Group Interests, Constituency Characteristics and Demands for Representation

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"If I hear 1 more person scream at a Rep., 'I'm your boss!', I'll scream louder. Friends, each of us is 1/700,000th the boss of a congressman."
— *Larry Sabato on Twitter*

Guiding Questions

1. How does one's social identity influence their demands for representation?

2. How does knowledge of the district's constituency characteristics influence one's demands for government responsiveness?

Past Research

- People demand representatives to represent them based on the most salient aspects of their personal identities
- Citizens are egocentric voters who prioritize personal and family interests on the ballot over those of their neighbors or community

Hypotheses

1. **Egocentric Hypothesis:** As a representative's effort on behalf of groups with which the citizen identifies increases, the citizen's evaluation of the representative will become more positive.

2. **Proportionality Hypothesis:** Citizens will expect that representatives expend effort on behalf of groups in proportion to their role in the constituency.

3. **Heterogeneity Information Hypothesis:** The link between representative effort, citizen identity and citizen evaluations will be attenuated by information about the heterogeneity of one's constituency and strengthened by information about the homogeneity of one's constituency.

4. **Size Information Hypothesis:** The link between representative effort, citizen identity and citizen evaluations will be attenuated by information that the identity group is a small part of the constituency and strengthened by information that the identity group is a large part of the constituency.

Study 1

Experimental Design

Distribution of Group Attachment

Table: Distribution of Group Attachment

Group Interest	Very Close	Somewhat Close	Not Close	Partisan Gap*
College Students	84%	12%	4%	-0.01
Small Business	26%	44%	30%	0.17
The Military	23%	37%	40%	0.22
The Elderly	16%	59%	25%	0.14
The Poor	11%	45%	43%	-0.22
Farmers	10%	30%	60%	0.17
Unions	8%	21%	71%	-0.12

*Partisan gap indicates the difference between Republicans and Democrats' propensity to identify with the group. A score of 1.0 would indicate all Republicans very closely identify with the group and all Democrats do not feel close to the group, while a -1.0 would indicate the opposite.
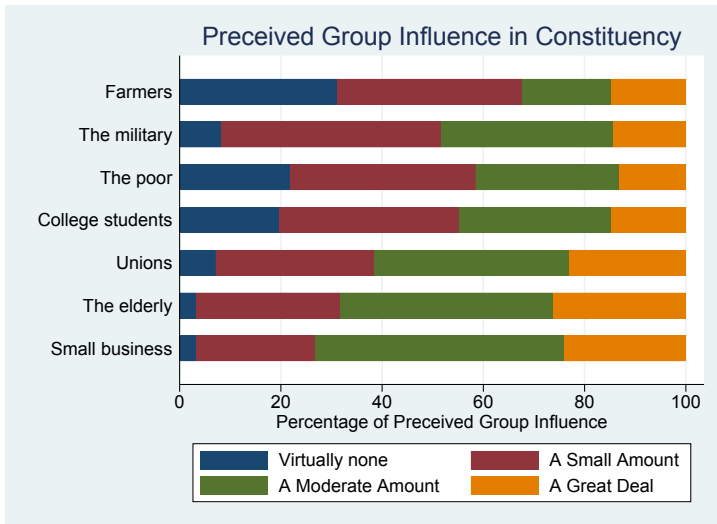
Experimental Condition Vignettes

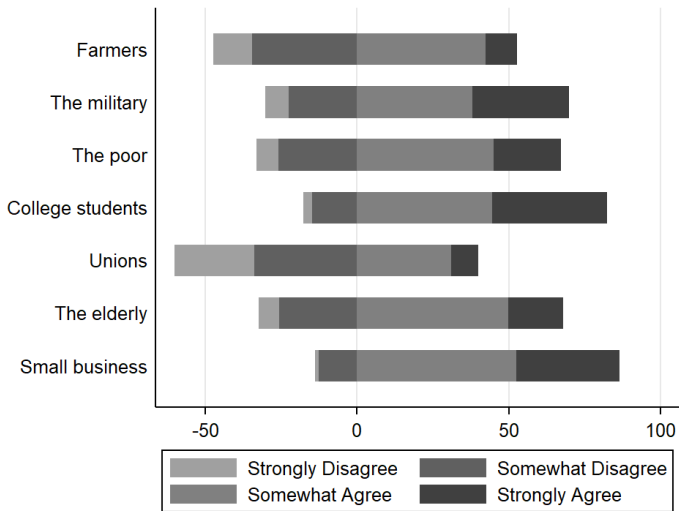| Homogeneity Condition	Heterogeneity Condition
Based on the information provided, your member of Congress is Mike Turner, a member of the Republican Party. He has served in Congress since 2003. The Third District of Ohio is a largely urban district which is dominated by the city of Dayton; more than three-quarters of its population resides within Montgomery County. The district is heavily Republican: it has supported Republican presidential candidates in the last three elections, and Turner has not faced a competitive election since being elected to Congress. The district is also racially homogeneous: whites make up more than 80% of the district's residents, and this number rises to over 90% outside of Dayton proper.	Based on the information provided, your member of Congress is Mike Turner, a member of the Republican Party. He has served in Congress since 2003. The Third District of Ohio stretches across large sections of south-western Ohio, from the city of Dayton to rural counties east of Cincinnati. Although Dayton is the largest city in the district, a majority of its residents live in the Cincinnati media market. The district leans Republican in presidential and Congressional elections, but had a history of electing Democrats to Congress throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the city of Dayton provides a strong based of Democratic support. The district ranks as one of the most racially diverse in the state of Ohio, with the city of Dayton almost evenly split between black and white residents.

Perceived Group Influence in Constituency

Preceived Group Influence in Constituency

Demands for Representational Effort

Study 2

Experimental Design

Summary of Experimental Scenarios

	Scenario 1	**Scenario 2**	**Scenario 3**
Incumbent Decision	Voting for bill that would cut money for hypothetical university	Leading effort to pass financial reform bill that would cut student loan benefits	Accepting seat on Agriculture Committee in lieu of seat on Education Committee
Incumbent Defense	Other groups in district will benefit from the bill's tax cut provisions	Bipartisanship is valuable; getting things done better than demanding the perfect bill	Agriculture is a large sector in the district; opponent pitting groups against each other
Constituency Trait Varied	Size of university, % of residents affiliated with the university	% of college graduates in the district who have federal student loans	How rural district is; how large agricultural sector in district is
Condition 1	Largest university 20% of residents	50% of graduates	75% rural – Third largest agricultural sector in the country
Condition 2	4th largest university 1% of residents	10% of graduates	30% rural – Agriculture is third largest sector in district

Responses to Experiment Vignettes

	Scenario 1 University Funding	Scenario 2 Student Loans	Scenario 3 Committee Work
Incumbent Has Better Argument			
High Importance Condition	61.0%	37.9%	67.7%
Low Importance Condition	62.6%	49.2%	69.4%
Expected Difference (Sign)	(−)	(−)	(+)
Observed Difference (S.E.)	−0.2 (0.06)	−0.11 (0.07) #	−0.02 (0.06)
N	225	225	225
Vote for Incumbent			
High Importance Condition	51.7%	42.1%	61.2%
Low Importance Condition	50.5%	41.5%	65.4%
Expected Difference (Sign)	(−)	(−)	(+)
Observed Difference	0.01 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	−0,04 (0.06)
N	225	225	225

Note: # $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

General Discussion

Conclusions

Group Identities Guide Demands for Responsiveness

Voters favor representatives who cater to their most salient social identities

- Study 1: Closeness to group influences perceptions of what warrants representation
- Study 2: District composition does not do much to influence evaluations demands for representation

Future Directions

- Observing results via observational methods
  - Campaigns
  - Legislative Behavior
  - Outcome of Future Elections

Discussion and Questions