

# A Constituent-Level Analysis of Home Style \*

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8/25/15

## Abstract

While studies of representation often focus on policy congruence between voters and elites, the relationship between the two sets of actors is not limited to ideological alignment. Rather, legislators engage in non-policy activities to win favor with those voters who may be unreachable with respect to policy. By partaking in home styles that highlight their most favorable attributes, members of Congress attempt to alter the dimensions of representation on which they are evaluated. Although much work on home style captures how and why legislators engage in their particular strategies, little is understood about how voters react to such behavior. In this paper I build upon previous theories to explore how the legislator's presentation of self affects not only the voter's evaluation of the representative, but also the importance of non-policy affect towards the legislator. Using original data from The American Panel Survey, I find that as the frequency and level of intimacy of contact with the legislator increases, citizens' evaluations of the elite improve.

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\*Paper prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association meeting, San Francisco, California, September 3-6, 2015.

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# 1 Introduction

The representation relationship depends upon the legislator's responsiveness to the will of the constituency (Pitkin 1967). One would expect representative democracy to imply the direct (or a relatively close) translation of citizens' policy preferences into desired policy outcomes through the electoral and legislative process (e.g. Powell 2004). The constituent's terms of evaluation of the representative, however, are not necessarily grounded in policy terms; a multitude of factors may influence how they perceive their legislators.

Characterizing these expectations is of the utmost importance to representatives. If members of Congress care about re-election, it would serve their best interests to be aware of this variance in expectations among the electorate. Legislators might not be able to persuade an ideological opponent to accept their opinion on a given policy, but they may be able to change the relationship to the terms of evaluation that are most favorable. That is, representatives present themselves to constituents in a strategic manner so that voters value non-policy aspects of representation in equal or greater amounts than policy representation. Richard Fenno (1978) identifies this presentation of self as "home style." Representatives build support in their districts through the cultivation of trust by stressing their qualifications, empathy, and identification with the electorate, rather than focusing on strictly ideological appeals. If trust is built successfully, voters provide the legislator a certain amount of leeway in roll call voting, so long as that sense of trust is not violated (Bianco 1994).

The major research question of this paper is: Is Fenno right? Do perceptions of legislator effort increase constituents' affect towards their representatives? If so, does this non-policy affect influence the citizen's overall evaluation of their legislator? While much recent literature has focused on Fenno's conception of home style in legislator behavior (e.g.

Butler et al. 2012, Grimmer 2013ab), few have tested it at the constituent-level. That is, the discipline's understanding of how constituents' perceive their legislators' non-policy and non-ideological behavior is less well researched. Using original national survey data, I model how citizens respond to their legislators' home styles. By asking individuals about the frequency, type, and content of their communications with elected officials, I investigate the ways in which home style and the information constituents receive from and about their representatives influence their view of the representational relationship, finding that changes in perceived legislator effort and non-policy evaluations have significant effects on the constituent's view of the legislator.

## **2 Interaction between Citizens and Elites: Creating Non-Policy Relationships**

Representation is a multi-faceted concept. Constituent-legislator relations are much more than simply the translation of policy preferences into roll call behavior. Often, representatives' district obligations include casework, securing federal appropriations, and creating a reputation of trust with the constituency (e.g. Eulau and Karps 1977). Great heterogeneity exists in what voters believe to be the most important of these duties (e.g. Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987, Krasno 1994, Grant and Rudolph 2004). Still, the incentive exists for the legislator to focus on non-ideological goods and traits when interacting with the district. As the maxim holds, "Americans love their member of Congress, but hate Congress" (Fenno 1974). One of the prevailing explanations for this phenomenon is that the member of Congress is often evaluated on non-policy grounds, but Congress is judged by its policy output and its procedural malfunction. Whereas the individual can rely on personal connections, the institution is ultimately associated with its policies that have the capability to

isolate major portions of the constituency (Parker and Davidson 1979). Furthermore, the individual member can often alleviate her accountability by pushing blame to other members of the legislature (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995).

Although citizens in democratic countries may like to believe their elections are based upon the competition of policy ideas, valence issues “typically dominate” national elections (e.g. Clarke et al. 2011). As Stokes (1963) discerned, candidates compete based upon position issues and valence issues. The former relate to the ways in which government will distribute public goods across the electorate. The latter “involve the linking of the parties with some condition that is positively or negatively valued by the electorate” (1963, 373). Just as parties highlight their competence and integrity at the national level, the individual candidate has a strong incentive to emphasize her positive non-policy reputation to the district (e.g. Stone and Simas 2010).

At the aggregate level, candidates with an ideological advantage can increase their support with the voters by cultivating their non-policy image in the district (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2000, Groseclose 2001, Adams and Merrill 2005). By maintaining both a valence and ideological advantage over their opponents, they become “difficult or impossible to defeat” (Stone and Simas 2010, 373). As a candidate’s quality outside of policy increases, the importance of policy preferences has been found to decrease with respect to vote choice ( Buttice and Stone 2012).

Grant and Rudolph (2004) try to clarify this disorganization of preferences using survey responses from the 2000 American Politics Study. They ask respondents to provide their first and second choice of jobs they would like their representative in U.S. Congress to perform. Attempting to cover both national and local issues they provide a list of national issues, local issues, and casework that deals with the government. Once again, the results from this survey illustrate the heterogeneity in priority of citizens’ expectations of

the representational relationship: here, the researchers find that working on local issues is most important, working on national issues second, and finally, casework is labeled as the least important.

## 2.1 Home Styles

Perhaps the scholar most strongly associated with non-policy representation and responsiveness is Richard Fenno. In his book *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (1978), he describes how representatives develop a “home style” to cultivate support among their constituencies. Drawing on the work of sociologist Erving Goffman (1959), Fenno notes that members must put themselves in the immediate presence of others and manipulate the “presentation of self” to control the response of voters to leave the most desired impression. In addition to creating an environment of support from the constituents, members also seek to foster a sense of legitimacy. Fenno stresses that without these two elements, “there is no political relationship” (54). These efforts all work towards establishing trust and confidence among the citizenry that will ultimately build a sufficient coalition of re-election support.

Members cultivate trust through their home styles. Fenno identifies three key characteristics members of Congress attempt to display in their trust-making strategy. First, is qualification. Whether it be with words or actions, first-time candidates for office, and even incumbents, need to relay to the constituents that they possess the credentials necessary to serve. If legitimacy is to be attained, the electorate must believe the member is fit for the job. Such an attribute is most important for the non-incumbent or the most junior member. As Fenno, notes for these individuals, qualification is “*the* threshold impression” upon which they are judged (57). Should a member prove herself unqualified, she has no hope of gaining the district’s trust. Hence, members will go to great lengths to provide a biographical narrative expounding upon previous experience and responsibilities held in the

public or private sector. When not campaigning, the member will attempt to portray herself as either an expert on policy or congressional business. Fenno also attaches the virtue of honesty to the characteristic of qualification.

The second attribute that is necessary to establish trust is identification. Identifying with constituents sends the message that “I am one of you. I am like you.” Voters will more likely trust someone who is like themselves; hence positive evaluations can be drawn based on such connections. The identification strategy plays out along many different dimensions. For example, it may be simply based upon geography; one establishes trust by hailing from the same district and knowing its rich history (e.g. see Fenno 2013 and the discussion of Barber Connable). Identification may be based upon more tangible and observable traits, such as race or religion. Consider how often candidates for office promote their Christian faith as a means to connect to voters. This attribute also manifests itself in more abstract ways, such as the types of jokes told when speaking publicly (Fenno 1978, 58).

Finally, trust is cultivated by empathy. To gain trust, the member must convey to her district that she understands their problems and cares deeply about helping. In this way voters will believe that their best interests are being tended to in Washington. They will not be seen as just numbers in the bureaucratic paper shuffle. Rather, they have someone in the legislature who knows and cares greatly about the issues facing the district. As a result, they can trust their representative.

To summarize, Fenno labels the three characteristics of qualification, identification, and empathy as necessary conditions for establishing trust with the district. For the constituent to provide the vote to a candidate, she must be able to find trust. Thus, the incentive exists for the member to present herself to cultivate a relationship borne on trust, rather than simply policy preference congruence.

*Qualification, Identification, Empathy → Trust → Vote*

Fenno outlines two different types of home styles that are not directly related to the attributes of qualification, identification, and empathy. First, members may pursue a strategy of explaining the issues (and their individual, as well as the Congress' aggregate, behavior) to their constituents (1978, 94). Although this strategy runs the risk of disagreement with the individual voter, it does fit the mold of what many believe to be the appropriate representational duty. Furthermore, Fenno goes to great lengths in his descriptions of House members in their districts that this "special emphasis on articulating, explaining, discussing, and debating issues" is essential among one's primary constituency (1978, 94). Elucidation of what goes on in Congress not only sends a message of ideological placement, but it also builds towards the notion of competence and depicts the representative as a policy expert.

Members may also highlight their engagement in service to their district independent of policy considerations. Fenno labels this behavior "servicing the district" by providing help to individuals, groups, and localities in coping with the federal government (101). They may also use their interactions with the citizens to claim credit for special projects that the federal government has designated for their district (Mayhew 1974), whether they played an actual role in securing the project or not (Grimmer 2013a). Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope (2012) argue that members have a stronger incentive to emphasize these service and pork barrel issues over policy positions for the very reason that Grimmer argues they should emphasize ideology: since legislators believe almost uniformly that service and particularism have salutary effects with gaining votes (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987), the behavior will always be able to reach someone. When one considers the highly polarized nature of the political landscape, the personal vote cultivated by case-work or pork stands as strong

non-policy means to reach those who are on the opposite side of the aisle, or at least not as ideologically extreme as the primary constituency (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005). In this way, those on Capitol Hill need not sacrifice their partisan reputations or their image of loyalty in the House in order to work towards re-election.

In addition to the content of presentation of self, members focus on the types of home style, or the ways in which information reaches the constituency. First, members will allocate their staff and personal resources to either help those in need of casework or to discuss policy issues. Second, members engage in strong messaging practices to alert the public of their reputations and accomplishments. This process can take place in multiple ways. First, incumbents will run election campaigns that highlight the legislator through various mail, television, or radio advertisements soliciting votes. Second, members can take advantage of the congressional franking system whereby they may report behavior through the mail in a non-campaign capacity. Third, members may provide press releases through their own websites or other means (Grimmer 2013a).

Although less well studied, internet and electronic media are now becoming more rapidly integrated into representatives home styles. Adler, Gent, and Overmeyer (1998) note how (relatively) early websites of House members emphasized constituency service and special projects secured for the district. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are now an important way in which constituents and representatives keep in contact. Some argue that these methods of home style are just as effective in building trust as traditional means (Lawless 2012).

Above all, however, personal contact is of the utmost importance to the member. It is here where the member can present herself both verbally and contextually. The member who travels home often, makes public appearances, and personally meets with constituents improves her relationship of trust. Frequent visits do not necessarily build the image of



a service minded and trustworthy representative, but when combined with strong and directed messaging focused on casework and the three attributes of qualification, identification, and empathy, the type of interaction “can be fairly constituted as evidence” of home style (Grimmer 2013a).

Previous research suggests that, all else equal, the more one encounters their member of Congress, the more likely they will develop a favorable view (Sinclair 1990) and be aware of their activities (Grimmer 2013a). As a result, the more one encounters their member, the higher their evaluations should be. Parker and Goodman (2009) explain that those constituents who encounter representatives that devote more time to home style are likely to increase their evaluation of the member with respect to non-policy elements of representation. Furthermore, the more personal the encounters with the member become, the more favorable the constituent will rate the member’s non-policy attributes.

To summarize, members of Congress may encounter uncertainty with respect to policy representation. To decrease this uncertainty, they emphasize the non-policy characteristics of qualification, identification, and empathy for the district. These engagements are taken in order to build trust among voters.

**H1:** Increased frequency, increased levels of contact, and receiving messages of constituency service or the personal background of the member will increase the evaluation of non-policy behavior.

In addition to home style activities increasing the positive evaluations of the member, it is necessary to examine if Fenno’s causal model of trust finds support. Presentation of self on the members part that focuses on identification, empathy, and qualification should lead to trust. In many ways, the first hypothesis captures this relationship. No trust variable may be overtly observable, but the non-policy evaluation should serve as a relatively reliable latent measure of trust. To complete the causal model, Fenno proposes that trust, or a

positive evaluation of the legislators non-policy activities, should lead to positive evaluations of the member overall.

**H2:** Positive evaluations of non-policy activities will increase likelihood of approval of the member

While much attention has been given to the purpose and form of home style, it is less understood how constituents react to exposure of their legislators' presentation of self. Fenno's arguments suggest that successful cultivation of a trustworthy image will lead to personal rather than partisan or ideological votes. Others have used measurements of home style at the elite level, such as amount of franked mail, trips home, and federal appropriations procured for the district (Parker and Goodman 2009), to determine its effectiveness. Unfortunately, studies have yet to determine if this influence is demonstrated at the individual level. This paper takes up where other works have ended: it tests the hypothesis that those constituents exposed to home style place higher value on non-policy characteristics in the representation relationship. Additionally, it tests the prediction that home style exposure leads to a higher evaluation of the member of Congress.

## **3 Research Design**

### **3.1 Methods: Panel Structure**

Obtaining measures of exposure to legislators home styles can prove quite difficult. A common tactic by researchers has been to employ legislator-level behaviors to predict either individual-level outcomes. While much data exists on legislator tactics exists and advances in textual analysis allow for greater measurement of home style content, it is unclear if individual constituents surveyed were in fact exposed to the treatment of presentation of self (Fiorina 1981). Survey experiments may be a novel approach to this research question

(e.g. Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2012). Yet, relying upon lab studies or limited treatment period experiments may also prove problematic when studying the effects of home style. First, it is very difficult to manipulate real-world legislator behaviors such as visits to public events and provision of aid when dealing with the federal government. Second, constituent-legislator relationships, as stressed by Fenno, are not necessarily susceptible to one-shot effects. The trust which a representative wishes to cultivate often takes months or years. Thus, a field experiment may not yield the external validity to how citizen-legislator relationships ebb and flow.

The following analysis relies on nationally representative survey responses about observations and evaluations of legislator performance. Little national survey evidence exists on respondents recalling legislative effort, particularly gathered simultaneously with evaluations on a legislator's diverse characteristics and this work attempts to fill that gap (Parker and Goodman 2009). Admittedly, problems could exist with the validity of constituent's self-reported exposure. To be sure, much evidence exists that turnout is often exaggerated among many individuals (e.g. McDonald 2003). Furthermore, other studies find that survey respondents often provide higher than actual levels of contact with electoral campaigns (Vavreck 2007).

Even if over-reporting of exposure were non-existent, these survey designs may be vulnerable to selection-biases, and consequently endogeneity issues, within a cross-sectional design framework. For example, those subjects who have high opinions of their representatives at the time of the study are more likely to seek their legislator's responsiveness activities than those who already hold a negative opinion (Green, Gerber and Nickerson 2003). Thus, it would appear that exposure to legislator effort influenced opinions about the representative. Such a design would confound any inference that could possibly be made from the data.

One possible way to overcome these many issues is with long term panel data. First, this design is able to capture reality in that it matches the voter with her actual representative and possible observation of legislative effort (or the lack of it). Second, by taking advantage of the panel structure and measuring change in addition to the level of the observed variables, it allows the researcher to identify the real undulations that may occur within a long-term relationship. By asking the interview subject to provide their level and type of contact with their legislators, and measuring their perceptions over time, the researcher is able to observe within-subject variation.

Since this design relies on self-reported exposure from the respondent, it is not immune to the issue of unreliable responses. To be sure, an individual could either provide more or less exposure to their legislators' behavior. Yet, this study should control the bias that over-reporting produces. By focusing on change rather than level, over-reporters should maintain their over-reporting behavior over time. This assumption suggests that the unreliable behavior should not produce biased estimates of a differenced model.

## **3.2**

Data for this analysis are drawn from the August 2013 and October 2014 surveys of The American Panel Survey (TAPS). TAPS is a monthly online survey of about 2000 people. Panelists were recruited as a national probability sample with an addressed-based sampling frame in the fall of 2011 by Knowledge Networks for the Weidenbaum Center at Washington University. To account for natural attrition, the sample has been refreshed twice since the panel began (June 2012 and February 2013). Individuals without internet access were provided a laptop and internet service at the expense of the Weidenbaum Center. In a typical month, over 1700 of the panelists complete the online survey. More technical information about the survey is available at <http://taps.wustl.edu>. For waves of interest to this project,

slightly over 1100 panelists responded to the outcome variables in both August 2013 and October 2014.

### 3.3 Outcome Variables

In order to measure the predictors and effects of citizens' views of their legislators' non-policy representation, I have chosen to create a latent variable. This variable is derived from a set of items that are connected to extant literature on the multiple dimensions of responsiveness, particularly those outlined in Fenno's conception of trust. As such, they capture citizens' perceptions of their representatives' qualification, identification, and empathy. These items include honesty, understanding of the issues, sufficiency in experience, keeping in regular touch with the district, leadership skills, and compassion. On each item, the panelists are asked how well each of the characteristics describes their legislator on a four-point scale.

Table I outlines the factor analysis of the two sets of this non-policy representation evaluations. For both factors, the loadings suggest that the items are a good fit for a common latent variable. All loadings are above .75 for the first wave and all above .80 for the second wave. Relatedly, all  $\Psi$ , or uniqueness values are less than .50, indicating that more than fifty percent of the variation in each variable can be described by the first factor. For further evidence that these items are appropriate for a single, unidimensional measurement, the first eigenvalue for the PCA is well above one and much greater than the second eigenvalue that is well below .50. Finally, the  $\alpha$  for each wave's PCA is well above .90. All of these figures indicate that the measure is a reliable and valid conception of non-policy representation.

In order to apply a level of non-policy affect to each panelist, scores on the first dimension are taken for each individual. Yet as, the following analyses will demonstrate, this cross-sectional score is not an effective operationalization. The true variable of interest is not the level of trust or the level of non-policy representation evaluation, but rather the

change in such a variable. To extract the change in this measurement, I standardize both waves' measurements at zero and take each individual's difference from wave 2 to wave 1 in order to create a change in non-policy representation measurement. This change in non-policy representation is the outcome variable for the first hypothesis.

**Table 1.** Factor Analysis of Non-Policy Evaluations

Variable	Loading on Factor 1	Uniqueness	First Factor Eigenvalue	Second Factor	$\alpha$
<i>2013</i>			4.65	.41	.94
Honesty	.8545	.2695			
Understands Issues	.9062	.1597			
Has Sufficient Experience	.8731	.2209			
Keeps in Regular Touch	.7820	.3680			
Is a Strong Leader	.8487	.2789			
Shows Compassion	.8451	.1392			
<i>2014</i>			4.94	.34	.96
Honesty	.8919	.2046			
Understands Issues	.9294	.1175			
Has Sufficient Experience	.8993	.1635			
Keeps in Regular Touch	.8321	.2860			
Is a Strong Leader	.8929	.2027			
Shows Compassion	.8710	.2136			

The second hypothesis requires an outcome variable that measures the overall evaluation of the representative. One's first instinct for measuring this concept may be to use vote choice. This study eschews that option because of the timing of the panel survey. The home style which panelists recall in the survey may be relatively recent. For this reason, the exposure could have no effect on the actual vote choice. Therefore, I follow the pattern of Grimmer (2013b) and rely upon approval measurements. Each month of the panel survey gathers data on the approval of individual members of Congress. The panelist ranks her representative on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disapprove to strongly approve. Change in these two variables is produced by taking the difference between the 2013 and 2014 values.

### 3.4 Explanatory Variables

The main explanatory variables in this analysis are changes in the content of legislator presentation of self (here, the incidence of being made aware of the representative's service or personal background while previously reporting not hearing about such material), changes in the intimacy of contact ( here measured as changes in the highest level at 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, type 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 *type* 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). As a result, 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 the type or intimacy* 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.

### 3.5 Modeling

To test the two hypotheses, I use two different models. For hypothesis one, the dependent variable is continuous. Hence, ordinary least squares estimate the effects of home style on the evaluation of non-policy representation. Recall that the first hypothesis predicts that increases in exposure to non-policy effort on the part of the legislator will increase the panelist’s evaluation of her non-policy characteristics. The first type of model is estimated using ordinary least squares:

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

where  $\Delta y_i$  represents the change in the evaluation each panelist has for their representative on the non-policy dimension.  $\Delta \mathbf{X}_i$  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.

### 3.5.1 Heterogeneity in Response

The likelihood of constituents to obtain information about their members of Congress is highly dependent on a multitude of variables. Failure to account for these variables could lead to confounding at the individual level (Grimmer 2013b). Thus, it is possible to include controls that may be related to a constituent’s ability to retrieve information about representatives such as racial group, education, income, gender, and political interest (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Griffin and Flavin 2007). Yet, since I am interested in within subject change, the modeling strategy is less concerned with time-invariant covariates on the two outcome variables which measure change. As a result, the main analysis will not include such demographic controls.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, however, this study is interested in heterogeneity of constituents’ reactions to variations in the legislator’s presentation of self. To be sure, Fenno’s theory holds that non-policy home styles are crafted to reach citizens who may be less attuned to policy. For this reason, I have chosen to investigate how citizens of varying levels of political interest react to these changes in exposure. To empirically examine this variation, I interact the explanatory variable from the previous model with a four-point measure of the panelist’s interest in political affairs. From here, the variation on the model is:

$$\Delta y_i = \alpha_i + \lambda \Delta \mathbf{X}_i \times \mathbf{z}_i + \beta \Delta \mathbf{X}_i + \gamma \mathbf{z}_i + \epsilon_i$$

where once again  $\Delta y_i$  represents the change in the evaluation each panelist has for their

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<sup>1</sup>All analyses in this paper were run using demographic controls. The addition of these variables did not influence the statistical relationship between the main explanatory variables and the outcome variables

representative on the non-policy dimension and  $\Delta\mathbf{X}_i$  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. Here,  $\mathbf{z}_i$  represents individual  $i$ ’s level of political interest, as measured on the self-reported four-unit scale.

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 non-policy affect towards 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 contains each individual’s level of non-policy affect towards their member of the House. Thus, this model tests the relationship the change in this variable contributes to the change in overall approval.

## 4 Results

Using ordinary least squares, I regressed the change in non-policy representation on the changes in these variables. The results for this analysis may be found in Table 2.<sup>2</sup> Within column I, the output suggests that changes in the content of information a constituent

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<sup>2</sup>The models were also estimated using various demographic controls, accounting for the possibility that certain observable, time-invariant characteristics may influence the change in non-policy affect. These models provided similar results regarding the time-variant covariates.

receives about her legislator is significantly related to his changing non-policy evaluation. The explanatory variables in this model are dummy indicators where “1” represents the panelist responding that they had come across information regarding the personal background of or constituency service provided by their member of the House of Representatives in October 2014 when they had previously said they did not hear any such information in August 2013. Thus, a “0” indicates that no change in response occurred for the individual from 2013 to 2014. Column I displays that being made aware of service, as well as the personal background or character, is significantly associated with an increase in the panelist’s non-policy affect for the representative. Being made aware of the service record is associated with a roughly .29 unit increase in the non-policy affect score. While this distance may appear relatively small considering the spread of change is roughly -3 to 3 on the relevant scale, it represents a roughly ten percent increase on the observed latent factor. While being made aware of the character or personal background is significantly related to the change in non-policy affect, the estimates show that the effect is much weaker.

**Table 2.** Predicting Change in Non-Policy Affect

	I	II	III	IV
Made Aware of Service	0.286*** (0.082)			0.226*** (0.079)
Made Aware of Character	0.170*** (0.064)			0.072 (0.062)
$\Delta$ Intimacy of Contact		0.222*** (0.023)		0.169*** (0.027)
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact			0.126*** (0.016)	0.067*** (0.027)
Constant	-0.049** (0.024)	-0.023 (0.021)	-0.031 (0.021)	-0.061*** (0.023)
$N$	1,135	1,135	1,135	1,135
$R^2$	0.02	0.07	0.05	0.10

Standard errors in parentheses. Intercept not shown. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

Column II demonstrates that increases in the intimacy of contact are also related to changes in the non-policy evaluations of representatives. As the type of contact increases, the panelist's evaluation of the legislator increases in kind. That is, the model predicts that should a voter come into contact with representative disseminated materials, while previously only encountering third party materials, she is likely to modestly increase her non-policy evaluation. While the coefficient in the table suggests that increases in the type of contact are analogous to the content of communication, with respect to their effects, it should be noted that this variable is the change of a scale. Thus, a two unit increase in the intimacy of contact, while admittedly rare within the sample, is associated with changes of a very high magnitude on the latent factor scale.

Increases in the frequency of contact are also strongly related to changes in the non-policy affect scale. Such a result suggests that stronger public effort on the part of the legislator has the potential to significantly improve the representative's non-policy image. This result holds when controlling for other types of changes in the presentation of self. While the change of frequency is the smallest effect in magnitude, it does remain significant and positive. Column IV indicates that within the less parsimonious model, being made aware of the representative's character is no longer a reliable effect. This change may be the result of hearing negative information regarding the background of the legislator, thus weakening the overall effect. Finally, it should be noted that the intercept term in column IV is negative and statistically significant. From this finding, it can be concluded that there was a slightly negative trend towards incumbents from the summer of 2013 to the fall of 2014.

## 4.1 Sensitivity Analysis

Typically, causal inference in the social sciences relies upon an assumption that treatment statuses are independent of potential outcomes, conditional on a set of possible confounders (Imbens 2003). Although this modeling strategy employs a panel structure to overcome some of the problems with self-report and selection bias for the treatment, it is necessary to perform a sensitivity analysis which accounts for violations in this ignorability assumption. For example, it is certainly possible that those who are already aligned ideologically or by party with their legislators will develop stronger positive feelings over time and seek out these legislators, particularly as an election nears (e.g. Gelman and King 1993). In this analysis, I must determine if individual traits of the panelists influence their likelihood of coming into contact with their legislators, and therefore influence the interpretation of exposure to legislators in relation to changes in non-policy affect.

Formally, this confounding can be expressed as (Blackwell 2014):

$$q(a, x) = E[Y_i(a)|A_i = a, X_i = x] - E[Y_i(a)|A_i = 1 - a, X_i = x]$$

Within this function,  $q$  represents the confounding as a function of being exposed to the legislator's home style,  $a$ , and covariates which may influence the likelihood of treatment.  $Y_i$  is the outcome for panelist  $i$ ,  $A_i$  represents the treatment, where a value of 1 corresponds to receiving an increase in exposure in information, and  $X_i$  refers to a set of each individual's covariates. Thus, confounding is defined by the difference between the expected observed outcome between treatment groups, conditional on a set of individually heterogeneous covariates. If treatment is assigned randomly, then the outcome's relationship to treatment group is assumed to be independent. As a result, confounding is non-existent. Yet, in an observational study such as the present, a similar assumption cannot be made.

Blackwell (2014) outlines a possible solution to the violation of the ignorability assumption. By modeling a confounding function of the treatment status and observed outcome, researchers are able to determine both the raw amount of confounding and the variance in the observed outcome explained by confounding produced by the covariates that are responsible for selection bias. Using this approach, it is necessary to construct a confounding function in which the treatment status is regressed upon covariates which may influence the likelihood of such status. Using this logistic regression estimation, the predicted values for each individual represent a propensity score to being in the treated group. These scores are then used to replace the observed outcome with an adjusted outcome without omitted variable bias. The new outcome variable is then regressed upon the treatment variable along with the confounding function, providing a new estimate that controls for selection bias.

The strength of this approach is that it allows for researchers to determine the extent to which confounding influences the estimated effect of the treatment. This method reparameterizes  $q$  so that it is possible to determine the extent to which the variance in the outcome variable,  $R^2$ , can influence the observed effect. Figure 1 displays the results of this analysis.<sup>3</sup> For the sake of interpretation, I have limited the analysis to the treatment of increased frequency of exposure to home style. The y-axis represents the estimated effect of an increase in this variable.<sup>4</sup> On the x-axis, the figure displays the amount of variance in the outcome variable, here the change in non-policy affect, explained by the confounding variables. The  $\times$  symbols represent the amount of partial variance each covariate has with the outcome variable.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Sensitivity analysis performed using the `causalsens` package in R

<sup>4</sup>The `causalsens` package does not allow for a continuous treatment variable. Thus, I have chosen to dichotomize the variable to “1” if the panelist reported an increase in contact and a “0” otherwise.

<sup>5</sup>For this analysis, I have chosen to include age, sex, race, interest in politics, shared partisanship,

The results of the figure indicate that for the entire range of possible variance explained by the confounding covariates, the effect of an increase in exposure to home style remains positive and statistically significant from zero. That is, even when accounting for the selection bias of coming into greater contact with the representative, constituents are still likely to increase their perceptions of the elected official’s non-policy attributes. Such a finding greatly strengthens the causal claims of the home style relationship.

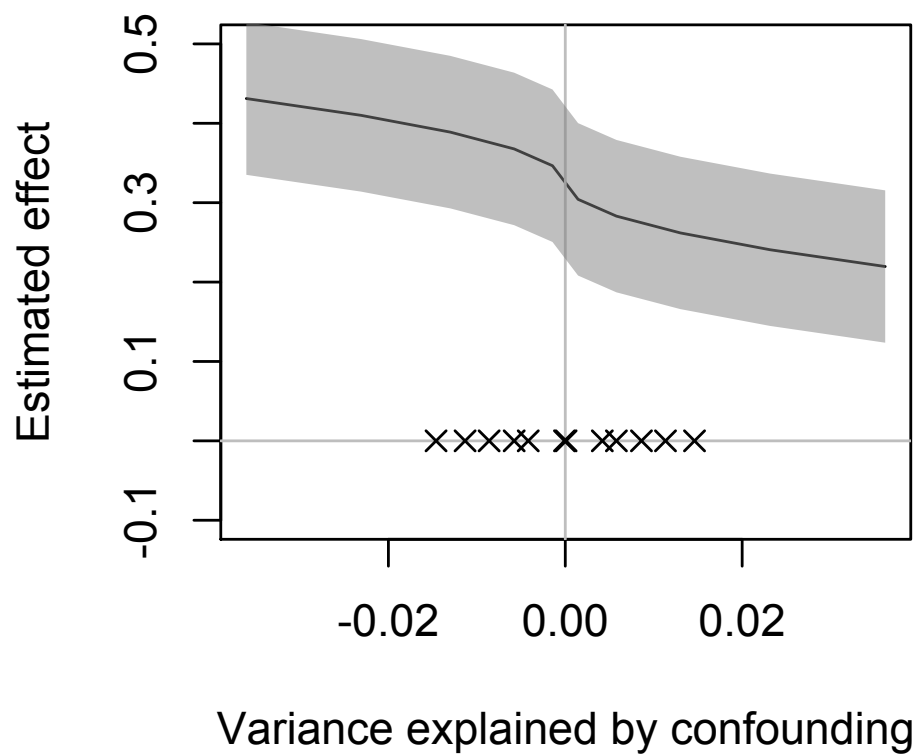
## 4.2 Political Interest and Exposure to Home Style

Part of the home style narrative is finding a means to attract support from constituents that may not be ideologically aligned or interested in the legislator. Rather than appealing on policy grounds, the legislator wins the support of the potential voter through other avenues, such as developing trust. To be sure, it is difficult to develop trust among those who are ideologically divergent or have already developed an opinion of the legislator. Typically, the most politically observant individuals have the strongest held policy preferences and have pre-existing perceptions of their legislators. It is among the less politically attuned that legislators should expect to make the biggest advances through their non-policy home style strategies. That is, it is possible that reactions to home style tactics may differ, conditional upon the panelist’s level of political interest.

Table III provides the results from this investigation. In order to find evidence of heterogeneity of effects by political interest level, a four point measure of political attentiveness is interacted with each of the explanatory home style variables. The mean estimates for the interaction term for both being made aware of service and intimacy of contact are

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and perceived ideological distance on a 7-point scale in the confounding function. The analysis tests these covariates for both negative and positive values.



**Figure 1.** Sensitivity analysis on the effect of an increase in exposure to the incumbent. The y-axis represents the estimated effect of a dichotomous treatment on the change in non-policy affect for the legislator. This treatment is coded as “1” if the panelist reported an increase in her exposure to the legislator’s home style and “0” otherwise. The x-axis shows the direction of the confounding multiplied by the proportion of the unexplained variance by confounding. The × symbols indicate the partial  $R^2$  for the covariates.



rather large and negative, but they do not reach acceptable levels of significance. Still, they provide some evidence that these effects are stronger for those who exhibit less political interest. With respect to change in the frequency of contact, however, the model predicts that those who report being more interested in politics will be less susceptible to these public effort tactics. Put another way, less interested constituents are more likely to improve their non-policy evaluations of the legislator if they encounter more frequent information.

**Table 3.** Predicting Change in Non-Policy Affect, Interacting with Political Interest

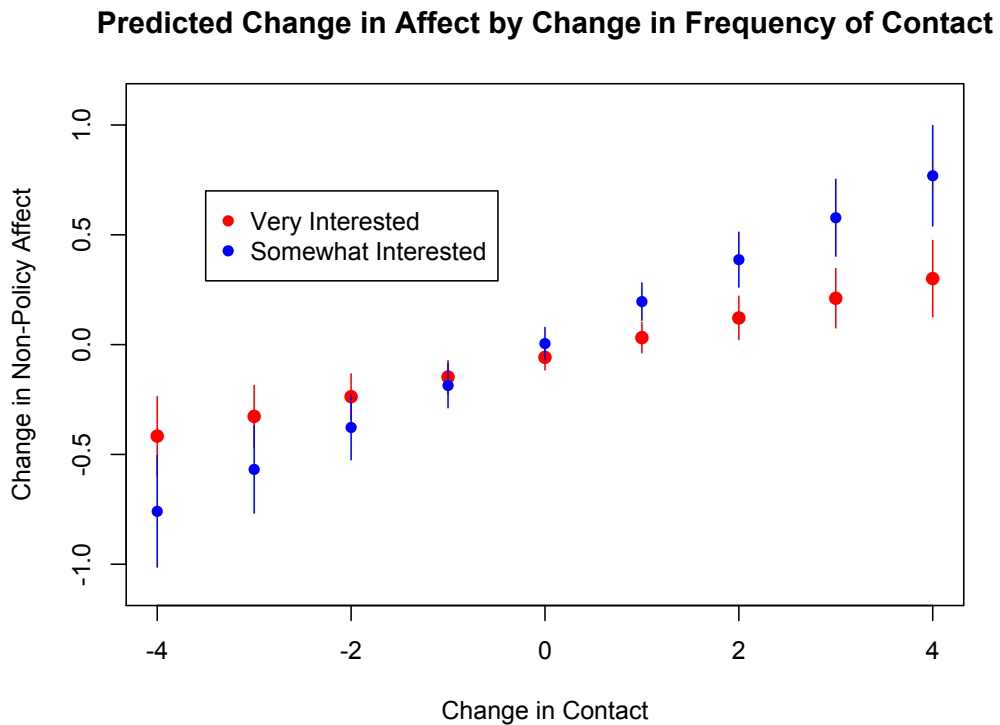
	I	II	III
Made Aware of Service	0.295 (0.199)		
Made Aware of Character	-0.071 (0.151)		
$\Delta$ Intimacy of Contact		0.134** (0.054)	
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact			0.039 (0.016)
Political Interest	-0.040 (0.028)	-0.033 (0.028)	-0.031 (0.025)
Made Aware of Service $\times$ Political Interest	-0.295 (0.199)		
Made Aware of Character $\times$ Political Interest	-0.004 (0.111)		
$\Delta$ Intimacy of Contact $\times$ Political Interest		-0.148 (0.080)	
$\Delta$ Frequency of Contact $\times$ Political Interest			-0.051*** (0.019)
$N$	1, 125	1, 125	1, 125
$R^2$	0.02	0.03	0.06

Standard errors in parentheses. Intercept not shown. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

To further explore the difference in the marginal effects by political interest, Figure 2 provides the predicted change as the frequency of contact changes. The image displays

two sets of predictions: the predicted level of change for those panelists reporting being very interested in political affairs (the highest level possible on a four-point scale) and the predicted level of change for those individuals reporting being only “somewhat interested” in politics (the second highest level on a four point scale). The x-axis provides the hypothetical level of change in contact that a panelist may encounter, while the y-axis provides the predicted level of change.

**Figure 2.** Predicted Effects on Change in Non-Policy Affect: The Very Interested vs. the Somewhat Interested



It becomes apparent that increases in the frequency of contact provide a significantly larger influence on casual observers of politics. Those who tend to be very interested in political affairs are much less affected by greater effort from their legislators. For further evidence of the politically attentive’s relative imperviousness to this treatment, it is impor-

tant to note that no significant predicted effect can be found for a one unit increase in the frequency of information reception. It is only when the most interested individual receives at least a two unit increase that a significant positive change occurs.

These significant differences do not appear with respect to decreases in the frequency of contact. That is, both the very interested and the somewhat interested react to less frequent information reception in statistically indistinguishable direction and magnitude. Nonetheless, unlike increases, predictions due to decreases in the frequency of contact are significant for both interested and less interested panelists. This result suggests that legislators would be unwise to shirk on their public efforts; voters of all levels of political attentiveness tend to think less of their non-policy attributes should such a change occur.

Finally, it is necessary to determine how these changes in non-policy affect are related to the individual's overall evaluation of the legislator. According to the theory of home style, these non-policy attributes provide the legislator a degree of freedom ideologically. To determine the effects of these non-policy perceptions, the model regresses the change in overall approval of the legislator on the change in the non-policy affect variable from August 2013 to October 2014.<sup>6</sup>

Table 4 displays the results of this model. Column I demonstrates that a significant increase in the approval of the legislator is associated with a similar change in the non-policy affect. A rather large positive coefficient of 0.328 indicates that representatives' evaluations are closely tied to their perceived non-policy attributes. To better understand the magnitude of this effect, consider that the mean value of observed change in non-policy affect is approximately zero. That is, the average person's perception of these extra-ideological elements did

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<sup>6</sup>Once again, this model was run using several time invariant covariates that may influence each individual's trend in approval over the course of the time period. The results of this model were consistent with the main explanatory variables' relationship to change in legislator approval.

not change during the study. One standard deviation from this mean is roughly 0.731. An increase in this variable by one standard deviation from the mean is associated with a predicted change of approval of 0.351, meaning that a hypothetical panelist would increase her approval by roughly one-third of a category. Similarly, a change of one standard deviation less than the mean produces a prediction of -0.133 categories change in the outcome.

**Table 4.** Predicting Change in Legislator Approval

	I	Shared PID	Opposite PID or Independent
$\Delta$ Non-Policy Affect	0.328*** (0.042)	0.285*** (0.063)	0.344*** (0.058)
$N$	1,076	380	676
$R^2$	0.05	0.05	0.05

Standard errors in parentheses. Intercept not shown. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

Although these predicted changes appear quite small, their magnitude must be put into context. The scale of approval is only a five-point measurement, indicating that the possible level of movement is quite constrained. The outcome variable in this analysis may take on nine possible values, but the individual panelist may only move a maximum of four units. Furthermore, the majority of movement is contained to two units. Very few individuals oscillate from strongly disapprove to strongly approve. With this pattern in mind, it becomes apparent that the predicted change from a one standard deviation increase is analogous to nearly twenty percent of all possible movement on the scale. Hence, these somewhat reasonable changes in the explanatory variable are related to rather meaningful perceptions of the legislator.

Finally, Table 4 also attempts to uncover whether legislators can make gains with ideologically opposed or ambiguous constituents on these non-policy characteristics. Within columns 2 and 3, the results of a subsetted regression are displayed by those who identified

as the same party as the legislator and those who identified as Independent or of the opposite party, respectively. These results show that Fenno's argument that legislators can improve their standing among their constituency by appearing as trustworthy representatives is with empirical merit. Among both co-partisans and those who are not aligned, significant positive effects exist. Although these effects are not statistically distinguishable, the estimate among those who do not share party identification with the legislator is more positive. Such a result should not be surprising. Those with shared partisanship should already have a policy or ideological connection with the legislator. For this reason, legislators need to connect with the other portions of the constituency by other means. This model suggests that non-policy affect is slightly more relevant among those individuals with respect to the evaluation of the legislator.

## 5 Conclusion

Though understudied, the inclusion of both elite behavior and citizen evaluations has not been totally ignored. Others (eg. Grimmer 2013a, Grimmer 2013b, Parker and Goodman 2009, Sinclair 1990) provide excellent accounts of how home style may influence the electoral relationship. Nonetheless, most of these studies (with the notable exception of Grimmer 2013b) do not rely upon purely constituent level data. That is, representative behavior is often measured at the aggregate level and the analysis must make the assumption that all citizens are equally likely to encounter home style and react to such behavior in similar manners. The analysis of this paper adds to the literature in that I gather data on the frequency, content, and type of legislator-constituent interaction, in addition to variables measuring approval of representation. In this way, I am able to examine how home style affects the individual's views of representation.

The preceding analysis would seem to give strong support to the research question at hand. The empirical evidence strongly supports Fenno's claims regarding home style and building support among the constituency. Furthermore, the sensitivity analysis improves the causal claims of Fenno that these actions taken by legislators directly improve their reputations in the district. The public efforts made by legislators towards their districts are well-received by their constituents. When constituents perceive increases in these outwardly non-ideological overtures, their perceptions of the legislator's character significantly increase. In turn, these evaluations of the legislator have a significant relationship with overall support. Thus, this paper confirms the contention that representation is a multi-faceted concept.

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