THE IMPACT OF PARTY CUES ON CITIZEN EVALUATIONS OF SENATORS

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Students of Congress highlight the connections that legislators cultivate with constituents, bonds that help to secure voters' trust and incumbents' reelection. We revisit the forces that shape citizens' evaluations of their senators, embedding a survey experiment in the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study to test for the impact of party labels. We show that citizens think more highly of senators from the opposite party when prompted with that senator's party label, results that are consistent with the psychological theory of "reference group effects." The theory and results help explain how senators maintain favorable reputations from cross-partisans in periods of partisan voting.

Students of the U.S. Congress have long noted the personal, bipartisan connections that legislators strive to cultivate with their constituents. Such ties of representation have earned several names, including "the personal vote" (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1989), "homestyle" and "trust" (Fenno 1978), and "durable fit" (Fenno 1996). Strong bonds between legislators and constituents are consequential: They enable representatives to build and maintain congressional careers based on personalized, rather than purely party or policy-based, support. Not surprisingly, these representational experiences often insulate members of the House and Senate when voters sour on Congress and its performance. Richard Fenno (1975) put it best: "We love our Congressmen [sic] so much," but we hate Congress.

In light of the resurgence of partisan voting and the polarization of legislative parties (Bartels 2000, Jacobson 2005), we revisit the impact of partisanship on voters' support of their elected representatives, focusing on the U.S. Senate. What impact do party ties have on citizens' views of their senators? To answer this question, we implement a survey experiment on the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study that tests for the impact of party cues on citizen evaluations. We ask respondents to evaluate their senators' effectiveness along four dimensions,

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randomly priming half of the respondents with their senators' party labels. The experimental results reinforce the conventional wisdom of *The American Voter* that partisanship serves as a perceptual screen—but only for citizens who share their senators' party affiliation.

In contrast, we find an unexpected result when citizens are reminded that their senator hails from the opposite party. Instead of diminishing voter support for their senator, we find that party cues enhance constituent approval of their senator. We turn to psychology and the concept of "reference group effects" to explain this finding. We argue that juxtaposing a well-known senator against his national party label changes the reference point against which voters judge their senator, increasing voters' support for that senator. Such "reference group effects"—well-documented in the psychology literature—provide new grounds for explaining the persistence of a modicum of out-party support in an era of heightened partisanship.

CONNECTING WITH VOTERS

After traveling in congressional districts some 30 years ago, Richard Fenno (1978) introduced the concept of "homestyle": legislators develop images and reputations of themselves for their constituents, striving to forge connections with voters and to earn their trust. Such efforts, Fenno argued, occurred in two stages: an expansionist stage early in a congressional career in which legislators sought to enlarge their re-election base, followed by a protectionist stage when legislators sought to maintain their base of support. Homestyles were said to be consequential because they enabled legislators to develop the trust of a diverse and large constituency. Subsequent scholars have suggested that these "extrapolicy aspects of representation" (Fenno 1978, 242) may underpin the "personal vote"—the idea that district service and personal qualities and qualifications make up a sizeable portion of incumbents' electoral support (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987).

Fenno of course was not alone in detecting the nonpartisan basis of legislators' relationships with constituents. David Mayhew (1974) as well articulated a view of the "electoral connection" as devoid of partisanship. Instead, Mayhew viewed position taking, credit claiming, and advertising as the key electoral activities: "Congressmen can—indeed must—build a base that is substantially independent of party" (Mayhew 1974, 26). Neither Mayhew nor Fenno saw policy congruence or partisanship as critical to the electoral connection.

More recent studies of constituents' views of their legislators place a stronger emphasis on the partisan and policy ties that link voters to their incumbent legislators. Ansolabehere and Jones (2010) show, for example, that constituents' beliefs about how their representatives voted on particular bills strongly influence their approval rating of their member. The impact of perceived policy agreement, in fact, rivals the impact of voters' (perceived) party agreement with their representative. Of course, as Ansolabehere and Jones point out, voters typically use a legislator's party label to infer his or her policy positions. In fact, congressional party leaders

work to develop their party's reputation and brand name precisely for that purpose (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Party agreement with one's representative thus serves as both a short cut for reminding voters of their legislators' policy records and provides a perceptual screen through which voters evaluate legislators (as suggested originally by the authors of *The American Voter* [Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960]). Such studies place policy and party connections between legislators and their constituents at the heart of citizens' evaluations of their representatives—a different causal story than the one that underlies *The Personal Vote* (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987).

There are relatively few parallel studies of senators' approval ratings, and surprisingly few individual-level analyses of citizen evaluations of their senators. Important exceptions include Lee and Oppenheimer (1999), Sinclair (1990), and Jones (N.d.). Sinclair, for example, uses the 1988 Senate Election Study to estimate a model of senators' likeability. She finds that a broad range of policy, party, and personal characteristics guide constituent evaluations of senators. Attention to voters at home—as well as some legislative activism in Washington and shared partisanship with the senators—makes a senator more likeable. Jones, in contrast, models individual vote choice, showing that citizens reward senators for the policy positions that they share with voters.

Studies of how legislators develop their careers and reputations at home provide valuable building blocks for studying the forces that shape citizen evaluations of their senators. The emphasis of recent studies on policy congruence, however, is limited in two ways. First, given the multidimensional character of representation, how citizens view their senators' effectiveness is unlikely to be determined solely on the basis of policy congruence with the senators. As Fenno's (1996) study of Senate representation suggests, the depth and breadth of senators' contact with constituents and senators' perceived ability to help state residents resolve their problems with the federal government are important and potentially rival dimensions of representation. If citizens vary their evaluations over different dimensions of senators' behavior, a study of citizen evaluations needs to account for the multi-dimensional character of representation.

Second, given the increased partisan consistency in voters' electoral choices (Bartels 2000), coupled with partisan polarization over major issues at the national level, the impact of party cues on citizen evaluations of their senators remains unknown. If partisanship provides a perceptual screen through which voters judge senators, then how do senators sustain the regard of voters (to varying degrees) from the opposite party? As we argue in the following, the psychological concept of "reference group effects" from the literature on framing offers a theoretical account to explain the impact of party labels on citizen evaluations.

COMPETING ACCOUNTS OF SENATORIAL EFFECTIVENESS

We draw from the literature on congressional approval to develop a model of the forces that shape citizens' evaluations of their senators. Our goal is to explain

variation in how citizens' view their senators across multiple dimensions of legislative behavior, tapping both senators' efforts at home among voters and at work in Washington among their Senate peers. Thus, rather than focusing on senators' approval ratings per se, we are interested in the forces that might explain voters' views about the effectiveness of their senators at home and in Washington. To what extent do voters' partisan and policy attachments color their views of their senators across the activities of representation?

The Impact of Party

We consider two potential effects of partisanship on voters' evaluations of their senators—one from the classic literature on the Michigan model, the other from the psychological literature on reference group effects. These theoretical perspectives offer different expectations about how party labels may shape voters' evaluations of their senators.

The Michigan Model

As articulated in *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960) and elsewhere in the early 1960s, the Michigan model suggests that individuals who identify with a party tend to view the political world through a partisan-tinted, perceptual screen. Rather than be dissuaded from one's views by information that might be inconsistent with their partisanship, identification with a party encourages the selective distortion of new information by partisans; and the stronger one's partisanship, the more distorting the screen. Such a view of partisanship as deep-seated affect toward a political party helps to explain why partisanship tends to be quite durable over time. Even the authors of *Partisan Hearts and Minds* (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2004), who recognize that partisanship reflects both affect and cognition and that partisanship is not entirely immune from change, suggest that citizens' party identities shape the way they view candidates and their policy promises.

If the Michigan model is correct, then citizens' partisanship should shape their views of their senators, conditional on sharing their senators' party ID. Voters who hail from the senator's party should view that senator's effectiveness more positively than do independents and voters from the opposite party, possibly increasing their estimation of the senator when prompted with senator's party ID. An additional test of the impact of the power of party labels is offered by exploring evaluations of senators' reputations at home and in Washington. We know that legislators undertake efforts such as keeping in touch with voters and helping them to solve problems with the federal government precisely because of the non-partisan character of these electoral connection activities (Mayhew 1974). If we find a partisan bias to respondents' views of their senators on both legislative and representative dimensions, we would have strong evidence of the persuasive impact of party identity on constituent evaluations of their elected representatives.

Reference Group Effects

What impact will party labels have on voters who do not share the senator's party? According to the Michigan model, such citizens should view their senator less favorably, especially if reminded of their senator's party. Still, Fenno's (1996) analysis of senators on the campaign trail suggests that successful senators are able to establish personal connections with voters and reputations of integrity and authenticity, without regard to their own partisanship or that of their constituents—raising questions about the fit of the Michigan model. Indeed, in the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey of 2006 (explored in detail following), of the respondents approving of their state's senior senator, roughly one-third hailed from the opposite party.[1] If partisanship offers a perceptual screen through which constituents view their senators, how can senators succeed in developing positive images of themselves at home among both sets of partisans?

We draw from the psychological literature on framing effects to offer an alternative account of how partisanship may affect citizens' evaluations of out-party senators. Framing effects occur when changes in the messages one receives about an issue, event, or person produce changes in individuals' opinions about that matter (Chong and Druckman 2007a). Framing effects also raise the possibility of what psychologists refer to as "contrast effects": As defined by Chong and Druckman (2007b, 647), a contrast effect "arises when evaluations of one frame are influenced by the presence of an opposing frame." As originally established by Herr, Sherman, and Fazio (1983), we are likely to see contrast effects when a subject with unambiguous views about a target is primed with a contrasting context against which the initial target can be judged. That contrasting context typically comes in the form of a reference group. A person, for example, might appear to be more appealing than otherwise perceived when contrasted with a member of a reference group perceived to have less appeal. We may find evidence of contrast effects, in other words, when there is a change in the reference point against which an object is considered. As Cohen (2003) explains, "attitudes do not follow from the objective features of the object alone." In theory, then, manipulating a reference group could alter how individuals view an object, person, or event.

We apply the concept of reference group effects to the impact of party cues. Is it possible that a voter's perception of his or her senator will change when the reference point of the senator's party affiliation is introduced? Based on strong evidence of reference group effects when individuals hold unambiguous views about a subject, we conjecture that reference effects will occur when citizens are reminded that their senator hails from the opposite party. As we explain in following text, we expect that prompting a respondent with the party ID of a senator from the opposite party will improve that respondent's evaluation of the senator, controlling for the extent of policy agreement between respondent and senator.

Consider, for example, what a Missouri Republican might think when told that Senator Claire McCaskill is a Democrat. "Claire McCaskill is a Democrat?

Well, she's better than all those other Democrats. She's reached out across the state and made herself accessible." When prompted with the "Democrat" label, we might expect a Republican to conjure up negative images and associations with that party label—particularly in a period of polarized parties. With negative connotations of the reference group in mind, Senator McCaskill seems more likeable to the Missouri Republican. As the psychological literature on reference group effects suggests, if the respondent can't "fit" McCaskill into the framed category of "Democrat," the respondent's estimation of McCaskill should become even stronger. Rather than living in a world of rational calculators who hold objective and stable preferences, we would instead find ourselves in a world of voters susceptible to framing and whose views are shaped by reference group effects.

The Impact of Policy

We also test for the impact of voters' policy concurrence with their senators, given recent studies showing that constituents appear to use perceptions of their own legislator's voting records in evaluating job performance (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010). In the data probed as follows, we test whether the greater the degree of perceived policy congruence between the voter and senator makes it more likely that the voter will approve of the legislator. To be sure, such a view of a well-informed citizenry runs counter to classic accounts of legislator-constituent relations. As established by Miller and Stokes (1963), few individuals typically know the policy positions held by their representatives. However, four decades later, voters have opportunities from candidates' campaigns and the news to form beliefs about how their members vote on salient issues. Moreover, the greater visibility of senators compared to members of the House increases the likelihood of finding a causal impact of citizen-senator policy congruence on voters' evaluations: Individuals who share policy orientations with senators are more likely to view them as more effective senators. If we want to assess the impact of party cues on how voters' assess their senators—both from their own party and the opposing party—then controlling for the perception of policy congruence is especially important. If we fail to control for policy congruence, then it will be impossible to know whether voters' support for senators from the opposing party stems from policy agreement or from a reference group effect as posited previously.

Granted, the accuracy of voters' policy perceptions may vary considerably. As Ansolabehere and Jones demonstrate (2010, Table 1), citizens in a recent survey did reasonably well identifying how their member of Congress (MC) voted: Among those who held beliefs about those votes, individuals got their members' votes correct roughly three-quarters of the time. Voters tended to underestimate how liberal Democratic MCs were and how conservative Republican MCs were. Given variation in voter perceptions, we also control in our model for the actual degree of policy agreement between senators and survey respondents on particularly salient roll calls.

DATA AND METHODS

Our empirical analysis is based on an experiment we embedded in the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES), an internet survey of a nationally representative sample administered by Polimetrix of Palo Alto, CA. The experiment was administered in late September and in the middle and end of October 2006 to a 1,000 person subset of a larger 36,000 person national stratified sample survey. Respondents in the 1,000 person sample were first asked a series of "Common Content" questions (asked of all respondents in the larger survey) and then were asked a series of questions including the survey experiment on party labels.

Dependent Variables

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of each of their two senators along four dimensions (eight ratings in total). Respondents were asked first about the senior senator from their state, with the name of the senator inserted into the survey. The second round of questions referred to the effectiveness of the junior senator from the respondent's state. The survey questions read as follows.

In general, how effective do you think Senator (Name 1 inserted) is in:

- Keeping in touch with the people in (state name inserted)?
- Helping people resolve problems with the federal government?
- Securing federal funding for the state of (state name inserted)?
- Working with other senators to pass legislation?

Respondents were asked to rate their senators' effectiveness on each of these aspects of their job on a scale of 1 ("Not Effective") to 7 ("Very Effective"). The survey question thus generates four indicators of senators' performance, ranging from senators' representational efforts (keeping in touch with people at home and helping people to resolve problems with the federal government) to their legislative performance (bringing home pork and working with other senators to help pass legislation).[2] We combine each respondent's responses on the four indicators into a single additive index to measure respondents' evaluations of their senators.[3] The resulting scale, which ranges from 4 to 28, with a weighted mean and standard deviation of 16.8 and 7.7, respectively, serves as the dependent variable in the analysis below.

Independent Variables

Party Labels (treatment)

To test for the impact of party labels, respondents were randomly assigned into a control or treatment group. Thus, we create a dichotomous independent variable that denotes whether or not the respondent was treated (coded 1) or not (coded 0).

For those assigned to the treatment group, the names of their senators were prefaced with their party label. For example, Texans in the control group were asked to rate the effectiveness of Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson and Senator John Cornyn; Texans in the treatment group were asked to rate the effectiveness of Republican Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson and Republican Senator John Cornyn. Both internal validity (the causal inferences we draw from isolating cause and effect with regard to the impact of party labels) and external validity (our ability to generalize from our sample to the larger population) are enhanced by use of the survey experiment.[4]

Party Agreement

We create a second dichotomous independent variable that codes whether or not the respondent shares a party identification with his senator (coded 1 if party shared, 0 otherwise). Note that there are two observations for each respondent, as we record the party match separately for each of the two respondent-senator pairs. We also estimate an interaction term between party agreement and the treatment effect to discern the impact of the treatment on each senator's partisans. The equation of interest given these two variables and their interaction is then:

$$evaluation_i = \beta_0 + \tau \cdot treatment + \beta_1 \cdot PartyAgreement$$
$$+ \beta_2 \cdot treatment \cdot PartyAgreement + \cdots + u_i$$

This specification allows us to compute the effect of the treatment on respondents who do not share the senator's party (τ) and the effect of the treatment on respondents who share the senator's party ($\tau + \beta_2$).

Perceived and Actual Policy Agreement

Following Ansolabehere and Jones (2010), we use Common Content questions of the CCES to calculate each respondent's perceived and actual policy agreement with his or her senator. Respondents were given a short description of seven different bills (on a range of domestic and foreign policy issues) that had been considered recently in Congress, and were given a brief summary of the arguments made by supporters and opponents of each bill. (None of the issues were decided on perfectly partisan lines.) Respondents were then asked: "What about you? If you were faced with this decision would you vote for, against, or not sure?" The respondents were also asked how they thought their senators voted. Because we know senators' actual votes on the policy questions, we can calculate both perceived and actual policy agreement scores for each respondent-senator pair.

For each of the seven roll call votes, perceived (actual) agreement is coded as −1 (for disagreement) if respondents believe that their senator voted contrary to how they would have voted (or the senator actually voted contrary to the respondent). Perceived (actual) agreement is coded 0 if respondents did not have a position on the bill or did not have a view about how their senator voted. Perceived (actual)

agreement is then coded $+1$ for roll call vote on which the respondent perceives he or she agrees with (or actually does agree with) his or her senator. Perceived agreement scores are then calculated as the sum across the seven roll call votes, yielding an index that ranges from -7(disagreement on all seven votes) to 7 (agreement on all seven votes). Actual agreement scores are calculated similarly. We expect that as both perceived and actual policy agreement increases, ratings of senators' effectiveness should go up as well.

Methods

To test for the impact of partisan and policy forces, we estimate a regression model, Because we have two observations for each respondent (corresponding to a set of observations for each constituent-senator pair), we stack the two sets of observations into a single dataset, weighting the observations using probability sampling weights as described in the Appendix.[5] The stacking of observations for the senior and junior senators of each states accounts for the Ns in the models below that are greater than the 1,000 person sample size.

RESULTS

We report the results for the model in Table 1. For reasons we explain following, the set of respondents included in the models are those respondents who correctly identify the party affiliation of both of their two senators. Some 74.5% of respondents correctly name their senators' parties, suggesting that on balance the sample is more politically knowledgeable than most national samples.

TABLE 1. Impact of Party and Policy on Citizen Evaluations of Their Senators (weighted OLS estimates)

Independent variables	Coefficient (*t*-statistic)
R received party treatment in Qs about senators	1.44 (1.96)
R and senator of same party	5.21 (6.62)
R and senator of same party + received treatment	$-1.62\,(-1.69)$
Perceived roll call agreement index	.601 (6.78)
Actual roll call agreement index	.39 (4.12)
Constant	14.3 (26.08)
R^2	.43
N	1108
95% confidence intervals for treatment effect	
Respondent does not share party with senator	$[-.0014, 2.88]$
Respondent shares party with senator	$[-1.46, 1.10]$

Note: The dependent variable sums up respondents' evaluations of their senators across four variables. The resulting index of representation ranges from 4 (least effective) to 28 (most effective). Independent variable coefficients are OLS regression estimates (*t*-statistics in parentheses).

First, it is clear (as we would expect from the Michigan model) that the senators' partisans rate their senators' effectiveness more highly than do respondents from the opposite party. We find a statistically significant coefficient for the party agreement variable, meaning that shared party affiliation shapes citizen evaluations. A senator's partisans rate their senator over one point higher than do respondents from the opposite party. Such results portend well for the Michigan model.

Second, perceived and actual policy agreement between the respondent and each of his or her senators improves respondents' evaluations of their senators. The greater the policy congruence (perceived or real) between constituents and their senators, the more highly rated are those senators. Granted, citizens may perceive greater policy congruence when they like their senator. That is what Fenno reminds us in detailing senators' efforts to build durable connections with voters at home. Senators seek to build these connections, as they enable senators to secure the trust of (and thus leeway from) the public on tough votes. Still, because we also control for the degree of actual policy agreement between respondent and senator, it is hard to argue that a senator's likeability drives the positions voters take on major policy issues.

Third, we find strong results for the impact of our key variable of interest—the party label treatment. Because we expect partisan agree-ers (those who share their senator's party ID) and partisan disagree-ers (those who do not share their senator's party ID) to react differently when reminded of their senators' party IDs, we estimate the impact of the party treatment alone and interacted with the dummy variable denoting party agreement. Thus, in Table 1, we can interpret the first coefficient (Respondent got party treatment) as the treatment effect (that is, the difference in mean effectiveness scores between those treated and not-treated) for the party disagree-ers. We can interpret the sum of the first and third coefficients as the treatment effect for party agree-ers. For ease of interpretation we show the confidence intervals for the treatment effects in the bottom two rows of Table 1.

The treatment effect is positive with a two-tailed p-value of .05 for party disagree-ers. In contrast, the confidence interval for the treatment effects for party agree-ers indicates that the treatment effect is close to zero and not statistically significant at conventional levels ($p = .78$). When primed with their senator's party ID, respondents from the opposite party rate that senator more highly than if not reminded of the party ID. The magnitude of the effect (1.44) is equivalent to slightly less than a fifth of a standard deviation of the dependent variable. This result suggests the presence of reference group effects. When primed with a negative frame (the national party label), respondents' views of the out-party senator become more positive. In the language of psychology, "the primed category [the party ID] . . . provides a context against which the target stimuli [the senator] could be judged" (Herr, Sherman, and Fazio 1983, 326). When the primed category is perceived to be extreme, "it is unlikely that the individual would perceive a sufficient match of stimulus and category features" (Herr, Sherman, and Fazio 1983, 327), thus producing a contrast effect. In layman's terms, changing the reference point or

standard against which a senator is judged substantially improves the perceived effectiveness of that senator.

As a validity check, we reestimate the models including only those respondents who cannot identify the party of at least one of their two senators, some 25% of the sample.[6] The parameter estimates for the key independent variables are no longer statistically significant. Shared partisanship, actual policy agreement, and age do not seem to have any significant impact on citizens' evaluations of their senators—even though all three variables are positively related to views of senators' effectiveness in the previous model.[7] Only respondents' perceived policy agreement with their senators makes a difference in their ratings, suggesting that approval ratings in this case may be driving respondents' perceptions of how their senators voted. The insignificance of the results points to the low political awareness of a portion of the Polimetrix sample, and rules out the possibility that respondents of low political awareness are actually learning and incorporating information about senators over the course of taking the survey.

For a second validity check, we explored an alternative hypothesis. It is possible that the distance between the ideological placement of the respondent and the opposite party accounts for the estimated treatment effects. To test this hypothesis, we constructed a variable that measures the difference between the opposite party and the respondent using variables available in the Common Content of the CCES. We then interacted that variable with the party treatment, and added both to the model estimated in Table 1.[8] Adding those two variables does not increase the explanatory power of the model (an F-test on the two variables yields a p-value of .5) and neither variable has a t-statistic greater than .5 in magnitude.

Finally, we test for the possibility that respondents view senators up for reelection differently than they do their other senator. Given voters' likely increase in exposure to information about their senator in the run up to a congressional election, it is conceivable that the contrast effects we observe are due to respondents being exposed to greater degrees of partisan information in the context of a campaign. When we add a dummy variable to denote those senators running for reelection and then interact the reelection dummy with each of the independent variables, the extended model does not fit the data better than the model that omits these terms.[9] This suggests that the same model applies to the evaluation of senators whether or not they are up for reelection. The reference group effects we observe do not result disproportionately from citizens' reactions to Senate electoral campaigns.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Understanding how citizens evaluate their senators is a critical missing link in the study of representation. Although some models of senatorial approval consider the forces that drive variation across states in how senators are perceived, few analyses have undertaken to explain variation at the individual level in how citizens evaluate

their senators. By devising a survey experiment to test for the impact of party cues on citizen evaluations, we are more confident of both the causal impact of party cues and on the generalizability of our study beyond the national sample surveyed.

We believe our findings are significant for several reasons. First, most studies of citizen evaluations of their senators or representatives are articulated in terms of job approval ratings. Left unclear are the parameters of what voters perceive the "job" of the senator to be.[10] Given that Fenno (1996) observes senators attempting to develop what appear to be "homestyles," it makes sense to incorporate senators' performance along both representative and legislative dimensions.

Second, we develop and test a model of framing effects to account for variation in citizens' evaluations of their senators. When primed with a senator's party ID, the evaluations of voters from the senator's party remain unchanged. Such information reinforces existing approval of their senator, as the standard Michigan model would lead us to expect. But the Michigan model fails to account for the impact of party cues when citizens evaluate senators from the opposing party. When citizens are asked to evaluate senators from the opposing party—and they are reminded of those senators' party IDs—these voters rate their senators' effectiveness much more positively.

Priming some voters with their senator's party ID produces a reference group effect, a well-known phenomenon from the literature on political psychology. Relying on a standard rational choice model, in which voters are portrayed as instrumental, Bayesian updaters (Gerber and Green 1999), we cannot explain why priming of an opposite party senator's party label would induce better evaluations of that senator. Instead, drawing from the social cognition concept of reference group effects helps us to account for an otherwise counter-intuitive finding. The existence of such group effects may also help to explain why the non-partisan strategies identified by Fenno (1975) and Mayhew (1974) some 30 years ago are often able to insulate legislative incumbents from the vagaries of electoral politics.

Our study thus offers dividends to scholars interested in the conditions under which framing effects are likely to be observed, as well as to scholars seeking to better understand the personal vote that often underlies senators' connections with their constituents. Consistent reference group effects—which improve the standing of out-party senators in the eyes of the other party's supporters—may ultimately blunt the impact of polarized national parties on the electoral standing and legitimacy of sitting senators.

NOTES

1. Here, we tally the number of out-party respondents indicating that they "strongly approve" or "somewhat approve" of their more senior senator.
2. On the multi-dimensionality of representation, see Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003.
3. The four-item scale has a Cronbach's alpha exceeding .9, so the items scale well. If we perform factor analysis instead, we get very similar results and no evidence of multidimensionality, but a loss of interpretability of the metric. Thus, we chose the additive scale over the factor analysis approach. We also estimated the model

below using each of the four items separately rather than combined in a single scale. When we do so, we obtain very similar results, reinforcing our decision to combine the four items into a single scale.

4. On the limitations of survey experiments—in particular the endurance of treatment effects—see Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk (2007).

5. Respondents' evaluations of their two senators correlate at .57 (including both split and unified party delegations).

6. Results available from authors.

7. Note that we find the opposite impact of age on respondents' views of their senators than does Hibbing (2005).

8. Note, however, that we could not construct the variable for pure independents (4s on the 7 point party ID scale), since party agreement will not vary for that subgroup (and thus they were not included in the analysis). Therefore, to isolate the effect of the new variable, we first estimated the model in Table 1, *dropping the pure independents*. When we do that, the magnitudes of the coefficients generally increase, but our qualitative conclusions do not change. After confirming that dropping independents does not affect the results, we then added the opposite party distance variable and that variable interacted with the experimental treatment.

9. In sum, when we control for whether or not each senator is up for re-election, the dummy variable is not statistically significant. Wald tests for the joint significance of the reelection coefficients (the reelection dummy and the interaction terms) produces an F-statistic of 1.59 and a p value of .14.

10. For an exception, see Grant and Rudolph (2004) who take account of citizen expectations about the role of their representatives in modeling approval ratings.

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APPENDIX

Respondents in the 2006 CCES participated in the survey online. The sample was thus not a traditional probability sample. Instead, respondents were selected by Polimetrix through their "PollingPoint Panel." The Polimetrix panel is a pool of several hundred thousand persons who have volunteered or have been recruited to participate in occasional internet surveys. The sampling procedure is described by Polimetrix as follows. First, a random subsample was drawn from the 2004 American Community Study. The ACS is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and has a sample size of over 1 million respondents and a response rate of 93%. Second, for each person in this subsample, the closest matching respondent was located in the PollingPoint Panel using a function that minimized the distance between the ACS and PollingPoint respondents based on several variables (including gender,

race, age, marital status, education, party identification, and ideology). Third, post-stratification weights were created for the CCES respondents, matching the CCES marginals to the ACS marginals for education, race, gender, and age. Sample matching and weighting are described further in Rivers (2006). Readers wanting more details on sampling in the 2006 CCES are strongly encouraged to read Vavreck and Rivers (2008). For an assessment of the properties of the 2006 CCES, see Hill et al. (2007). For a comparison of the 2008 CCES study to other surveys commonly used by political scientists (Gallup, Pew, and the ANES internet sample), see Rivers and Bailey (2009).