

Reconciling Candidate and Party Brand Names

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November 11, 2008

Paper prepared for presentation at the American Politics Workshop, November 17, 2008. The author thanks Betsy Sinclair and Michael Dawson for comments on previous versions of the manuscript.

Abstract

My workshop paper is a draft of a book chapter, where the book addresses how political parties in the U.S. solve the adverse selection problem in elections (i.e. how party labels provide credible information about candidates' behavior in office) despite weakness of the national parties' control apparatuses. This chapter squares my theory with the conventional understanding of American elections as being candidate-centered affairs. I show that 1) MCs are not sufficiently well-known that one might reasonably believe that they contest elections on the basis of private rather than party brand names; 2) the exercise of negative agenda control by the majority party greatly limits the electoral incentives that MCs confront to cast votes that differentiate themselves from the rest of their party; and 3) the explanation for the low levels of information about MCs overall is that it is only a small number of legislators with centrist voting records who have electoral incentives to invest campaign resources in the development of private brand names.

Over the last few Chapters, I made my case for the argument that parties benefit from acting as unified teams in government because it reduces the uncertainty of voters about the characteristics of party members. Consequently, it is rational for citizens to cast votes based on candidates' party affiliations because they know that if the party organization allows too many of its members to step out of line in the future then it jeopardizes its valuable reputation in the same way that a franchiser stakes its brand name on the performance of its local franchisees. I believe that this provides a rationale for the empirical fact that voters tend to rely primarily on politicians' party affiliations in congressional elections rather than other decision-making cues (including candidates' own policy positions) and explains why it is rational for the public to hold the national parties collectively responsible for their actions in government (see Chapter One).

This account of the importance of partisan cues is not easily reconciled with the notion that American elections are candidate-centered (Agranof 1976; Wattenberg 1982, 1994). Seminal studies of congressional elections strongly suggest that politicians endeavor to develop and campaign on the basis of private brand names established via their legislative record that have particular appeal in their home districts and that differentiate themselves from other members of their party (Fenno 1978; Mayhew 1974a). In the language of the spatial model of political competition used elsewhere in this book, politicians have strong incentives to establish a reputation that is appealing to the median voter in their district regardless of what the other members of her party are doing.

The claim that politicians are able to campaign on the basis of private brand names established through their legislative record has the capacity to challenge the central arguments of this book in two fundamental ways. First, it raises questions about whether party brand names are important institutions for increasing voter confidence in the qualities of the candidates that they choose on Election Day. If politicians develop private brand names that they value (and voters believe candidates develop those reputations), then party labels are not needed to commit politicians to a particular course of action in office. Following the logic introduced in Chapter Two, the public might believe that politicians will do as they have promised because voters know that a candidate

who betrayed them in office forfeits the opportunity to compete successfully in that district in the future.¹ Second, legislators focused on appealing to local interests might harm the party's reputation for providing the public with a certain type of candidates, thereby weakening partisan attachments in the general public in the manner described in the last several Chapters. With too many legislators acting in this way, the national parties would lose their ability to credibly signal candidate quality because the electorate would no longer see the Democrats or Republicans as placing a valuable reputation in jeopardy when they run candidates for office.

The purpose of this Chapter is to demonstrate that the American system of candidate-centered elections is consistent with my account of why voters find partisan cues credible signals of candidate-quality. To that end, the first Part of this Chapter is dedicated to addressing the two theoretical challenges posed to my theory that are described above. The remainder of the Chapter describes the strategic choice that politicians confront when choosing to campaign on the basis of their party's record or to differentiate themselves from their party in order to compete on the basis of private brand names.

I. Candidate Reputations as a Substitute for Party Labels?

The first challenge to my theory posed by the presence of private candidate brand names is that they might somehow substitute for party labels. In support of this claim is the overwhelming impression given by politicians to both the public and to scholars that they believe that this is true. Even prior to the period of party decline during the 1950s that scholars believe gave rise to the modern era of candidate-centered politics, 85 percent of incumbent candidates standing for reelection to the House believed that their "personal standing and record" was "very important" or "quite important" to their electoral fortunes (Stokes and Miller 1962, p. 542). While this belief may be genuine, just because politicians talk about the desirability of personal reputations that are

¹ More subtly, if voters recognize that legislators face incentives to develop legislative records that appeal in their home district and there are not countervailing party forces, then that undermines the credibility of the information conveyed by partisan cues about specific candidates even if voters do not actually observe legislators acting in this way.

appealing in their home district does not necessarily mean that they are able to successfully appeal to the vast number of ordinary Americans on the basis of a private brand name. As noted in Chapter Two, for a politician's reputation to inspire confidence that she will not behave opportunistically in the event of her election, it must be the case that she has 'equity' in her brand name that she would sacrifice if she behaved badly. At a minimum, this requires that voters know the candidate's name and some useful attributes (including whether she provides effective constituency service) about her that differentiate her from opponents. If these conditions are not satisfied, then the politician does not place a valuable personal reputation in jeopardy if she acts opportunistically in office. At the very least, if a tremendous number of ordinary voters do not know who the politician is, then they have no way of knowing whether she has a private brand name to value. Similarly, if name recognition is sufficiently low, then the handful of voters who do recognize the candidate but who recognize that most other voters do not may also infer that the candidate's current reputation is not a particularly valuable asset.

A logical starting point for assessing whether individual politicians have reputations that the general public believes that they value is to determine whether people are able to recall or even recognize their names. One useful measure of this is to ask people in an open-ended question to provide a candidate's name. Based on evidence from the biennial ANES, the public's ability to *Recall* the name of incumbent members of the House of Representatives who are running for reelection is remarkably low. As reported in the first column of Table 5.1, the percentage of ANES respondents unable to recall the name averaged over 68% over the last three decades.² I find the low name recognition of American politicians to be incredibly damaging evidence against the claim that voters rely on candidates' private brand names to cast their votes—a person would have to be able to identify the candidate before trusting her brand name.

² Jacobson (2004, p. 122) reports that 54% of voters (as opposed to the entire sample) were unable to recall the name of their incumbent.

To put in perspective the weakness of Americans' ability to recall their incumbent Representative's name, Cain, et al, (1987) report that when citizens in the U.K. were asked to recall their incumbent MPs name, only 35% of respondents were unable to do so. The striking thing about this fact is that the U.K. has a parliamentary system of government in which legislators' party line votes on most measures prevent MPs from differentiating themselves in any meaningful way from their party. Thus, in a country where one would expect personal reputations to have minimal effects on voting behavior, the public actually knows individual candidates better than they do in the United States. While there are important institutional and cultural differences between the U.S. and the U.K. that could explain these differences, I believe the cross-national comparison still makes the point compellingly that 1) there is nothing inherently hard about recalling the identity of an incumbent politician and 2) the United States' weak partisan institutions do not translate into higher levels of name recognition.

Market research suggests that I might nevertheless be rash to conclude from name recall questions that a brand name lacks value if peoples' decisions are made at the point of purchase (Keller 2001). Mann (1978) and Jacobson (2004) make a similar case with respect to politicians—arguing that the public might recognize the name of a candidate on the ballot even if they are unable to pull that information from memory. I am skeptical about this claim because I feel that most people probably know that they are going to vote for the Democrat or the Republican even if they do not know those candidates' names (which implies that candidate brand names are irrelevant to the decision), but it is at least plausible that elections to Congress are sufficiently far down the ballot that a person arriving at the polls has not already come to a decision about how to vote. If the latter scenario were true, then that would require that the public could recognize the incumbent's name on the ballot and assess their feelings toward the candidate. As a rough measure of whether people are able to recognize a politician on their ballot, I use ANES respondents' ability to place their incumbent House member on 100-point scales describing how warmly or coolly they feel toward this individual. This data is reported in the second column of Table 5.1 along with feeling thermometer

scores for the President which provides a useful benchmark. In contrast to the recall questions where just two-thirds of respondents could not name their incumbent, the data from feeling thermometer scores suggest that 20% percent of the American public either fail to recognize the name of their sitting Congressmen or their opinion of this person is so poorly formed that they are unable to place him or her on the feeling thermometer scale when given their name.

If the actual level of incumbent name recognition hovers around 80%, then that would be much more supportive of the claim that politicians have equity in their private brand names than the 32% figure reported above. The question that follows is whether people who are able to place their incumbent on feeling thermometers really do have reasonably well-informed opinions about the candidate and her issue positions, or if this is simply evidence of what market researchers call 'spurious awareness' which is said to occur when someone mistakenly reports being able to recall something (Keller 2001). To assess whether the public knows something about legislators' record in Washington, I look at ANES respondents' placements of their incumbent on 7-point issue scales on a number of important public policy questions as well as her political ideology. The issues included whether men and women should have an equal role or if women's place is in the home; whether government should help blacks (minorities) or if blacks (minorities) should help themselves; whether government should provide many fewer services and reduce spending a lot or if government should provide many more services and increase spending a lot; and whether government should see to people having a job and good standard of living or if government should let each person get ahead on their own. Table 5.2 reports the percentage of respondents for each election year since 1978 who were able to place both themselves and their incumbent Representative on these scales when asked to do so. Considering the various topics, roughly half of all respondents failed to place both themselves and an incumbent candidate who ran for reelection on these scales when given the candidate's name. This is an incredibly low standard by which to measure the information that people possess about candidates because it does not speak to the accuracy of their candidate perceptions, yet

only about half of all people surveyed were able to offer an answer to these questions—even for seemingly easy questions like whether the incumbent is liberal or conservative.³

This general pattern of low levels of public awareness about their incumbents also adheres when people are asked about specific measures before Congress. For example, Ansolabehere and Jones (ND) find in their study of public knowledge about recent salient votes in the House that: “57% [of respondents] placed their Representative [i.e. offered a guess about her vote] on the Prescription Drug Importation bill, 64% on the Partial-birth Abortion Ban, and 62% on the Gay Marriage Amendment (p. 12).” Of the roughly 60% of people offering guesses about their incumbent’s votes, they find that the rate of correct predictions was also quite low with only 64%, 74%, and 62% of people correctly identifying their Representatives votes on the respective scales. Putting the data together, their study finds that only about 1/3 of people were able to correctly guess their Representatives votes on these high profile bills. These findings echo the seminal studies by Miller and Stokes (1962; Stokes and Miller 1963) who report that “Our constituent interviews indicate that the popular image of the Congressman is almost barren of policy content... By the most reasonable count, references to current legislative issues comprised not more than a thirtieth part of what the constituents had to say about their Congressmen (Stokes and Miller 1963, pg. 542-543).”

My purpose here is not to disparage the American public for their lack of information about the identities and actions of their elected officials. For reasons that I will lay-out in greater detail later in this Chapter, I believe that the reason that most Americans have little information about their MCs and relate to their Representative (if at all) in terms of her personal qualities and service to her district because the Representative has little incentive to provide information about her

³ When people are given the opportunity to provide open-ended answers about what they like or dislike about their Representative which gives them the flexibility to identify issues that are important to them and evaluate her performance on that issue domain, they are no more likely to point to her legislative record. In his research on congressional elections, Jacobson (2004, pg. 139) reports that only around 1/5 of voters (as opposed to all respondents) indicated that an attribute that they liked about the incumbent was her position on some issue or her political ideology. Meanwhile, he finds that around 1/3 of voters offer an issue position or ideological rationale as being something that they dislike about the incumbent.

legislative record to her constituents because her party's brand name already conveys that information. Most people are able to make reasonably good decisions about how to vote based on their own preferences about the direction of government, the positions of the national parties on these issues, and candidates' party affiliations—people just infer that the politicians vote with the rest of their party (Miller and Stokes 1962; Ansolabehere and Jones ND)). Taking this argument a step farther, I conjecture that one factor contributing to voters' lack of knowledge about specific candidates is that they do not trust the information that individual politicians provide and therefore do not undergo the cognitive effort needed to store this information. This perspective is supported by the evidence in Chapter Two that ordinary Americans believe that politicians are “experience goods” and by experimental studies showing that subjects who are actually given candidate-specific issue information and then asked to recall shortly thereafter a candidate's issue positions are more likely to provide the party's position than the candidate's (Rahn 1990). That insight aside, the essential point for the purposes of this Chapter is that if people are drawing upon partisan cues or other stereotypes and they have little specific information about the candidates running for office, then that strongly supports my claim that politicians' private brand names are not a substitute for partisanship in American elections.

II. Candidate Incentives to Differentiate Themselves from Their Party

The second challenge posed by politicians' desire to develop private brand names is that incumbents who believe that their personal reputations affect electoral outcomes may split with their party to cast votes that satisfy district interests, thereby harming the party's reputation for providing candidates who advocate for certain sets of issue positions. I believe that this argument is much more relevant for my work than the claim that candidate reputations provide a substitute for partisanship in American elections because not all voters need to know an incumbent's record for politicians to believe that it is consequential. For example, it is possible that an incumbent believes that it is in her electoral interest to satisfy an influential group of voters who place considerable weight on an issue

and pay heed to their Representative's actions, and that by giving into this pressure they divide the party thereby damaging its reputation.

In considering politicians' electoral motivation to cast votes that disagree with that preferred by a majority of other members of their party in government, I believe that it is useful to consider three different strategic situations that candidates confront given their district's preferences (either the district writ large, or a group of high demanders) on an issue and the actions of other MCs. First, there are legislators who represent districts who approve of the votes cast by the majority of other members of the incumbents' party in government. For these politicians, electoral considerations provide scant motivation for defecting from the party line—voting with the party is equivalent to voting with the district. Second, there are legislators who represent districts who disapprove of the votes cast by majorities of both parties. For politicians representing this group of constituents, I believe that it is unlikely that they will feel compelled to bow to electoral pressures to vote against the party. Ultimately, there is not much to be gained by taking credit for being on the bottom of a 415-20 vote in the House so that MCs whose votes reflect district tastes have little reason to campaign on this issue, and a challenger would not make much political hay by claiming that they would have cast the 21st vote opposing congressional action. In fact, pointing to this kind of legislative failure would presumably be damaging to a politician's reputation because it creates the impression that she is unable to move policy in the direction preferred by her district. Third, there are legislators who represent districts whose policy preferences place them at odds with their own party and in agreement with the opposition party. This group of legislators obviously have the strongest incentives to vote against their party for electoral purposes, especially given that challengers could point to their party's support of the district as evidence for how they might have voted regarding this issue.

Given this (I think uncontroversial) statement about the electoral concerns that incumbents face with respect to their vote choices, it is possible to inquire into the types of issues that create incentives for politicians to differentiate themselves from their party as well as the characteristics of

the districts who encourage this type of behavior.⁴ As I proceed, I will begin from the assumption common to many studies of Congress that the national parties have relatively weak levers to manipulate the voting behavior of party members (cf. Mayhew 1974a; Krehbiel). Proceeding from this assumption, it would seem to follow that if the congressional parties are not able to offer much to compensate members for casting hard votes against constituent interests, then office-motivated MCs 1) would vote with their district and 2) would strive to differentiate themselves from their party's positions on the issues in the manner described above. However, viewed through the theoretical lens about legislator incentives presented above, this argument is a bit of a red herring because a party does not necessarily need to be able to coerce its members to prevent them from defecting from the party line. A key variable motivating a politician's decision to differentiate herself from her party is the appearance of issues on the legislative agenda that force her to choose between the party line and the interests of her district. From this observation, it obviously follows that the exercise of agenda control has the potential to significantly influence the incentives for politicians to defect from their party for electoral purposes.

The Implications of Agenda-Setting Powers for Private Brand Names

My goal in this Section is to better understand what effect agenda-setting power has on the development of private brand names. To this end, I consider the behavior of legislators in two stylized models of the legislative process drawn from Cox and McCubbins' (2005; see also Cox 2001) work on agenda control in the U.S. Congress. The first model, what they call the Floor Agenda Model, considers legislator behavior when the Committee of the Whole monopolizes agenda control in Congress. I take this to represent the type of agenda control portrayed by Mayhew (1974) who sees appointees to agenda-setting offices (i.e. Speaker, majority party leader, and members of the Rules Committee) as agents for the entire House of Representatives who looked after the well-being

⁴ Egan (2007) offers strong support for this assumption. He shows that MCs are most sensitive to their districts in cases where their party has an issue position at odds with constituent interests and the opposition party's issue position is viewed more favorably in the district.

of the chamber as a whole. The second model, what Cox and McCubbins call the Party Cartel Model, considers legislator behavior when the majority party in Congress also exercises agenda control. In practice, this means that appointees to agenda-setting offices do not allow legislation to reach the floor for a vote if it is opposed by a majority of majority party members (even though there may be a congressional majority in favor of that legislation). Drawing upon these models, it is possible for me to assess theoretically when office-motivated politicians should cast votes that differentiate themselves from their party to advance their electoral interests under different systems of agenda control.

Model Preliminaries

There are five key assumptions shared by the two models. First, I assume that legislators confront a single public policy question, where the different policy choices can be represented as points along a left-right political continuum or issue dimension. There is a status quo point q that represents the reversion point that remains in force if the legislature fails to pass an alternative policy. Second, I assume that there are n members of the legislature. Each member of the legislature has an ideal point in the policy space representing their most preferred policy outcome and their utility for a public policy falls the greater the distance between their ideal point and the policy's location along the left-right continuum.⁵ Giving proponents of the view that MCs are narrow-minded reelection seekers the benefit of the doubt, I assume that each legislator's ideal point represents in some vague sense the position that she believes maximizes her reelection chances in the district, perhaps because it represents the policy position most-preferred by the median voter in her district or because it is the policy most-preferred by high demanders on that issue dimension back home. Third, I assume that there exists a coalition of legislators (to be defined below) with the ability to block bills from floor consideration, but that once a bill reaches the floor all members may introduce amendments. Fourth, I assume that the legislative process occurs in four stages: 1) some MC(s) introduce a bill on the

⁵ Specifically, I assume that legislators have city-block utility functions.

policy domain in question (presumably, the bill is referred from committee), 2) the agenda-setters decide whether to allow the bill onto the floor for further consideration, 3) if the bill receives floor consideration, amendments are offered and decided by majority rule, and 4) the floor chooses between the reversion point q and the bill as amended. Fifth, I assume that all players in the game know each others' preferences, the status quo point q , and the rules of the game.

Nicely, these assumptions allow for the application of the median voter theorem for each issue considered by a session of the legislature. That is, for each issue that the agenda-setter allows to reach the floor for vote consideration, some member (perhaps the median voter herself) will introduce the policy proposal most-preferred by the median voter in the chamber as the bill or as an amendment. By the assumptions of the model, no proposal can defeat the policy most-preferred by the median voter in a pairwise vote. Consequently, the spatial location of the bill (as introduced or as amended on the floor) considered for final passage is at the ideal point of the median voter in the chamber. Let F represent the location of the floor median in the policy space; the final passage vote is between q and F ; and F wins a majority of the votes in the legislature.

Since I believe that the electorate cares more about final passage votes than about procedural maneuvers leading up to that vote, I will focus my attention for now on the question of when legislators feel electoral pressure to cast votes that differentiate themselves from the rest of their party when choosing between q and F .⁶ To begin, it is useful to identify who sincerely prefers (recall,

⁶ One could certainly make the case that votes on amendments could also be considered potential campaign issues. I do not dwell on this possibility because procedural rules have shielded MCs from publicly casting tough votes on floor amendments. It was not until the early-1970s that roll call votes taken in the Committee of the Whole were recorded teller votes so, prior to that time, MCs had little reason to be concerned that these votes would come back to haunt them. Shortly after that reform which made the process of marking up legislation more transparent, the House made more frequent use of restrictive amendment procedures, including the closed rule. Bach and Smith (1989) tell us that part of the rationale for operating under these restrictive rules is that they prevent MCs from being forced to cast votes on amendments that embarrassed party leaders, either by revealing the extreme positions favored by some of its members or severe internal party divisions on key issues.

To the extent that special rules have prevented the introduction of amendments in the era of recorded teller votes, they provide further justification for my focus on final passage votes; however, they also violate my assumption that MCs are free to introduce amendments. My analysis of legislator incentives to buck their party on final passage votes would, fortunately, be unchanged if special rules have been used to improve legislative efficiency by preventing the introduction of amendments to centrist legislation. If, on the other

I assume that their preferences reflect constituency opinion on an issue dimension, not their personal values) to vote for F and who prefers to vote for q as a function of their location in the policy space: the spatial locations of legislators supporting and opposing F are identified in Figure 5.1 for the case where the status quo policy q_L is on the left side of F and for the case where the status quo policy q_R is to the right of F. Considering first legislators' choices between q_L and F, the standard spatial logic of voting implies that the midway point between these two policy choices represents a cut-point such that any actor to the left of $(q_L + F)/2$ prefers q_L and anyone to the right of $(q_L + F)/2$ prefers F. Similarly, the midway point between q_R and F is the location such that any legislator to the left of the cut-point $(q_R + F)/2$ prefers F to q_R and any legislator to the right of $(q_R + F)/2$ prefers q_R .

Building upon these insights, it is also possible to identify the set of policies that are majority and minority-party preferred. I define a policy x to be preferred by a party over a policy y if a majority of party members prefer x to y. It follows from this definition and the assumption of single-peaked preferences that a party preferred policy must also be preferred by the party member with the median ideal point on that issue dimension. Assuming that M is the ideal point of the median majority party member and m is the ideal point of the median minority party member, I summarize in Figure 5.2 the set of majority and minority-party preferred policies with respect to the status quo point q. Addressing the case of the majority party (the minority party case is symmetric to the majority party and not addressed here), if q is to the left of the point $2M - F$ then the cut-point is to the left of M which means that the median majority party member and every party member to the right of M (which together constitute a majority of the majority party) prefer F to q. On the other hand, if q is between $2M - F$ and F, then the cut-point $(q + F)/2$ is between M and F so that the median majority party member and every member of her party to the left of M (which together

hand, the majority party used special rules to pull policy away from the center of the chamber in the manner suggested by the theory of conditional party government (cf. Rohde 1991), then that is more consequential for my analysis. I take-up this issue below in my discussion of CPG.

Readers interested in analyzing MCs' incentives on those amendments that are considered by the Committee of the Whole can employ the methodology I develop in this Chapter. The only difference is that the bill should be treated as the status quo and the amendment should be treated as the policy proposal.

constitute a majority of the majority party) prefers q to F . Finally, for status quo locations to the right of the floor median, the cut-point is to the right of F so that M and every legislator to the left of M prefers F to q .

Given this set of results regarding the voting behavior of each MC and the action favored by each party when choosing between q and F , it is possible to identify the set of conditions that must be satisfied for a legislator to cast final passage votes that differentiate herself from the rest of her party in order to advance her electoral interests under different agenda-setting models.

Floor Agenda Model

Agenda-setting by the Committee of the Whole refers to the case where a majority of the entire chamber must vote to allow a bill (and its amendments) to come to the floor for voting—if they exercise their gate-keeping powers, the status quo point q remains law. Following Shepsle (1979), the main value of gate-keeping by the Committee of the Whole is to restrict the introduction of non-germane amendments that may create social choice problems in the legislature. For expositional purposes, however, the exercise of gate-keeping powers by the Committee of the Whole can be largely ignored because it is always true that a majority of the Committee of the Whole (weakly) prefers to allow the bill to come to the floor for a floor vote.⁷ This follows from the fact that the median voter can always introduce her ideal point as an amendment, and there is always a legislative majority who prefers the median voter's position to the status quo, so that the coalition favoring F to q ensures that legislation on that issue area reaches the floor.

To identify the spatial locations of legislators whose constituents want them to vote in accord with their party's preferred position and those who do not, it is useful to first decompose the policy space into six distinct parts which represent different possible ranges of values of the status quo point q . These six regions are presented in Figure 5.3 as q_1, \dots, q_6 , where q_1 represents the set of points to the left of $2M - F$, q_2 the set of points between $2M - F$ and M , etc. Having decomposed

⁷ I say that a majority of the Committee of the Whole weakly prefers to allow the bill to come to the floor because it is possible that $q = F$, so that all legislators are indifferent between q and F .

the space in this way, it is now possible to identify which legislators have split district-party loyalties on final passage votes as a function of different possible ranges of q .

Beginning with the left-most extreme region of the policy space, if $q \in q_1$, then by the results summarized in Figure 5.1 it follows that only those legislators representing districts to the left of $(q+F)/2$ prefer q to F and by the results presented in Figure 5.2 it also follows that F is preferred to q by both the majority and minority parties. Thus, as depicted in the top half of Figure 5.3 for the majority party and 5.4 for the minority party, all legislators representing districts whose ideal point is to the left of $(q+F)/2$ have split party-district loyalties and all legislators representing districts whose ideal is to the right of $(q+F)/2$ have unified party-district loyalties. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 also depicts the symmetric results for the case where $q \in q_6$ and legislators to the right of $(q+F)/2$ support q and have split party-district loyalties and legislators to the left of $(q+F)/2$ have unified party-district loyalties. Given the incentives discussed above, neither legislative supporters or opponents of F have incentives for credit claiming on the issue if q occupies an extreme location of the policy space because they either 1) voted with their party and free-ride on the organization's stance, 2) they voted against their party on an issue where they lost a lopsided vote, or 3) they voted against their constituency's preferences and prefer not to communicate that information.

Repeating this logical procedure for the case where $q \in q_2$ or q_3 , only those legislators representing districts with ideal points to the left of the cut-point $(q+F)/2$ have constituencies that prefer q to F , the majority party prefers q , and the minority party prefers F . As portrayed in Figures 5.3 and 5.4, majority party members representing districts with preferences to the right of $(q+F)/2$ and minority party members representing districts with preferences to the left of that cut-point have split party-district loyalties, and the resulting incentives for publicly distancing themselves from their party's position on the issue or for explaining their decisions. (The Figures also portray the symmetric results for the case where $q \in q_4$ or q_5 where majority party members to the right of $(q+F)/2$ and minority party members to the left of that cut-point have split loyalties.) On the other hand, majority party members representing districts with preferences to the left of $(q+F)/2$ and minority party

members representing districts with preferences to the right of that cut-point have unified party-district loyalties and the weak incentives for credit claiming that this implies.

Taken together, the important implication of these results from the Floor Agenda model for my purposes is that unless the status quo point is at either the far left or far right ends of the policy space, large numbers of party members would have strong incentives to vote against the preferences of their majority in order to best represent their districts. Thus, with agenda setting by the Committee of the Whole, familiar arguments about legislators' incentives to vote against their party and to communicate those votes to constituents are sound.

Party Cartel Model

Agenda-setting by the majority party describes the case where congressional leaders are granted gate-keeping powers to keep issue areas that divide the majority party from coming to the floor for consideration. Following Cox and McCubbins (2005), I examine here the case where congressional leaders exercise gate-keeping powers when a majority of majority party members prefer the status quo point q to the floor median F to prevent a bill or amendment from being introduced—as it inevitably would by the median voter logic—that shifts policy to F . As anticipated by Figure 5.2, this implies that legislative action is not allowed on issue dimensions where the status quo is located between $2M - F$ and F , or the area that Cox and McCubbins describe as the majority party 'blackout' zone. With the majority party exercising gate-keeping powers in this manner, legislator behavior on measures reaching the floor will not change. Thus, if $q \in q_1, q_4, q_5,$ or q_6 , then the results derived from the case where agenda control is exercised by the Committee of the Whole apply. If $q \in q_2$ or q_3 , on the other hand, then the majority party prevents legislative action on the floor on that issue dimension, and no voting take place.

According to the formal structure of this model, the voting behavior of legislators who aspire to best represent their constituents' preferences for reelection purposes is unchanged by majority party agenda control—it is just that the legislative gates remain closed in some issue areas.

Consequently, it is not immediately apparent that investments in private brand names would be meaningfully affected by this kind of behavior. However, it is straightforward to show that the exercise of gate-keeping power by the majority party has an important effect on the extent to which district pressures encourage MCs to defect from their party on roll call votes.

Consider first the incentives for majority party members to vote against their party as a function of q and their district's ideal point. For issues where $q \in q_1$, then no majority party member has an electoral incentive to vote against her party. If her district agrees with the party, then the member votes the party line and the district is satisfied with the decision. If her district disagrees with the party, then the member should still feel free to vote with the party because there is little reward to her from being on the bottom of a lopsided vote. For issues in the majority party's blackout zone (i.e. $q \in q_2$ or q_3), then majority party leaders exercise their gate-keeping powers to prevent divisive issues from reaching the floor. Finally, for issues where the status quo is to the right of the Floor median (i.e. $q \in q_4, q_5$, or q_6), those majority party members to the right of $(q+F)/2$ may have incentives to communicate their disapproval of the majority party's actions. Assuming that politicians do not represent districts whose preferences are more extreme (at least on important issues) than the median member of the opposition party, that means that only a small group of majority party members representing centrist districts whose ideal point is between $(q+F)/2$ and m when the status quo is to the right of the floor median feel strong electoral pressures to vote against their party. I summarize these results graphically in the bottom half of Figure 5.3.

Consider now the case of minority party members. For issues where the status quo point is extreme such that $q \in q_1$ (or q_6) minority party members representing districts whose ideal points are to the left of $(q + F)/2$ (right of $2F - q$) lack electoral incentives to communicate differences with their party because their vote places them on the bottom of a lopsided outcome; other MCs vote with the position preferred by their party and their district is pleased with that choice. For issues where the status quo is in the majority party blackout zone, majority party leaders exercise their agenda setting powers to prevent a floor vote so there is no voting record to campaign on. Finally,

for issues where the status quo is to the right of the floor median but not extreme (i.e. $q \in q_4$ or q_5), minority party members who represent districts to the left of $(q+F)/2$ do possess incentives to vote against their party. Echoing the majority party case, assuming that minority party members are very unlikely to represent an extreme district whose preferences are closer to the majority party (i.e. minority party members do not represent districts whose ideal point is to the left of M), it is once again a narrow range of centrist legislators who have electoral incentives to communicate their voting record to their district. These results are summarized in the bottom half of Figure 5.4.

Evidence for the Party Cartel Model

The comparison of the *Floor Agenda Model* and the *Party Cartel Model* clearly demonstrates that the locus of agenda-setting powers in Congress has important ramifications for incumbents' incentives to cast votes to appeal to district tastes. If Mayhew's ideas about the responsiveness of agenda-setting agents to the Committee of the Whole are correct, then MCs might frequently be placed in a situation where they would feel strong electoral pressure to vote against their party to advance the interests of their district, thereby buttressing the argument that parties cannot maintain reputations for being unified because of incumbents' preference to vote with their district. On the other hand, if Cox and McCubbins are correct that majority party leaders are agenda-setting agents who prevent measures opposed by a majority of its caucus from reaching the floor, then there will only be a relatively small group of centrist MCs in both parties who have electoral incentives to vote against the party line.

Fortunately for my theory, the evidence seems quite persuasive that agenda-setting agents do protect the majority party in the manner described by the *Party Cartel Model*. As noted in Chapter Two, party leaders in the House have had recourse to Reed's Rules, adopted in the 1890s, which grant the Speaker (and her partisan allies on the Rules Committee) the ability to restrict the flow of legislation onto the floor. Since that time, there have been very few instances where the Speaker, as head of the majority party, has allowed issues that are opposed by a substantial part of her party's

members from reaching the floor and that of those issues where the majority party gets “rolled” by the minority, they find that it is rarely the case that the measure is of any consequence (Cox and McCubbins 2005). The key implication of the majority party’s exercise of gate-keeping powers for the purposes of this Chapter is that most issues reaching final passage votes on the floor of Congress provide scant electoral motivation for most MCs to cast votes to protect private brand names that differentiate their activities from those of their party. Thus, parties can maintain high levels of party unity in government—a necessary condition for the creation of strong brand names—without asking politicians to sacrifice their electoral interests or resorting to coercive disciplinary tactics.

Special Rules and the Theory of Conditional Party Government

So far, my argument in this part of the Chapter has been that the exercise of gate-keeping power by the majority party—a power that I believe most scholars will readily admit the majority party possesses—is sufficient to maintain party brand names. An influential group of congressional party scholars consider parties to be even more influential in the policy-making process than simple “negative” agenda control might suggest. Proponents of the theory of conditional party government (cf. Cooper and Brady 1981; Rohde 1991) argue that under the right set of circumstances—high levels of agreement within the majority party and well-defined cleavages between majority and minority party members—majority party leaders will be empowered to pull policy away from the center of the chamber, toward policy positions favored by the center of their party. According to Rohde (1991), the most important of these powers is the ability to introduce restrictive special rules that allow majority party leaders to control amendment activity in the Committee of the Whole—a power that gives majority party leaders the ability to prevent floor consideration of the median voter position. If that claim is correct, this implies that there are circumstances, in contrast to the *Floor Agenda* and *Party Cartel Models*, where the alternative to the status quo considered at the final passage vote (the focus of my analysis above) is non-median. This possibility raises the question as to whether MCs are confronted with greater incentives to defect from the party line when the

conditions of conditional party government are satisfied, a matter of particular concern for my argument in this book because my view is that party brand names should be strongest when party unity is high.

To flesh out how the exercise of positive agenda control affects legislators' incentives to cast votes that differentiate themselves from the rest of their party when party unity is high, I develop a model of positive agenda control that I believe captures the main insights of conditional party government. To make this model comparable to that described above, I adopt the shared assumptions of the *Floor Agenda* and *Party Cartel* models (described in the *Model Preliminaries* section) with the exception that now MCs are not free to introduce whatever amendments they like. I assume instead that the legislature uses a closed rule where MCs are forced to choose between a proposal B and q; that B is chosen by the median member of the majority party located at M; that the agenda-setter can propose that B be anywhere in the policy space so long as it is sincerely preferred by a majority of majority party members; that the agenda-setting agent exercises her gate-keeping powers to prevent floor consideration of issues where there is no alternative to q that receives majority support of the majority party in a manner akin to the *Party Cartel* model; and that the agenda-setting agent seeks to maximize her own electoral well-being (i.e. she chooses B to be as close to M as possible).⁸

Based on these assumptions, it is helpful to first identify the conditions where the majority party's agenda-setting agent exercises her gate-keeping powers to prevent floor consideration of an issue where there exists no viable alternative to the status quo preferred by a majority of majority party voters. As depicted in Figure 5.5, if the status quo point is located anywhere to the left of M, then the agenda-setter will allow floor consideration of the issue area because there is a proposal (M, for example) that receives majority support of the majority party and majority support of the entire chamber. If the status quo is located between M and F, then the agenda-setter prevents floor

⁸ This is obviously not the most general model possible, but I think it suffices to illustrate the consequences of what Cox and McCubbins (2004) call the exercise of "positive" agenda-setting by the majority party for legislators' incentives to cast votes that differentiate themselves from other members of their party.

consideration of that issue area because the only policies preferred by a majority of the majority party over q are to the left of q while the only policies preferred by a legislative majority over q are to the right of q . Finally, if q is to the right of F , then the agenda-setter allows floor consideration of the bill because there exists a proposal (F , for example), that is preferred by a majority of the majority party and by the entire legislature. Thus, there are two regions outside the majority party blackout zone that should be considered when determining the possible effects of positive agenda control on legislators' incentives to cast votes that differentiate themselves from their party.

For the case where q is to the left of M , the electoral incentives for legislators to cast votes that differentiate themselves from their party are incredibly small under positive agenda-control. In this case, the agenda-setting agent proposes B to be her ideal point M , knowing that M defeats q and receives majority support from her party—she could personally do no better. The spatial location $(q + M)/2$ represents the cut-point such that all legislators to its left prefer q and all legislators to its right prefer B . Because $(q + M)/2$ is in an extreme region of the policy space, majorities of both parties prefer B to q . Following the logic developed for the *Party Cartel* and *Floor Agenda* models, it follows that neither party's members have strong electoral incentives to cast votes that differentiate themselves from their co-partisans in this circumstance: even if a legislator represented a district preferring q to B , she would have been on the bottom of a lopsided vote that provides little opportunities for credit claiming. It is also noteworthy that if $q < M$, the range of spatial locations where legislators might have split party-district loyalties is *smaller* because of the exercise of positive agenda control when compared to the *Party Cartel* and *Floor Agenda* models for both the majority and minority party.

For the case where q is to the right of F , positive agenda control has the potential to increase the number of majority party legislators and to decrease the number of minority party legislators with electoral incentives to differentiate themselves from their party. To illustrate this, it is necessary to first identify the proposal B introduced by the majority party's agenda-setting agent. Since $q > F$, the agenda-setter can propose any policy (weakly) to the right of both $2F - q$ and M and secure majority

support for her proposal from the entire legislature and the majority party. She therefore proposes B to be the leftmost winning proposal, $2F - q$, if $M < 2F - q$, and she propose B to be M otherwise because her ideal point defeats q in a pairwise vote and there is no other winning proposal that makes her better-off.⁹ In the former circumstance, all legislators to the left of the floor median F vote for B so that B is the majority party-preferred proposal and all legislators to the right of the floor median vote for q so that q is the minority party-preferred proposal. In the latter circumstance, all legislators to the left of $2M - q$ vote for B so B is the majority party-preferred proposal and all legislators to the right of $2M - q$ vote for q so q is the minority party-preferred proposal (except in the extreme cases where $q > 2m - F$ and $m - B < q - m$).

With these preliminary results for $q > F$, it is possible to assess whether a legislator has split party-district loyalties as a function of her ideal point. For the majority party, the analysis is straightforward: all majority party members to the right of F (or $(q+M)/2$ for extreme q or very centrist M) have electoral incentives to vote against the policy preferred by a majority of their own party, while all majority party members to the left of F lack these pressures. Notably, majority party members located between F and $(q+F)/2$ did not have split party-district loyalties under the party cartel model, but they do have electoral incentives to vote against the rest of their party because of the exercise of positive agenda control. Thus, on balance, the effect of positive agenda control on majority party members' electoral calculations is to increase the number of centrist legislators who have incentives to cast votes that differentiate themselves from the rest of their party and to communicate those differences to the public; however, it is still true that as in the party cartel model that it is only centrist members of the majority party with these kinds of incentives.

Turning to the minority party, it is necessary to consider both the case where a majority of its members vote for the B and the case where a majority of its members vote for q (recalling that I am still focused on the case where $q > F$). With regard to the former case, a majority of minority

⁹ Note that if the majority party chooses its median member to be the agenda-setting agent in the manner described here, it ensures that a majority of its members are made better-off by the application of the closed rule compared to the party cartel and floor agenda-models.

party members prefers B to q only if $q > 2m-F$ and $m-B < q-m$. If q is in this area (a very extreme part of the policy space even compared to region q_6 which I considered in the models without positive agenda control), minority party members lack electoral incentives to buck their party and vote for q either because they can vote with their party for B or because they will be on the bottom of a badly lopsided vote. If q is in the part of the policy space to the right of F where a majority of minority party members vote for q over B, then minority party members to the left of $(B + q)/2$ do have electoral incentives to cast votes to differentiate themselves from the rest of their party. In contrast to the majority party case where it increased member incentives to vote against their party, for minority party members between $(B+q)/2$ and $(F+q)/2$, the exercise of positive agenda control removed the electoral incentives to cast votes to differentiate members from the rest of their party.

In sum, the exercise of positive agenda control by the majority party does have the potential to create situations where majority party members have electoral incentives to vote against the position favored by the rest of their party in a manner detrimental to their shared brand name; however, I do not believe that this undermines my argument that agenda control by the majority party prevents it from maintaining high levels of party unity in Congress. To understand why, I think it is important to reiterate that the only circumstance when positive agenda control encourages defection from the party line occurs when the reversion point q and the median member of the majority party are on opposite sides of F, in which case majority party members with centrist ideal points between q and $(q + F)/2$ (or $(q + M)/2$ for extreme q or centrist M) may have split party-district loyalties on final passage votes under positive agenda control which they did not have under the basic *Party Cartel Model*. In all other cases, the incentives of MCs from both parties to cast votes contrary to the party line are either unchanged or weakened by positive agenda control. Furthermore, in the one exceptional case, I think it is also important to remember that, according to extant theory, positive agenda control is most likely to be granted with sharp inter-party cleavages and high levels of intra-party unity in Congress. This means that there will be relatively few majority party members on the “wrong” side of the floor median—in fact, the number of majority party members with split

party district loyalties on those kinds of issues would not much exceed the surplus legislators the majority party needs to pass the measure, and many of these legislators would have had split party-district loyalties without positive agenda control.¹⁰ Thus, even if Congress were to be confronted with a large number of issues where the status quo point was far away from the policies preferred by large numbers of majority party member (a situation I believe is most likely to occur after a change in the identity of the ruling party), the use of positive agenda setting power would be unlikely to encourage substantially greater defection rates than observed under simple negative agenda control because that power is only granted when a party is highly unified on the issues of the day.

Who Develops Private Brand Names?

To this point in the Chapter, I have focused on responding to various arguments that could be made in support of the claim that party brand names cannot be signals of candidate quality because electoral politics in the United States is candidate-centered. Accordingly, I have demonstrated that relatively few voters have sufficient knowledge about individual politicians to cast votes based on private brand names which means that the vast number of ordinary voters need some sort of credible cue—like a party label—to inform their vote choices. I have also shown that agenda control by the majority party greatly increases the credibility of partisan cues because the exercise of gate-keeping powers by party leaders protects the party's collective reputation by reducing the need for most MCs to cast votes contrary to the party line because of electoral considerations. Thus, in the absence of contrary information, I believe that it may be rational for voters to trust a candidate's party affiliation as a predictor of her future behavior in that it provides information about the

¹⁰ For example, if 435 MCs cast votes on a measure decided by majority rule, then the surplus number of legislators would be equal to the majority party's size less the 218 votes needed to pass the legislation. Since the 104th Congress, that surplus has never exceeded 15. In prior Congresses, when the Democrats had larger seat shares, holding constant district preferences (and the conditions of CPG), the median majority party member M would be much closer to F . As a result, it is much more likely that, for an issue chosen at random, the majority party agenda-setter prefers M to $(2F-q)/2$ and the number of cross-pressured majority party members between q and $(q+M)/2$ would shrink greatly.

distribution of possible positions that she might take in office despite the fact that not all party members act in the same way.

My argument for the remainder of this Chapter is that the reason that voters have such poor knowledge about their Representatives in Congress is that incumbents have very weak incentives to invest in private brand names because they can campaign on their party's record. This argument proceeds from the following pair of observations. First, I believe that there are tradeoffs between actions that raise a candidate's political profile, strengthening her brand name, and other types of activities that improve her reelection prospects. For example, someone who spends all of their time raising money for large ad buys come reelection time is not securing federal money for her district and is not developing a reputation as a hard worker deserving of advancement within the party ranks. This means that a politician who does not often disagree with her party on key issues may find the opportunity costs of securing a private brand name are greater than the benefits of publicly differentiating herself from her co-partisans. Second, I believe that incumbent politicians' voting records are not perfect reflections of constituency opinion in their district. Instead, I believe that it is reasonably well-established that legislative records reflect a combination of personal political preferences, partisan and interest-group pressures, and district opinion (e.g. Arnold 1990; Kingdon 1981). Consequently, many legislators may prefer to not make their legislative record a campaign issue.

Given these two observations, I believe that it is possible to generate some straightforward predictions about how a legislators' voting record relative to the rest of her party affects her incentives to invest in private brand names. Considering the entirety of House members' voting records, centrist legislators are by definition actors who sometimes votes in accord with the preferences of their party and sometimes votes against their party with that preferred by the opposition party. These individuals have a voting record that differentiates themselves from their party and, if they vote with their district, their record is preferred by their constituents to the position of the opposition party, which means that they have incentives to inform the public that they do not

share the party's position on the issue. If they develop a centrist record by voting against constituent interests, then they have a lot of explaining to do about their actions, especially when facing a viable challenger who is pointing to that record as a reason to reject the incumbent's reelection bid. A partisan legislator, on the other hand, is someone who typically votes with her party, regardless of what the opposition does. Legislators who closely toe the party line have weaker incentives to invest in private brand names than centrists because their voting records do not provide information that usefully differentiates their actions from those of their co-partisans so their time might be better-spent on other types of activities. Finally, an extremist legislator is someone who votes with her party most of the time, but when she defects it is on issues where her action diverges from that of both their party and the opposition. These individuals have the weakest incentives to invest in private brand names. On most issues, they vote with their party; however, when they vote contrary to its preferences, they will typically be on the bottom of lopsided votes. Consequently, on those issues where there are differences between their voting record and that of their party, they do not want to communicate that information to the public. At best, their voting record (relative to the rest of Congress) creates the impression that they are ineffective coalition builders, and at worst, they are extremists out of step with the preferences of their district and their party.

Campaign Contacts and Candidate Extremism

If the theoretical intuitions developed above are correct, then legislators like Chris Shays (R-Connecticut) and Heath Shuler (Democrat-North Carolina) with centrist voting records will have the strongest incentives to engage in costly effort to boost their name recognition and to communicate differences with their party and extremists the weakest such incentives. As a first cut at testing this claim, I investigate whether individuals who are represented by legislators with centrist voting records are more likely to report some sort of contact with their incumbent while people who are represented by legislators with extremist voting records are less likely to do so. To this end, I estimate a series of probit models where the dependent variable is whether a respondent to the

ANES reports having some sort of *Contact* with an incumbent candidate using data from 1978 to 1994, except for 1982 and 1992 which were years when redistricting makes it more difficult to match incumbents with their district. Contact includes everything from having met the incumbent personally, to attending a meeting with her, to talking to her staff, to receiving mail from her, to reading about her, to hearing radio about her, or to seeing her on television. Initially, I include only year fixed effects to capture the consequences of over-time variation in the political context and the main independent variable of interest—the *Ideological Extremism* of the respondent's incumbent House member which I measure using the absolute value of the politician's DW-Nominate score for the current Congress—as predictors for *Contact*. My research hypothesis is that *Ideological Extremism* is negatively related to an incumbent making contact with her constituents because an extremists have the weakest incentives to invest in a private brand name. In subsequent analyses, I elaborate the model to ensure that the original model estimates are not especially sensitive to the presence of other variables that may affect *Contact*. The variables that I consider are the presence of a quality challenger in the election and whether the respondent and the incumbent are of the *Same Party*. Following common practice in the literature, I define a person to be a *Quality Challenger* if they had previously held elective office which provides some evidence of her ability to organize a political campaign and muster public support for her candidacy to office.¹¹ I hypothesize that a *Quality Challenger* will be positively related to *Contact* between the incumbent and the respondent because I believe that the presence of a serious electoral threat may force incumbents to campaign harder, thereby making contact with more people (see also Jacobson 2004). I hypothesize that *same party* will be positively related to *contact* because I believe that incumbents are likely to target campaign appeals to partisan audiences who are likely to be favorably disposed toward their candidacy in order to turnout the vote and that voters are more likely to seek out help from candidates who belong to the same party (see also Box-Steffensmeier, et al).¹² Because the variable *Same Party* is measured using a multiplicative

¹¹ Briefly discuss why this variable might be preferred.

¹² A person is defined to be a Democrat (Republican) if she self-identifies as a Democrat (Republican) or as someone who leans Democratic (or Republican).

interaction between *Respondent* and *Incumbent Partisanship*, following standard modeling practices I also include the constitutive elements of the interaction between respondent and incumbent partisanship in my analysis. I do not include other respondent-level variables in the analysis because I believe factors like a survey respondent's political interest, socioeconomic status, etc., will be uncorrelated with the behavior of politicians trying to appeal to a wide audience and are only a distraction from my arguments.¹³

The first four columns of Table 5.2 reports the results from the various statistical analyses testing whether *Contact* is a function of the incumbent's *Ideological Extremism* and other variables. Reading across the first row of the Table reveals that *ideological extremism* is a statistically significant, negative predictor of candidate contact in every specification of the model, just as hypothesized. Confirming the results of previous studies, I also find that the presence of a *Quality Challenger* and a respondent's membership in the *Same Party* as the incumbent both have a significant positive effect on *Contact*. To give some substantive meaning to the effect of *Ideological Extremism* on *Contact*, I use predicted values from the fullest specification of the model (column 4). For the case where there is no *Quality Challenger* and the incumbent and the respondent are of different parties¹⁴, the predicted probability of *Contact* by the incumbent varies from 0.85 when *Ideological Extremism* is at its minimum value to 0.67 when *Ideological Extremism* is at its maximum value. For the case where there is a *Quality Challenger*, the predicted probability of *Contact* increases only slightly, to .85 when *Ideological Extremism* is at its minimum, and to 0.70 when *Ideological Extremism* is at its maximum value.¹⁵ Thus, the extremism of an incumbent's legislative record has about five-times the effect on their probability of

¹³ Box-Steffensmeier, et al, (2003) found little support for the claim that respondent-level variables interacted with legislator characteristics in models of contact.

¹⁴ The baseline year for the predicted values is 1980, the incumbent is a Democrat, and the respondent is an independent without partisan leaning.

¹⁵ I consider the possibility that *Ideological Extremism* is a better measure for safe-seats than the presence of a quality challenger—the logic being that a legislator could take more extreme positions if she did not fear a general election threat. However, when I include the incumbents lagged vote share, that coefficient is significant, but the large significant effects from *Ideological Extremism* persist. The robustness of my inference concerning *Ideological Extremism* is anticipated by the literature, which finds—contrary to what one might expect—that incumbent ideologues are significantly more vulnerable than centrists in their reelection bids.

making *Contact* with a resident in their district than the presence of a viable opposition candidate who, one might expect, would induce greater campaign efforts by the incumbent because of the presence of a stronger electoral threat.

Candidate Message and Incumbent Extremism

A second perspective on candidates' investments in private brand names that differentiate themselves from their party in government is provided by the content of the messages they send to their district. If the theoretical claims provided above are correct, then I expect that incumbents will typically communicate positive messages about congressional actions when they are in the majority and negative messages when they are in the minority. However, I expect that centrist MCs will endeavor to communicate to constituents their support for congressional actions opposed by their party if they belong to the minority and their opposition to congressional actions supported by their party if they belong to the majority. More loyal partisans, on the other hand, will simply try to persuade voters that their party supported desirable public policies.

Nice support for this set of arguments is provided in Lipinski (2004)'s careful study of congressional communications as reflected in franked mail for the period from 1991 through 1995. Contrary to the popular view that MCs run against Congress, Lipinski shows that this phenomenon broke along purely partisan lines—fewer than 5 percent of majority party members sent negative messages about Congress in any given year and that includes 1994 when, in anticipation of a Republican congressional takeover, Democratic Party members would have had particularly strong incentives to campaign against the chamber. Meanwhile, he finds that more than 60% of majority party members said positive things. In contrast, he finds that, on average, fewer than 20% of minority party members said positive things about Congress while more than 40% of majority party members did so. Thus, the messages sent by the overwhelming number of MCs were partisan in content (Lipinski 2004, p. 42). Consistent with my theoretical expectations, Lipinski (2004, pg. 51) notes that the exception to this general pattern are party members who most often vote against the

rest of their party on key issues: he finds that majority party members in this situation are less likely to communicate positive messages to their district and that minority party members are more likely to do so.¹⁶

Name Recognition and Candidate Extremism

Taking a different approach to the question of whether an incumbent's ideological extremity affects the strength of her private brand name, I address whether ideologues have lower name recognition than centrist politicians. The conventional wisdom would presumably be that ideologues stick out like sore thumbs in government and would be well known by the residents in their district as a result; according to my account, however, I expect name recognition to be a decreasing function of ideological extremism because of the incentives that they provide candidates to invest in the development of private 'brand names.'

To adjudicate between these rival hypotheses, I estimate a series of probit models where the dependent variable is whether a respondent to the ANES is able to *Recall* the name of their incumbent House member (who was running for reelection) using data from 1978 through 2004. As above, *Recall* is measured using a respondent's ability to elicit from memory the name of their House incumbent. Initially, I include only year fixed effects to capture the effect of over-time variation in the political context and the main independent variable of interest—the *Ideological Extremism* of the respondent's incumbent House member which I measure using the absolute value of the politician's DW-Nominate score for the current Congress—as predictors for candidate name recognition. My research hypothesis is that when averaging across districts nationwide, *Ideological Extremism* will be negatively related to respondent's ability to *Recall* and *Recognize* their incumbent's name.¹⁷ In a second

¹⁶ Lipinski does find that incumbents who represent a district that is more hostile toward their party are more likely to send negative (positive) messages about Congress if they are in the majority (minority); however, he also demonstrates that this effect is limited to district-wide mailings, and that when incumbents find themselves in this situation they increase their use of targeted mailings that bolster their party's image to the most loyal partisans in their district (2004, pg. 54).

¹⁷ I do not report the results of models which include respondent-level covariates because the characteristics of individual voters are very poorly correlated with the attributes of House members

model, I test the hypothesis that non-centrist incumbents' name recognition will be greater if they confront *Quality Challengers*, based on the logic that the challenger has incentives to campaign against the incumbent's record in office (for much the same reason that non-centrist legislators do not want to do so) which requires them to inform the public about the incumbent's name so that people do not vote based simply on party labels. To test for the effects of competent challengers on incumbent candidates' name recognition, I estimate a probit model with *Recall* as the dependent variables and include as independent variables the incumbent's *Ideological Extremism*, whether the incumbent faces a *quality challenger*, and a variable measuring the multiplicative interaction of *Ideological Extremism* and *Quality Challenger*. My research hypothesis is that the interaction between *Ideological Extremism* and *Quality Challenger* will be positive. Finally, as a robustness check, I estimate a third probit model which includes a host of variables that previous research (e.g. Jacobson 2004; Box-Steffensmeier, et al. 2003) suggests might affect an incumbent's name recognition, including the total amount spent on the election campaign, whether the incumbent is a freshman or more *Senior*, and whether the respondent reported having *Contact* with the incumbent.

Table 5.4 reports the results of the statistical analyses for candidate name recognition as a function of her political extremism and other variables. The first column of the table reports the estimated effect of *Ideological Extremism* on *Recall* averaged across all candidates. As I hypothesized, *Ideological Extremism* has a significant negative effect on *Recall*. In concrete terms, for centrist incumbents who have an *Ideological Extremism* score of zero, the probability that a respondent could *Recall* their name is .35; for individuals with *Ideological Extremism* scores of one, the probability that a respondent recalls her name falls by a third to .22.

The second column of the table reports the results of the model taking into account how the presence of a *Quality Challenger* affects respondent *Recall* of centrist and non-centrist incumbents. Consistent with my argument that the presence of a quality challenger boosts the name recognition of ideologically extreme House members, the interaction term between *Ideological Extremism* and

so their exclusion will not bias my results, while their inclusion would be distracting. My results are not changed in any meaningful way if I add individual-level data.

Quality Challenger is significant and positively signed. Substantively speaking, the probability that someone recalls the name of a centrist incumbent is insensitive to challenger quality, varying from .37 without a *Quality Challenger* to .38 with a quality challenger; however the probability that someone recalls the name of an ideologue is very sensitive to the presence of a quality challenger, varying from .20 without a *Quality Challenger* to .38 with a *Quality Challenger*.

The third column of the table reports the results of the statistical analysis taking into account a respondent's self-reported contact with the incumbent and the incumbent's seniority in the House. With these control variables, the results are even more supportive of my hypotheses. For example, with a senior incumbent who makes contact with a respondent, the probability that a respondent *Recalls* the name of a centrist politician decreases slightly from 0.44 without a quality challenger to 0.41 with a quality challenger while the probability that a respondent *Recalls* the name of an extremist politician increases greatly from 0.30 without a *Quality Challenger* to 0.50 with a *Quality Challenger*. The conclusion that I draw from these analyses is that incumbents with the most extreme voting records prefer to run simply as partisans, and that they are exposed as ideologues by quality challengers hoping to capture their seats.

The Incumbency Advantage and Incumbent Extremism

Perhaps the most striking thing about more ideologically extreme incumbents making less of an effort to contact constituents, campaigning as partisans, and having lower name recognition is that they are sacrificing many of the benefits commonly associated with the incumbency advantage. This naturally raises the question whether candidates' behavior is really a strategic response given their voting record—perhaps they are just in safe districts so they do not need to exploit their office to its fullest potential when running for reelection.

There is pretty strong evidence in the extant literature which supports my argument that ideologically extreme incumbents perform less well than centrist politicians when running for

reelection (e.g. Canes-Wrone, et al, 2002; Erikson and Wright 2000)¹⁸ which is inconsistent with the notion that seat security alone drives this behavior.¹⁹ The standard explanation provided in these studies for why extremist incumbents perform less well at the polls is that voters are holding them accountable for their legislative record. I agree that this kind of direct effect may exist; however, I believe that the effect that legislative records have on the strategic choices of incumbents (and challengers) with respect to their relationships with constituents has an indirect effect on their electoral prospects. Previous work has established that candidate name recognition has an effect on vote choices that is on par with a voter's party identification and greater than incumbency status (e.g. Jacobson 2004, pg. 135). Given my findings above regarding how ideological extremism affects the probability that incumbents make contact with residents in their district, their overall name recognition, and the content of their campaign messages, it is entirely possible that extremist incumbents fare so poorly in elections because their legislative records prevent them from reaping the full rewards of incumbency status. The value-added of my account of indirect effects is that it explains why voters who know very little about their incumbent's actions in office are less likely to vote for MCs with extremist records.

The Decline of Party?

The main point of this Chapter has been to show that incumbent politicians typically have weak incentives to invest scarce campaign resources trying to communicate to the public that their legislative record provides credible information that they are somehow distinct from the rest of their party. At a glance, the well-documented breakdown in party-line voting in congressional elections that took place during the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Bartels 1999) and the attendant rise in the

¹⁸ Along these same lines, Brady, et al, (1996) and Jacobson (1996) find in their study of the 1994 House elections that Democrats with very high party unity scores are also prone to electoral retaliation.

¹⁹ Although some analysts suggest that this may be a pattern restricted to the period since the 1960s (Ansolabere, et al 2001).

incumbency advantage (Mayhew 1974b; Gelman and King 1990; Cox and Katz 2002) would seem to challenge this argument.

The arguments developed in this book can be reconciled with the breakdown in party-line voting in two very different ways. One possibility is that candidate partisanship ceased to be seen as a credible signal of their legislative intentions during the 1960s and 1970s. As noted in Chapter Three, during this period the level of internal party disagreements within both the Democratic and Republican Parties' congressional caucuses grew markedly and there was an attendant decline in the number of strong partisans in the electorate. Consequently, voters may have come to believe that the national parties either lacked the institutional capacity to maintain discipline in government or that the party organizations no longer valued their reputations sufficiently to incur the costs of policing their memberships.

An alternative explanation for the decline in party-line voting that also accords with the arguments in this book is that, for reasons I will discuss in greater detail in the next Chapter, during the middle-twentieth century a large number of incumbents found themselves belonging to parties that were not a good match ideologically with their electoral districts. This was especially true of Southern Democrats, who increasingly found themselves representing conservative constituencies with policy preferences at odds with their national party. Following the formal logic presented above, these ideologically mismatched MCs had very strong electoral incentives to cast votes that differentiated themselves from the rest of their party and to invest heavily in private brand names that communicated that disagreement to constituents. As a result of investments in private brand names, it was possible for these incumbents to successfully win the votes of people who might normally have supported the other party's candidates, especially in light of the fact that their challengers would have been at a disadvantage (compared to challengers at other points in history) because the high levels of internal party conflict would have increased risk-averse voters' uncertainty about the attributes of candidates within that party. Party brand names therefore may have still

existed during the period of party decline, but they were viewed by professional politicians as being less valuable than in the generations before and after.

Overall, I tend to favor the latter explanation for the decline in party-line voting because I do not find the evidence to be very strong that voters ceased to find candidates' party affiliations to provide a credible signal of their political positions. This follows from my belief that if voters were to stop interpreting partisan cues as credible signals of unknown quality, then partisan electoral tides would have ceased to exist. As I argued in Chapters One and Two, if voters do not depend on party labels to establish the credibility of a candidate's campaign stance, then they should simply cast votes in retaliation against incumbents who voted for an unpopular (or against a popular) policy regardless of their party ties. Since partisan electoral tides persisted during the so-called "period of party decline (e.g. Claggett, et al. 1984; Cox and McCubbins 1993)," in many cases occurring when candidates from both parties have supported unpopular programs (e.g. the tide against Reagan during the 1982 recession whose economic policies received strong Republican and Southern Democratic support), I believe that voters continued to depend upon partisan cues to establish that the out-party might be the better option. Furthermore, if partisanship ceased to convey credible information about candidates, then I would expect to find a dramatic increase in the number of successful independent and third-party candidates who could compete with little disadvantage against their partisan opponents. However, there is little evidence to support the claim that third-party candidates had become more viable in congressional elections during this period. To the contrary, by some measures the 1960s and 1970s marked the nadir in public support for candidates not belonging to one of the major political parties (Aldrich 1995).

Conclusion

My goal in this Chapter has been to explain why it is that, even though all politicians would like to have a reputation perfectly suited to their district, many of them do not compete on the basis of private brand names. I have argued that the establishment of private brand names involves

opportunity costs to legislators (or, given how out-of-step their legislative record is vis their constituents, may even prove damaging). With the congressional leadership exercising control over the legislative agenda to prevent MCs from having to choose between partisan and constituent interests, I have shown that most incumbents campaign on the basis of their party record rather than incurring the costs of creating a private brand name. The exception to this general rule are those (typically centrist) politicians whose legislative record gives them an advantage over less experienced challengers who cannot offer credible signals of their commitment to a set of principles other than provided by her party affiliation.

One important implication of these arguments is that it provides a response to Keith Krehbiel's influential critique of research arguing in favor of the point of view that political parties are important for the organization of Congress (cf. Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Rohde 1991; Sinclair 2006; Aldrich and Rohde 1999). Krehbiel's argument is that it would not be rational for legislators to agree to the creation of partisan institutions that could coerce them into casting a vote that places their reelection prospects in jeopardy. In particular, he argues that MCs would not want to be forced into voting contrary to their districts' interests because, according to the classic logic of the spatial model of party competition where the credibility of candidate campaign promises is taken for granted, it would be quite straightforward for a challenger to exploit any vote contrary to district interests to realize significant electoral gains (cf. Krehbiel 1993).

The insight on Krehbiel's critique provided by the current Chapter is that if 1) the majority party exercises agenda control to keep issues that divide the party off the agenda, 2) challengers are saddled with their party's brand name, and 3) there are some benefits from party unity (from a stronger brand name, perhaps), then it would be rational for MCs to agree to the establishment of a party control apparatus. To see this, consider why a party might want to discipline a member representing a district with extreme preferences on some issue (e.g. a Republican MC representing a very conservative district) that are at odds with their party's position, so the district will be made worse-off policy wise regardless of how the incumbent votes because majorities of both parties will

support the measure. In this instance, I do not believe that the Representative of that district would be subject to retaliation at the polls by voting with her party because it would be extremely difficult for either a primary or general election challenger to provide credible evidence that they would have voted against their own party if placed in the same situation. Absent strong electoral pressures from her constituents, this Representative could still believe that it is in her best-interest at the margin to take a principled stand in support of her district's preferences without intervention from the party because the benefit to her from a small improvement in party unity would be insignificant; however, if pressed by the party leadership, she could not credibly claim to be placing her seat in jeopardy by voting contrary to the party line. Meanwhile, party leaders who know that this MC is not placing her seat in jeopardy prefer that she toe the party line to improve the organization's brand name—an outcome that would be of benefit to all party members. Because the benefit of voting with the district is so small in this case, I believe that party leaders can secure this MCs vote with a relatively small amount of coercion and that all party members would prefer that their leadership have the capacity to impose moderate levels of party discipline.

A similar argument can be made about why a party would allocate resources to its leadership to discipline legislators whose constituents prefer that she votes with the opposition party on some issue. Admittedly, the legislator who voted with her party on that issue would be placed at some disadvantage relative to a general election challenger whose party affiliation would provide a credible signal that she would vote in a manner consistent with her district's interests. Because the individual legislator has a very small effect on her party's reputation, she would therefore prefer, *ceteris paribus*, to vote with her district (and would prefer not to be punished by her party). That being said, most issues are not salient enough for a MC to anticipate severe electoral consequences, especially if she represents a district that otherwise favors her party's issue positions which would greatly disadvantage a challenger saddled with his party's brand name, so in most instances the party could retain the seat if she voted the party-line. However, the individual legislator with local knowledge is better-positioned to anticipate the blowback than her party's leadership. To the extent that it is

optimal for the party if an MC votes the party line unless it jeopardizes her seat, and because the individual legislator has private information about her district's preferences, the optimal strategy would be to empower party leaders to mete out modest punishments whenever someone defects (or, equivalently, to reward party loyalty over the long-term). The result would be an incentive system whereby individual legislators would be encouraged to make the decision that is optimal for the party, even when they vote their district's interests.²⁰

²⁰ There is one important caveat to this line of argument about the desirability of a party control apparatus in government. It is possible that a party may have a class of legislators who consistently votes against their party in order to reflect district interests (and the party would not want to make an exception for these legislators, because all legislators would claim that they are in the same position). In this circumstance, the sum total of the punishments that these legislators incur could place their seats in jeopardy because a general election challenger could credibly claim to vote the same way and bring home goodies from the party. When confronted with this situation, I believe that the optimal response from the party would depend on 1) the size of the majority party and 2) the number of legislators affected. If the number of legislators affected does not determine partisan control of the chamber, then it might be optimal for the party to risk sacrificing those seats. However, if the party found itself in a situation where there were large numbers of members receiving regular, severe punishments, then it would presumably be in its interest to lessen the penalties it inflicts on defectors. Sadly for the party, this would exacerbate the damage already done to its brand name by the large number of defectors.

Table 5.1. Incumbent MCs' Name Recognition

	Could not Recall Incumbent's Name % (n)	Could not Place Incumbent on Feeling Therm. % (n)	Could not Place President on Feeling Therm. % (n)
1970	66.55 (1294)		
1974	62.74 (1938)		
1978	67.42 (1937)	21.58 (1999)	2.18 (2155)
1980	66.51 (1261)	17.87 (1297)	0.58 (1482)
1982	65.20 (1186)	20.39 (1225)	1.33 (1298)
1984	69.16 (1680)	17.85 (1719)	1.29 (2073)
1986	74.62 (1866)	22.72 (1925)	0.68 (1980)
1988	69.58 (1572)	15.36 (1620)	2.07 (1899)
1990	75.84 (1670)	19.28 (1737)	0.88 (1850)
1992	68.06 (669)	16.49 (681)	0.68 (979)
1994	69.64 (1458)	17.12 (1496)	0.44 (1706)
1996	52.06 (1319)	23.00 (1557)	0.37 (1659)
1998	77.38 (1085)	26.28 (1120)	0.33 (1186)
2000	74.82 (1342)	22.34 (1391)	0.59 (1730)
2002		15.96 (1177)	0.28 (1415)
2004		18.90 (897)	0.52 (1159)
Overall	68.61 (13,933)	19.81 (19,839)	0.94 (23,567)

Source: ANES Cumulative Data File and Gary Jacobson. Cell values are the weighted percentages and case counts of respondents either able to recall the House incumbents' name or who were able to place politicians on feeling thermometers.

Table 5.2. Percentage of Respondents Able to Place Both the Incumbent and Themselves on Scale.

	Liberal-Conservative	Women's Role	Aid to Blacks	Government Services and Spending	Gov't Guaranteed Jobs and Std of Living
1978	54.25 (2000)	56.51 (1995)	52.30 (2000)		52.27 (2002)
1980	54.12 (1149)	55.68 (1289)	48.26 (1291)		54.42 (1291)
1982	55.75 (1216)	53.40 (1221)	54.62 (1223)	54.17 (1230)	52.29 (1223)
1984				44.70 (863)	47.78 (857)
1986	45.77 (1925)			48.22 (1923)	
1988					
1990	52.28 (1741)			49.51 (1749)	
1992					
1994	39.18 (1476)			39.62 (1503)	35.40 (1489)
1996	49.52 (1361)			48.81 (1367)	
1998	44.59 (1122)	43.87 (1116)		40.66 (1122)	42.18 (1118)
2000	45.58 (594)			50.76 (696)	
2002					
2004	42.25 (897)			35.60 (899)	
Overall	48.80 (13480)	53.16 (5621)	51.77 (4514)	46.14 (11352)	47.58 (7980)

Source: ANES Cumulative Data File. Cell values are the weighted percentages and case counts.

Table 5.3. Probit models for probability that a person reports contact with an incumbent

Coefficient (standard error)	Contact by Incumbent	Contact by Incumbent	Contact by Incumbent	Contact by Incumbent	Contact by Incumbent
Ideological Extremism	-0.46* (0.08)	-0.46* (0.08)	-0.49* (0.08)	-0.51* (0.08)	-0.54* (0.09)
Quality Challenger		0.09* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.09)	0.09* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.10)
Qual Chal * Extremism			0.41 (0.28)		0.40 (0.28)
Respondent Partisanship				-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Incumbent Partisanship				-0.17* (0.06)	-0.17* (0.06)
Same Party				0.06* (0.01)	0.06* (0.01)
1978	-0.10 (0.05)	-0.10* (0.05)	-0.10 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)
1984	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.07)
1986	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
1988	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.1 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
1990	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)
1994	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
Constant	0.95* (0.05)	0.94* (0.05)	0.95* (0.05)	0.97* (0.06)	0.98 (0.06)
χ^2	37.61*	42.54*	44.69*	66.33*	68.29*
n	10,595	10,584	10,584	10,349	10,349

Source: ANES Cumulative Data File, Poole and Rosenthal's DW-Nominate Scores, and Jacobson's data on candidate quality. Cell values are probit coefficients. 1980 is the omitted year—data is missing for other years due to redistricting. * Statistically significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

Table 5.4. Probit Models for Incumbent Name Recognition

Coefficient (standard error)	Recall Incumbent	Recall Incumbent	Recall Incumbent	Recall Incumbent	Placement on Feeling Therm.	Placement on Feeling Therm.	Placement on Feeling Therm.
Ideological Extremism	-0.33* (0.06)	-0.40* (0.07)	-0.36* (0.07)	-0.46* (0.08)	-0.42* (0.07)	-0.61* (0.09)	-0.16* (0.08)
Quality Challenger		-0.02 (0.06)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.07)		-0.14 (0.08)	-0.59* (0.09)
Qual Chal * Extremism		0.47* (0.18)	0.44* (0.18)	0.48* (0.19)		0.80* (0.22)	0.75* (0.22)
Not a Freshman			0.08* (0.03)	0.09* (0.03)			0.16* (0.04)
Total Spend				1.21*10 ⁻⁷ * (2.34*10 ⁻⁸)			1.39*10 ⁻⁷ (2.83*10 ⁻⁸)
1970	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.06)					
1974	0.18* (0.05)	0.22* (0.06)					
1978	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)			-0.14* (0.05)	-0.10 (0.06)	
1984	-0.05 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)			0.02 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)	
1986	-0.23* (0.05)	-0.16* (0.05)			-0.19* (0.05)	-0.16* (0.06)	
1988	-0.06 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)			0.10 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	
1990	-0.27* (0.05)	-0.25* (0.05)			-0.06 (0.05)	-0.10 (0.06)	
1994	-0.05 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)			0.09 (0.06)	0.05 (0.06)	
1996	0.46* (0.05)	0.50* (0.05)			-0.03 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	
1998	-0.21* (0.05)	-0.12 (0.06)			-0.19* (0.06)	-0.12 (0.07)	
2000	-0.24* (0.05)	-0.24 (0.05)			-0.08 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.06)	
2004					0.09 (0.07)	0.13 (0.07)	
Constant	-0.40* (0.04)	1.14* (0.05)			1.06* (0.05)	1.13* (0.07)	
χ²	441.31*	408.88*			114.38*	111.42*	151.15*
N	19467	14419			15914	12733	12324

Source: ANES Cumulative Data File, Poole and Rosenthal's DW-Nominate Scores, and Jacobson's data on candidate quality. Cell values are probit coefficients. 1980 is the omitted year—data is missing for other years either due to redistricting or absence of relevant survey data. * Statistically significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

Figure 5.1. The location of cut-points in the spatial model of voting

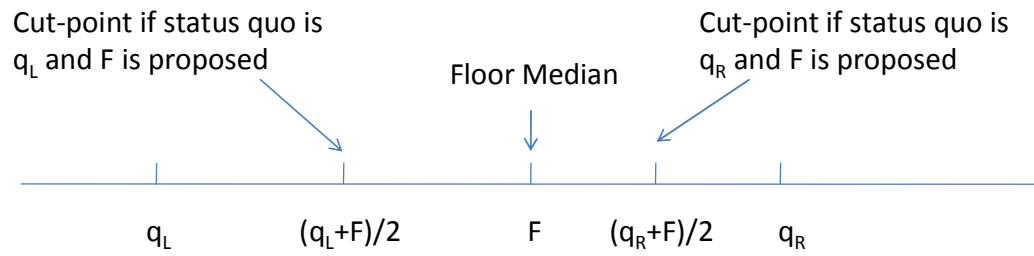


Figure 5.2. The Definition of Majority and Minority Party Preferences

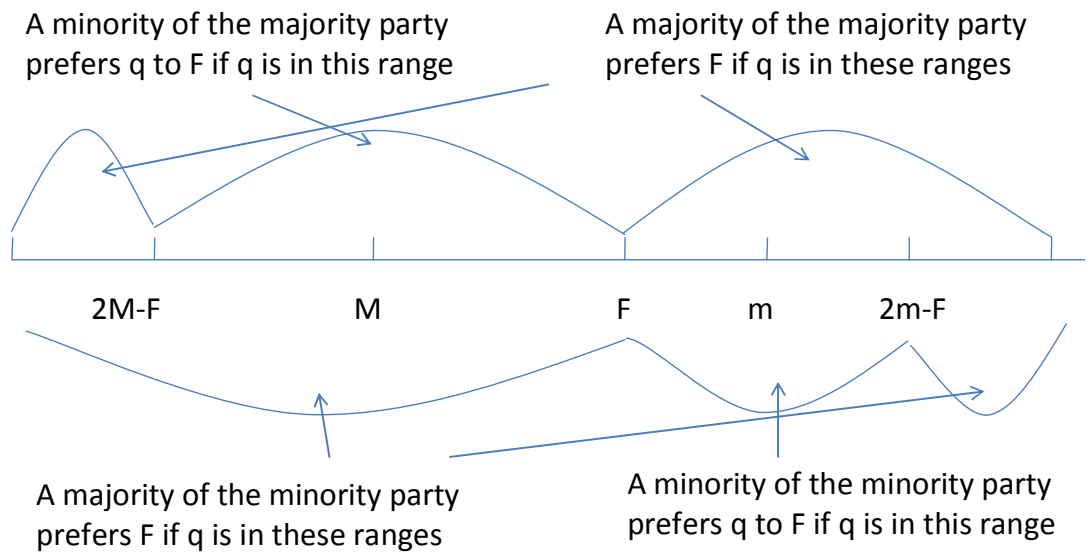


Figure 5.3. Divided or Unified Party-District Loyalties The Majority Party Case

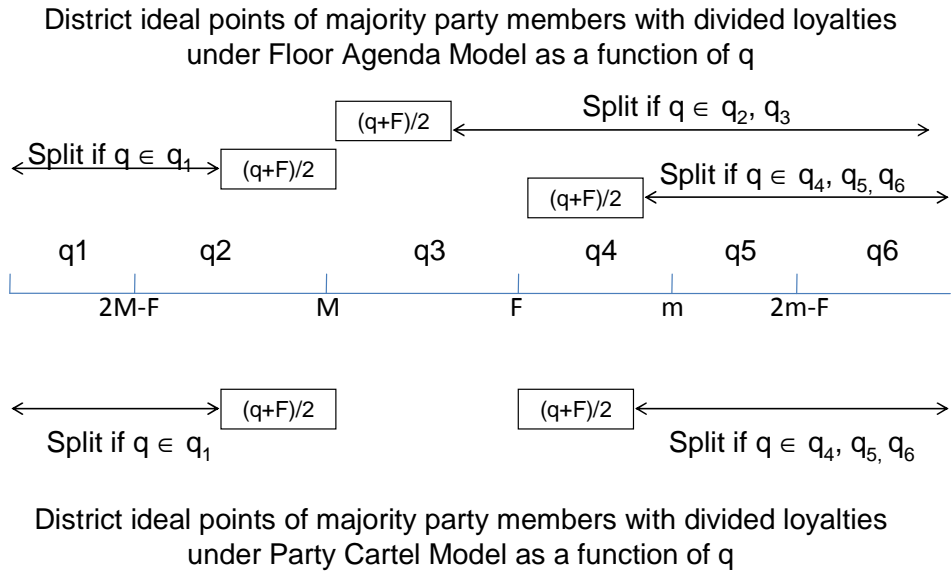


Figure 5.4. Divided or Unified Party-District Loyalties: The Minority Party Case

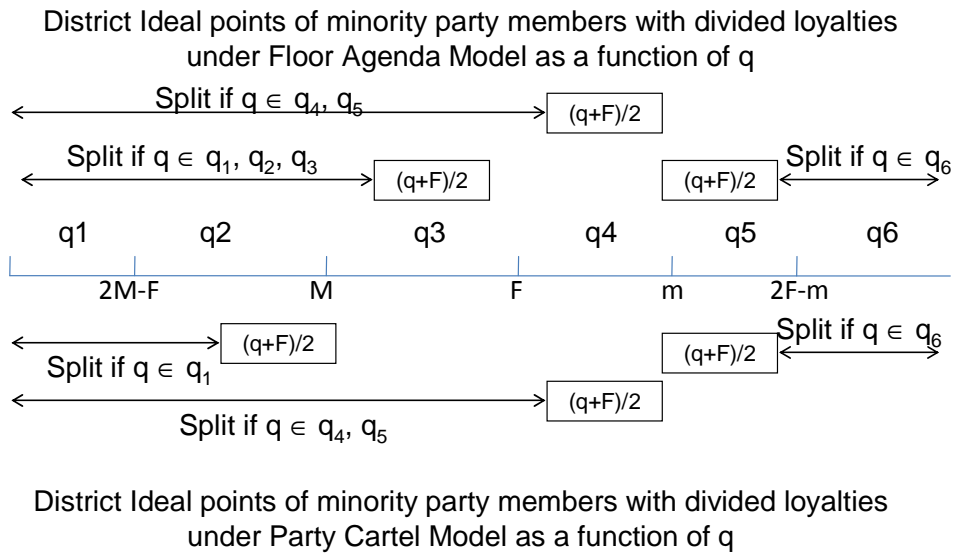


Figure 5.5. Divided or Unified Party-District Loyalties with Positive Agenda Control

