). At the aggregate level, research also suggests similar outcomes; those members who deviate from their district's median vote increase the risk of being unseated in November (Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002, Carson et al. 2010).

In an era of strong party identifications in government and the electorate, the importance of policy preferences may overstated. Correlations between citizens' issue positions and their vote choices could be an artifact of well-sorted voters (Levendusky 2009). In such a scenario, party identification drives the bulk of all political decisions, while ideology is merely an ancillary consideration. Yet, strong evidence exists that the policy positions of voters relative to those of their representatives matters. Jessee (2009, 2010) finds that independent of party, voters' preferences influenced choice in the 2008 election. Additionally, Highton (2012) provides empirical support for the argument that voters' support for the president changes with respect to their own policy preferences regardless of party identification. The basic hypothesis of policy congruence applied to legislators is:

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

Measuring change in policy congruence

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

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are noted when used.[2]

I employ a series of first-difference models to evaluate the relationship between perceptions of legislator effort and perceptions of policy congruence. In August 2013 and October 2014, panelists were asked to measure perceptions of policy congruence with their House member on a 5-point scale.[3] Response options ranged from 1 ("extremely well") to 5 "not well at all." To measure the change in perceptions of congruence from year to year, I subtracted the October 2014 value from the baseline value collected in August 2013. The resulting measure of change in perceptions in policy congruence is a 9-point scale ranging from -4 to $+4$.

More than 1500 panelists answered the baseline question in the original wave. Of those subjects, 1230 responded to the same question more than one year later. To be sure, for most panelists, the level of congruence on this scale is fixed. That is, approximately sixty percent of individuals participating in both waves did not change their response. Nonetheless, a sizable portion of the panel did exhibit change in their perception of congruence. Roughly thirteen percent of those surveyed twice indicated that their perception of congruence had decreased over the past year. The remaining twenty five percent of subjects responded that they believed their level of congruence with their House member had improved. Among those who improved, a slight majority (approximately thirteen percent of the panel) improved by one point on the 9-point scale. Overall, the change indicates that in the aggregate, the panel's perceptions of their policy alignment with their legislators improved from 2013 to 2014 by a non-ignorable amount.

The choice to use change in this 5-point scale for measuring changes in perceptions of policy congruence may seem somewhat unorthodox. One possible way to measure the change in policy perceptions would be to ask panelists to place themselves in the

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[2]More information can be found at taps.wustl.edu

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

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

Still, such a measure has its flaws. Most problematic in using ideological self-identification for measuring the individual's policy preferences is the issue of interpersonal comparability (Shor and Rogowski 2016). As Ellis and Stimson (2012) and others (Claassen, Tucker, and Smith 2015) demonstrate, within the American public, the extent to which the liberal-conservative scale relates to how citizens prefer the government acts with respect to policy varies quite a great deal. Primarily, the seven-point scale is seen as more symbolic and extra-political for individuals who pay less attention to public affairs. Rather, Ellis and Stimson (2012) note that policy preferences relate more to "operational ideology" instead of the "symbolic ideology" captured by the traditional scale. In short, heterogeneity exists in how survey subjects interpret these questions (Conover and Feldman 1982, Brady 1985).

Another approach that might capture policy representation is placing citizens and elites within the same dimensional space using responses to questions regarding issue positions. Once citizens' responses can be captured with survey data, researchers use

a variety of methods to "bridge" the space between the public and elites using various legislator measures, such as roll call votes (Clinton 2006) or responses to candidate surveys, such as Project Vote Smart (Shor and McCarty 2011). Traditionally, findings using this method have been mixed. While Miller and Stokes (1963) and Converse (1964) found that the level of congruence varied by issue, more recent findings have provided encouragement to the level of responsiveness between elites and the public.[4]. For example, many find that ideal point estimation on a few key policy questions can create a common space between legislators and the populace (Ansolabhere, Rodden, and Snyder 2008, Jessee 2009, 2010, 2012, Bafumi and Herron 2010).

For the purpose of this study, however, these approaches also present significant limitations. First, citizens still make mistakes when responding to policy preference questions, particularly when they are asked to provide opinions on an extensive battery of policy items, many of which they may prove to be the result of weak or unformed preferences (Broockman 2016). Second, measures of ideology derived from scaling extensive batteries do not reflect ideological divergence or extremity accurately. Rather, these measures tend to present a form of ideological constraint or consistency (Broockman 2016). They identify which subjects provide conservative or liberal responses more often than not, but they do not correctly demonstrate to what extent an individual is a conservative or a liberal. In this way, an ideologically cohesive party of elites would be difficult to distinguish from an ideologically extreme one. Finally, this study does not intend to measure responsiveness, but rather it is interested in how citizens perceive congruence. Therfore, traditional models of congruence are insufficient for this analysis.

For the previous reasons, I have chosen to use the more direct measure of perceived policy congruence in this analysis. Nonetheless, these imperfect measures still provide the potential to check the validity of the current measure. Within TAPS, panelists were asked to place themselves and their federal legislators on the seven-point ideological

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[4]To be sure, the great progress made in the area of statistical methods and measurement are partially responsible for these findings

scale.[5] Roughly half of the panelists who were able to do so indicated that they were within one point of their House member. Comparatively, only sixteen percent of panelists believed their legislator represented their policy views "extremely well" or "very well" on the five-point scale. This result suggests the relationship between the seven point scale and my measure is imperfect. Yet, a correlation between the two variables, while not dismissing the flaws of the liberal-conservative scale for my purposes, still demonstrates some reliability. The inter-variable correlation between the five and 7-point scales is somewhat high at 0.51. Similar to the findings of Ellis and Stimson (2012), I find that the relationship between symbolic ideological congruence and directly asking about policy congruence is higher for those panelists who pay the most attention to politics. That is, among the most interested panelists (those indicating they are "very interested" in politics and public affairs), the correlation between the two is above 0.6, while among those who pay attention to politics fleetingly (those indicating they are at most "slightly interested"), the correlation is below 0.4.[6]

Additionally, panelists were asked to identify how well their members of Congress represent their policy positions on a series of political issues. Provided with a seventeen item battery, panelists identified their level of agreement with their House member on each issue realm on a five-point scale ranging strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).[7] To obtain a comprehensive measure of perceived policy congruence with the House

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

[6]For the purposes of statistical power, those indicating they were "not interested at all" were pooled with those "slightly interested." The majority of those "not interested at all" were unable to locate their House member on the seven point scale. Additionally, those in the group "somewhat interested" displayed a correlation of 0.41, further confirming the unreliability between the liberal-conservative scale and perceptions of policy congruence.

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

member, I first ran a factor analysis on the seventeen items. The results of this analysis suggested that panelists' views of congruence with their House members loaded well onto the first factor. The first eigenvalue was above 11, while that of the second was below 0.5. Additionally, the first factor explained 0.94 of the variance in the individual items. All items loaded onto the first factor at a rate above 0.6, while the uniqueness values of each were well below 0.5, indicating that for each item, the first factor explained more than half of the variance.

To compare these results to the five-point measure of congruence, I derived the first factor scores for each panelist. These scores had a mean of 0 with a standard deviation of 0.99 and ranged from −2.8, suggesting very little agreement, to +2.4, indicating very high levels of agreement across many issues. The correlation between these two variables was approximately 0.51, much similar to that of the liberal-conservative seven-point scale. Similar to those comparisons, the inter-variable correlations for the most interested in politics was well above 0.6 and for those least interested, the values were well below 0.4. As one might expect, the correlation was much better for the more attentive panelists. This result provides some face validity to the measure.[8]

Modeling change in perceived policy congruence

To test the relationship between legislator effort and perceptions of policy congruence, I treat the change in perceptions of policy congruence as a continuous outcome variable. I have chosen to estimate the model using ordinary least squares regression. I employ a series of first-difference explanatory variables to predict changes in perceptions of policy. The main explanatory variables in this analysis are changes in the content of legislator presentation of self (here, the frequency of being made aware of the representative's service or personal background while previously reporting not hearing about such material), changes in the level of contact (here measured as changes in the highest level at

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[8]While it would be useful to measure the change in this scale of perceived agreement, the questions were unfortunately only asked once.

which the panelist reported hearing information about their legislator), and changes in the frequency with which the panelist reported coming into contact with their legislator.

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

The *change in frequency* variable is derived by taking the difference between the two waves of the given panel. This choice results in a nine category variable ranging from -4 to 4 that indicates how the frequency of interaction between the legislator and the constituent changed over the years. To measure the *change in level* of contact, I chose to treat the ordered variable as continuous on a scale of 0 to 3, once again, taking the difference between the two years. Such a decision produces a continuous variable ranging from -3 to $+3$, with high values indicating the strongest jumps in the type of

contact for the constituent. Finally, I chose to operationalize changes in the *content* of the presentation of self with two dummy indicators. As noted above, within both waves I measure whether or not the panelist was made aware of information regarding the legislator's personal service or personal background. To indicate change here, I simply created two dummy variables that are set at "1" if the panelist claims to have heard about either of these subjects when previously stating she had not, and "0" for all other cases.

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

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

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha_i + \beta \Delta \mathbf{X}_i + \epsilon_i$$

where Δy_i represents the change in each panelist's perception of policy congruence with their representative. $\Delta \mathbf{X}_i$ is a matrix that contains the set of variables that relate to changes in each panelist's exposure to the differing levels and types of contact with their legislator.[9]

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[9]Models were also estimated using the time-invariant controls race (a five category nominal variable), years of education, political interest, income, sex, and a dichotomous indicator for shared partisanship.

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

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha_i + \beta \Delta \mathbf{x}_i + \epsilon_i$$

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

Results

Results from theses analyses indicate a strong relationship between perceptions of legislator effort and changes in how citizens view their policy views are represented. Table 1 displays the results of the first policy regression. The dependent variable in these estimates is the change from 2013 to 2014 in perceived policy congruence on the five-point scale. Positive values reflect an improvement in beliefs about policy representation.

Results with these covariates included provided identical statistical inferences as the models shown here. All of the controls exhibited unreliable or weak effects on the change in the perceptions of policy congruence. The one exception was the covariate of shared partisanship. That is, panelists who shared their partisanship with the legislator significantly improved their perception of congruence from wave 1 to wave 2. This finding is in line with Gelman and King (1993). Still, the main findings' magnitude and reliability hold.

Within the first column, the results indicate that exposure to information regarding the House member's legislative record or ideological position have a positive effect on the perceptions of policy representation. This effect, while somewhat large, lacks the precision to consider it significant. While this simplified model presents evidence of policy-based homestyles influencing evaluations of the legislator, I cannot conclude so with the simplified model.

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

Stronger evidence of projection in policy congruence may be found in column 3. Increasing the level of contact is signficantly and positively related to change in the outcome variable. The model predicts that a one unit increase in the closest proximity of contact corresponds to improvement of 0.17 on the five point scale. To better conceptualize this phenomenon, consider the citizen who had no contact with their legislator when data were gathered in wave 1, but by the data gathering process in 2014 had received representative disseminated material, such as a phone call or franked mail. This corresponds to a change of 2 in the variable.[10] Such a prediction corresponds to a net increase of about one-third of a category of approval.

Finally, change in the perceptions of frequency of contact demonstrate highly reliable and substantive effects with respect to the change in the outcome variable. The results indicate that a one unit change in frequency over the course of the year corresponds with

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[10]While not the modal observed behavior, approximately fifteen percent of the panelists exhibited change of 2 or more categories.

a change of approximately 0.15 in beliefs about the degree to which the legislator represents the citizen's policy views. To put this change into context, consider a citizen who experienced hearing information about their member of the House a few times a year in August 2013, but increased their level of response to a few times a month in 2014. This change represents movement of two categories in the explanatory scale. The model predicts that this individual will move their level of perceived congruence by roughly 0.3 on the scale. Likewise, decreasing contact with the legislator from approximately bimonthly to biweekly predicts a similar drop in the belief of congruence.[11] To further elucidate this change, the model predicts that one out of every three subjects who experienced this change in perception of contact would change their response on the scale by one category, or twenty percent of the entire scale. That is, these views of legislator effort, which on their face have little to do with policy or ideology, have serious implications for the extent to which citizens believe their preferences are being represented. It would appear that legislators' attentiveness expands beyond the the traditional conceptions of policy responsiveness.

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

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

reliablity. Finally, the effect for changes in character awareness remain positive and of a somewhat substantive magnitude, but the reliability is weakened.

Table 1: Predicting Change in Perceived Policy Congruence

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

Standard errors in parentheses. $^{***}p < .001$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{*}p < .05$.

The lack of a perfect bridging method between citizen and House member makes it difficult to discriminate between projection and persuasion. Putting citizens in the same space as legislators poses a great challenge. Identifying change in citizens' positions to those of their representatives presents even further obstacles. Yet, for the purpose of this project it is not necessary for citizens to be in the same policy space to understand if their preferences move in response to contact with the legislator. Although I cannot accurately

identify if panelists move closer to their legislators in the same ideological space, I do have the ability to identify if perceptions of contact with the legislator correspond to changes in opinion regarding public policy.

If policy based home styles are successfully persuasive, it should be the case that the panel data exhibit significant changes in the citizen's policy preferences. I take advantage of repeated policy preference batteries asked in TAPS in May 2013 and September 2014.[12] These batteries include thirteen questions gauging panelists' opinions on salient political issues.[13] Each item includes a statement with which the panelist provides her level of agreement on a five-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (-2) to "strongly agree" $(+2)$.

An intrawave measure of operational ideology is derived by conducting an exploratory factor analysis on the items. The first factor's eigenvalue in each wave provide strong evidence of unidimensionality of these policy preferences. Both values are well above five, with the second factor's eigenvalue well below one. Each first factor accounted for more than 0.96 of the variance in the items. Furthermore, loadings for each item were above 0.50. Operational Ideology scores represented the predicted value of each panelist's first dimensional score. To obtain a measure of change in policy preferences, each wave's first dimension scores were standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation. The change operationalized for the models is measured by the absolute difference from wave one to wave two.

Across time, these measures display remarkable stability in the aggregate. Figure 1 displays the collapsed preferences to categories of "Agree," "Neither Agree nor Disagree," and "Disagree." It is clear that over the six waves (a four year period), the aggregate levels of opinion are relatively fixed and exhibit very little change. Such a finding suggests

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[12]The same battery was asked in the spring of 2014. The results using that month as the baseline hold.

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

that longitudinal individual opinion change is quite limited. Further evidence of this stability can be found in the correlation between the standardized scores of the two waves of interest for this study, seventeen and thirty-four. The standardized values of these operational ideologies correlate at the very high value of 0.94. Intra-item inter-wave correlations provide more reasons to believe that individual change is at most restricted. Among these thirteen items, the inter-wave correlations are at least 0.65 for each policy statement.[14] It is possible, although admittedly unlikely considering few overall trends in Figure 1, that such correlations do not capture large, unidirectional shifts in preferences among individuals. For this reason, it is necessary to examine systematic change at the panelist level.

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[14]The highest inter-wave correlation is 0.83 for opinions regarding states' recognition of gay marriage. The lowest correlation (0.66) related to federal initation of greater affirmative action programs.

Figure 1: Aggregate Policy Preferences
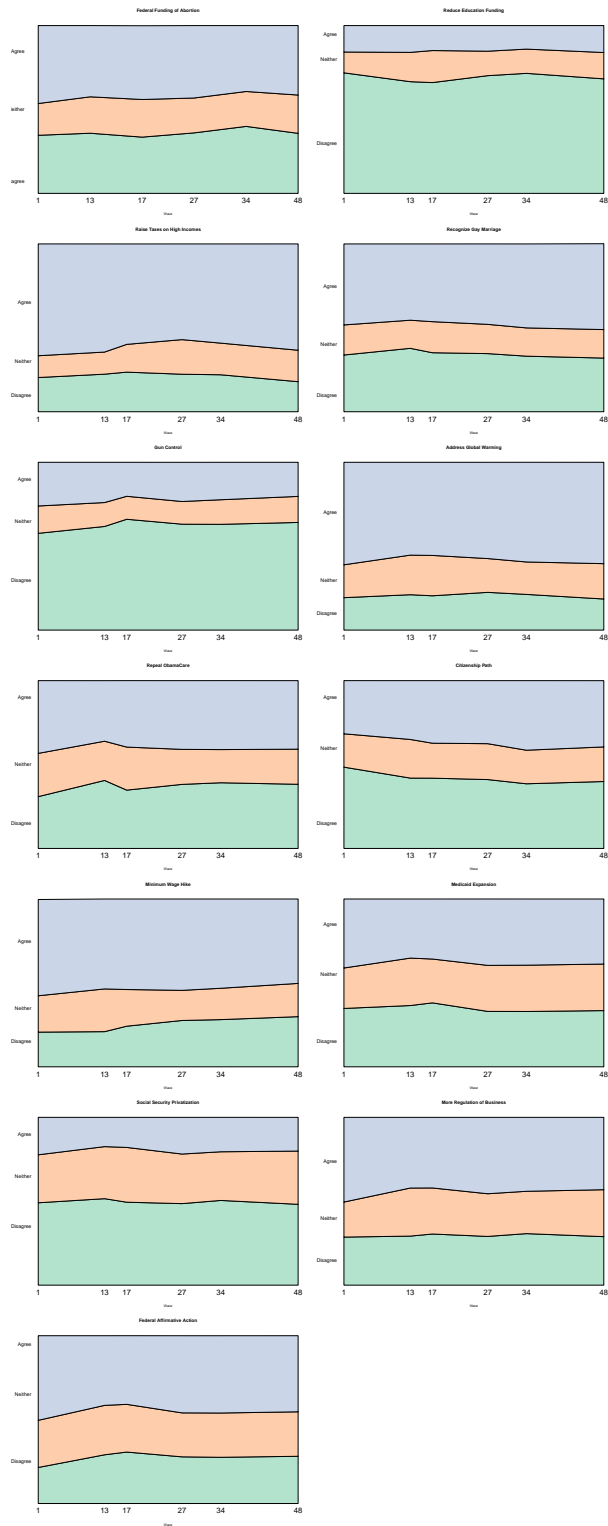
If perceptions of contact with legislators correspond to opinion change, it should be the case that shifts in the explanatory variable measuring exporusre to home style would relate to changes in the policy preferences of the citizen. Thus, I have chosen to regress absolute changes in these operational ideology scores on changes in the absolute difference in perceptions of the frequency with which the panelist receives contact with the House member. While this measure does not perfectly identify if the panelist is moving closer to the legislator's true positions, it does capture movement in opinion that would be necessary for persuasion to occur. The results of this exercise may be found in Table 2.

Column I shows that instances of change in the frequency of contact correspond to changes in the stability of the panelist's policy preferences. This is what would be expected if actual persuasion were occuring. More directly, the greater the increase, or decrease, in contact from 2013 to 2014, the greater the predicted change in operational liberalism among the subject. This change is predicted in either direction so as to identify opinions that may shift due to legislator neglect. While this effect is positive, it is not very reliable. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that any real position changes are occuring in response to contact from legislators.[15]

Time invariant covariates were added to the model in column II to control for factors that may be associated with natural instability in policy preferences. This model first reveals that certain variables predict significant change in the outcome variable. For example, more educated panelists display greater interwave stability than those less educated. Additionally, White panelists displayed significantly more stability between 2013 and 2014 than those panelists who identifed as either Black or Hispanic. I also find that Republicans demonstrate slightly more movement between the waves than Democrats. This model also provides modest evidence that panelists who change their perception of contact changed their policy opinions more than those who did not. The

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[15] A similar model was conducted using the exposure to policy positions of the legislator. The estimated effects were quite minimal and of an insufficient precision.

effect of this coefficient is estimated to be positive and significant at the 0.90 level. It must be noted, however, that this change is of almost no substantive magnitude. The scales of operational ideology for both waves range from -2.4 to $+2.0$. Thus, even the rare maxmimum change of four units in this main explanatory variable only corresponds to a difference of 0.06 on the ideological scale. Since this predicted movement only represents about one percent of the entire ideological scale and the effect itself is only slightly significant, it is difficult to conclude that persuasion occurs with this sample of panelists.

Table 2: Predicting Change in Policy Preferences

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

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

Finally, it is necessary to examine how change in perceptions of policy congruence are related to changes in overall approval. That is, I am interested in determining if citizens' policy perceptions play a role in how they evaluate their representatives in Congress. Table 3 provides the results of this model. Column I displays a model including all panelists participating in both waves. This estimate provides strong support that the individual's beliefs about how well their representative puts forth their own opinions in Washington matters. The effect is of a relatively large magnitude, positive, and statistically significant. If a panelist were to move their perception of congruence by two categories on the five point scale it would correspond to more than two-fifths of a category on the five-category approval measure. Considering the limited scope of the approval scale, such a predicted movement is quite large.

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

It is worth remembering that these effects for changes in policy congruence continue to have a significant, positive effect on changes in approval even when controlling for changes in the NPE. These results bolster the agrument that policy perceptions play a large role in citizens' evaluations of their legislators, even in a world with polarized parties. As the results in Table 3 indicate, members of the same party can choose to punish or reward their representatives for perceptions of straying from their own personal

preferences.[16] Furthermore, this phenomenon also occurs when members who do not belong to the same party of the panelist suffer with respect to policy perceptions. In short, policy congruence serves as a tool for legislators to reach large swaths of citizens, regardless of partisanship.

Table 3: Predicting Change in Legislator Approval with Change in Policy Perceptions

	All	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
Δ Perceived Congruence	0.216***	0.154***	0.247***
	(0.050)	(0.042)	(0.040)
Constant	0.050	0.139**	0.001
	(0.041)	(0.054)	(0.038)
N	1,165	417	728
R^2	0.05	0.03	0.05

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

Conclusion

Legislators go to great lengths to establish themselves on a policy dimension of representation. In response, political scientists have provided insight into how legislators explain their roll call voting behaviors to their constituents. This chapter attempted to take this research a step further in the discipline's understanding of the home style phenomenon. Rather than limiting the scope of study to the legislators, I measured changes in citizens' perceptions of their legislators home styles and the subsequent changes in their perceptions of ideological agreement. Confirming the projection hypothesis, positive changes in the perceptions of the home style or legislator effort were accompanied with more favorable beliefs regarding the distance between the elite and the citizen. Perhaps surprsingly,

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[16]To be sure, approximately fifteen percent of copartisans developed worse feelings toward their House members, while twenty percent of non-aligned panelists did so.

the effect of policy specific information lacked the precision to conclude that explanations themselves are effective in bridging the ideological gap While evidence exists that this policy information home style was effective in creating a connection, it could not be distinguished from the basic aspects of a traditional presentation of self. Thus, the persuasion or policy adoption hypothesis could not be confirmed. Further circumstantial exploration of the same panelists' policy positions and their stability undercut the notion that persuasion occured.

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

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

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