REPRESENTATIONAL INCONSISTENCY: PRESENTATION OF SELF AND EXPLANATIONS OF WASHINGTON ACTIVITY IN CAMPAIGN MAIL AND FRANKED MAIL

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Studies of representation have focused primarily on the correlation between legislators' voting records and their constituents' preferences; however, accountability inevitably includes representatives' explanations of their legislative actions. Unlike previous research that has examined consistency within a single form of communication, this study systematically examines legislators' consistency in the explanations they give across different means of communication. Contrary to arguments that members of Congress do not vary their explanations or presentational styles, we find that incumbents present themselves to constituents differently through different methods of communication. Using the 2006 Campaign Communication Survey, a random survey of registered voters in Ohio and Pennsylvania who were asked to send in all campaign mail received during three weeks in 2006, we compare the content of campaign mail and franked mail incumbents send to constituents. Even though the mediums of communication are similar and the timing of franked mail suggests its use as a campaign tool, we find incumbents use these different tools to present themselves to their constituents in different ways. As such, we argue that fully understanding a member of Congress's representational style requires an examination of a wide range of congressional activities.

The frank, or the privilege held by members of Congress to send mail to constituents free of charge, has long been controversial. Critics of the congressional frank claim that it "looks more and more like the campaign mailings that pile up in mailboxes in election years" (Madden 2007) and decry the use

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of public funds to pay for "campaign materials" that duplicate the mail sent out by congressional campaigns. In spite of these claims, we know little about the similarities or differences in the content and presentational format of franked mail and campaign mail.

This is only one example of a larger conceptual question, however. Scholars of congressional representation have argued that members of Congress do not vary how they present themselves to their constituents (Fenno 1978) and that members tailor their positions extensively to their audience (Grose, Malhotra, and Van Houweling 2014; Mayhew 1974). Does the frank, a method of congressional communication sent through the mail, merely duplicate campaign mail efforts or does it provide a distinct image and presentation of the incumbent seeking re-election? Previous work has found representational inconsistencies within a single type of communication directed at different constituents (Butler and Broockman 2011; Butler, Karpowitz, and Pope 2012; Grose et al. 2014). But do members pursue the same overall representational strategy across distinct means of communication? Studying the content of both campaign and franked mail communication, both printed forms sent to constituents through the postal service, provides insight into this question. This study looks at the representational consistency (or inconsistency) across communication mediums, rather than within a single communication medium as previous studies have done.

Although critics have assumed they serve the same purpose, we do not know how the content and appearance of franked mail compares to the content and appearance of campaign mail beyond the occasional accusations of blatant campaigning with the frank that filter through the media. More broadly, if members of Congress are not consistent in their presentation of self across different communication mediums, we may fail to capture the breadth of a member's representational style by assuming uniformity across the variety of congressional communication. If there are differences in content and a member of Congress's presentational style across these similar mediums, we can assume even greater differences across different methods of communication.

Part of the difficulty in analyzing these questions comes from the problems associated with collecting a representative sample of campaign communications that are similar to official congressional communications. Studies have examined variations in the content of official communications of members of Congress both online (Gulati 2004) and through traditional mail (Dolan and Kropf 2004; Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2012; Lipinski 2001, 2004; Yiannakis 1982). None of these studies, however, have systematically compared congressional incumbents' official communication with their campaign communication.

Using a new and unique dataset of campaign mail and franked mail from a sample of incumbent members of Congress running for re-election in 2006, we provide, for the first time, a clear comparison of two similar, yet distinct, means of communication with congressional constituents. Although

the timing of franked communication suggests its continued electoral purpose, we find significant differences between how members of Congress present themselves to constituents in franked and campaign mail. On the whole, we find that members of Congress focus more on advertising their office and the prestige associated with being a member of Congress in their franked mail. Conversely, in campaign communications, members of Congress emphasize informal connections to the district. Untargeted franked mail also contains less issue content. Unlike franked mail, the micro-targeted campaign mail allows incumbents to send mail with more issue content to targeted individuals without concern about offending constituents.

Our findings have significant implications for the study of congressional representation. Although both campaign and franked mail are used in the context of an election and are sent through the U.S. Postal Service, they present different images of the incumbent. Taken together they provide a broader perspective of how members of Congress represent their constituents than can be derived from the study of a single form of congressional communication. In conclusion, we argue that studies of representation that examine only a limited number of a legislator's activities may miss important components of representation.

REPRESENTATION THROUGH PRESENTATION AND EXPLANATION

Past studies of political representation have focused primarily on the correlation between voting in the legislature and constituent policy preferences (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995). Although Fenno (1978) advocated the use of activity outside Washington as a means for better understanding representation, only recently have scholars begun to put together the relationship between candidate behavior and legislative representation (Sulkin 2011). Indeed, behavior in Washington is not the only thing that matters to representation. Accountability in office inevitably includes the obligation of representatives to explain their actions in Washington to their constituents (Mansbridge 2003; Pitkin 1967). More importantly, in the past legislators have reported that how they explain their actions in Washington and present themselves to their constituents is as important as or more important than the votes they cast in Congress (Fenno 1978).

Recent scholarship has revived attention to the way that campaigns affect representation (Sulkin 2005; 2011). Sulkin's work uncovers a clear relationship between the content of campaigns and subsequent legislative behavior. For example, through "issue uptake" eventual winners alter their behavior by placing additional emphasis on issues raised by opponents during the campaign recasting the importance of losing candidates and suggesting that even in losing they are affecting the substance of policy representation

(Sulkin 2005). More recently, Sulkin (2011) shows that campaign promises are an important factor for how legislators set policy agendas once in office. Thus, understanding the different ways that members of Congress communicate with their constituents is an important part of understanding representation more broadly.

All members of Congress do not use official communications in the same way. We know that the amount of credit-claiming in official congressional communication varies by ideological extremism, electoral vulnerability, committee assignment, majority party status (Esterling, Lazar, and Neblo 2005; Grimmer et al. 2012; Lipinski 2004; Yiannakis 1982), as well as by gender (Dolan and Kropf 2004; Gulati 2004). Likewise, candidates vary the types of appeals they use in campaign communications dependent upon their standing in the polls and the number of other candidates in the race (Hassell 2011). A candidate's decision to go negative is also highly correlated with a multitude of characteristics such as campaign competitiveness (Lau and Pomper 2001), challenger status (Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2009; Hassell and Oeltjenbruns 2015), and even local political culture (Patterson and Shea 2003).

Although we know a lot about the variation of congressional statements within one specific type of communication, it is important to analyze how members of Congress explain themselves to constituents through different means of communication. Whereas Fenno (1978, 157, 189) argues that explanations and stylistic presentations are largely consistent, noting that members of Congress "give the same explanations for their Washington activity before people who disagree with them as they give before people who agree with them," Mayhew (1974, 63) makes the argument that members of Congress are usually largely able to "tailor position[s] to suit [their] audience[s]."

In a return to some of the arguments of Mayhew and Fenno, scholars have begun to examine and find variation within a legislator's communication. Recent work has found that many members of Congress modify their explanations to constituent inquiries within a single mode of communication according to the opinions of the constituent and have found that such variation has a significant effect on the constituent's view of the representative (Butler et al. 2012; Grose et al. 2014). Likewise, changes in how modern politicians engage in politics also give reason to suspect that members of Congress vary their presentation of self and explanations of Washington activities across different means of communication. In recent decades, political campaigns have begun to engage in more micro-targeting. Campaigns now vary the messages they send to voters on the basis of voter characteristics (Grant and Rudolph 2002; Hassell and Monson 2014; Hillygus and Shields 2008) and some evidence suggests that these persuasive effects are different across subgroups (Fridkin and Kenney 2011; Gerber et al. 2012).

EXPECTED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FRANKED MAIL AND CAMPAIGN MAIL

Incumbents' Presentation of Self

Comparing franked mail with campaign mail allows us to examine this unresolved question of whether members of Congress vary the presentation of themselves across different mediums of communication. Both campaign mail and franked mail are common ways that members of Congress communicate with and present themselves to their constituents. Both forms of communication are delivered to the constituent's mailbox. Yet, in spite of these similarities, the context and origins of these two different means of communication is unique. Franked communications originate from the member of Congress's official government office and are paid for by taxpayers. Campaign communications, on the other hand, originate from a campaign office located inside the district and are paid for by the candidate's election committee. Furthermore, although campaign mail is all about winning votes, members may see themselves as having responsibilities beyond winning votes when communicating through official channels. Because of differences in the contextual frames of these two types of communication, we are skeptical that incumbents present themselves to their constituents in the identical way in campaign mail and in franked mail. Instead, we argue that members of Congress change their representational style to fit the method of communication. This leads us to our first hypothesis:

> H_{1A}: Franked mail will emphasize official congressional duties and the formalities of office more than does campaign mail.

Absent the institutional norms and official government frame of franked mail, we also expect that members of Congress will choose to use presentational styles and imagery that enables them to relate in a more informal and personal way to their constituents, leading to the second part of that hypothesis:

> H_{1B}: Campaign mail will present the incumbent in a more informal and casual manner than does franked mail

Issue Content

Not only are the contextual frames different, but the institutional norms of how members of Congress use these means of communication are also different. Members cannot use the frank to attack potential opponents or to engage in inflammatory rhetoric (House Franking Commission 2012). Because negative advertising generally contains more issue content than its positive counter-

parts (Geer 2006), limits on negative communication restrict the ability of incumbents to engage in position taking in franked mail.

Even when comparing franked mail to positive campaign mail (the type of campaign mail with less issue content), we still expect to find less issue content in franked mail.[1] While campaigns extensively target their messages based on micro-targeting data (Hassell and Monson 2014; Hillygus and Shields 2008), members of Congress cannot target franked mail (House Franking Commission 2012). Franked mail must be sent to an entire geographic constituency regardless of party identification, issue positions, or ideological leanings. Thus, although campaigns can easily and effectively target specific subgroups who will be responsive to specific issue content, the official congressional office's inability to target mailings to the same extent as the campaign means they must be more careful about offending potential supporters with controversial issues.[2] In such a way, we reach our second hypothesis:

> H_{2A}: Franked mail will contain significantly less issue content than mail sent through the incumbent's campaign organization.

Incumbents without significant electoral competition, however, often come from congressional districts with constituents who hold opinions similar to those of the incumbent. Because incumbents are not allowed to target franked mail on the basis of political or ideological information, it is easier for safe incumbents to engage constituents on the issues without micro-targeting.[3] Vulnerable incumbents, however, represent marginal districts where the incumbent's issue positions may not necessarily be shared with their constituents. This makes it harder to appeal across the district without the use of targeting techniques commonly used in campaign direct mail. This leads us to the second part of this hypothesis:

> H_{2B}: Franked mail from safe incumbents will contain more issue content than franked mail from vulnerable incumbents

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

In order to test these hypotheses, we draw upon two unique data sets that allow us to collect information about campaign and official communication from sitting members of Congress from Ohio and Pennsylvania leading up to the 2006 election. Although not a random sample of legislators, these two states provide a diverse group of members of Congress from both competitive and non-competitive districts that allow us to draw broader conclusions about legislators' communication with constituents through two different means. These two states were originally chosen for the wide variation of district and

incumbent characteristics so as to be able to better draw inferences for the rest of the country. In these two states there are urban and rural districts, districts that are safe and competitive, and districts with wide variations in socioeconomic characteristics. In 2006, 34 of the 37 incumbent members of Congress from Ohio and Pennsylvania ran for re-election. Thirteen (38%) were Democrats and 21 (62%) were Republicans. Incumbent vote share in their re-election campaigns ranged from 43.6% of the two-party vote to winning unopposed. The average vote share was 63%, and half of the incumbents in the sample received less than 60% of the vote. Thus, although not perfectly representative of the country as a whole, we believe the variation in characteristics allows us to generalize more broadly.

In order to get a representative sample of the campaign mail each incumbent sent out prior to the 2006 election, we rely on the 2006 Campaign Communications Survey (CCS) conducted by the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy (CSED) at Brigham Young University through YouGov Polimetrix. The CCS is a multi-mode survey of registered voters in Ohio and Pennsylvania who were contacted prior to the 2006 election and asked to keep a log of all of their campaign communications during the last three weeks of the congressional election, including phone calls and personal contacts. This is the third iteration of this survey; similar surveys were conducted in several small states in 2002 (Monson and Curtis 2004, 293–4) and on a national scale in 2004 (Hassell and Monson 2014). Most importantly for this article, respondents were asked to collect and send in the political mail and e-mail they received during that time.

Although we recognize that the timing of campaign mail from this survey does not identically match the timing of franked mail, previous research and anecdotal evidence suggests that campaigns , particularly incumbents, do not vary the image of the candidate they attempt to present to voters during the campaign (Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Hassell and Oeltjenbruns 2015; Popkin 2012). From the beginning of the election cycle, campaigns formulate the message they wish to communicate and decide how they will present the candidate to the voters (Bradshaw 2004; Popkin 2012). Thus, whereas the timing of the campaign mail does not exactly match the timing of the franked mail, the messaging and presentation in campaign mail of an incumbent with a record of public service does not change over the course of the campaign and should not restrict conclusions about comparisons of the content of franked mail to campaign mail.

The survey employed a stratified sample of registered voters in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Because the survey design required some telephone contact, the population was defined as registered voters living in households with telephones. The sample design was intended to maximize the participation of respondents most likely to receive campaign communications in order to get a representative sample of mail from each congressional district in the sample.

To this end, the sample was stratified by voter activity, those who had voted in one of the past four general elections (1998, 2000, 2002, or 2004); and voter inactivity, those who had not voted during any of the last four general elections. Seventy-five percent of the sample was randomly drawn from the active voters, while 25% was randomly drawn from the entire frame. Based on the expected response rate and the desired number of completed interviews, a sample of 950 registered voters was drawn from both state files.

Following the model for mail surveys outlined by Dillman (2000), respondents selected from the voter files in Ohio and Pennsylvania were contacted six times between October 2006 and the end of November 2006 to elicit their cooperation in the project. In the sample, the response rate for the post-election telephone survey was 54% while the response rate for the questionnaire and log booklet portion of the survey was just under 32% for a total of 395 respondents almost equally divided between the two states.

Data entry was accomplished remotely from the CSED lab in Provo, Utah. After completing the data collection, coders entered the data from the questionnaire and log booklet as well as the initial coding of the mail pieces. Coders gave each unique piece from federal elections an identification number, and provided a brief description that identified the electoral race associated with the piece and the political entity that sponsored the piece. After this initial pass, coders undertook a more comprehensive coding of the federal mail pieces, including an analysis of issue content, tone, and imagery. Respondents that returned the questionnaire and log booklet along with their political mail sent 1,664 unique pieces of political mail; however, for the purpose of this study we use only the 120 unique pieces of campaign mail sent by the 34 congressional incumbents running for re-election in Ohio and Pennsylvania and exclude mail sent from sources other than the incumbent's campaign.[4]

We also collected copies of all the franked material these same incumbents sent leading up to the 2006 election. Until the mid-1990s, comprehensive data on franked mail was difficult to gather. Prior to the Republican takeover of Congress in 1995, Congress did not archive franked mail. Since 1995, however, congressional rules mandate that members of Congress archive all mass mailings sent under the frank in the Legislative Resource Center in Washington, DC. Although only franked mail from the previous two years is easily accessible, visitors to the Legislative Resource Center can request older mail be retrieved from the archive for perusal the next day. In addition to postal mail, legislation also permits the use of the frank for other forms of communication such as phone calls, as well as radio and newspaper advertisements, which are also archived at the Legislative Resource Center.

We collected 271 franked communications, of which fewer than 60% (158) were sent through the U.S. Postal Service. The mean number of franked mail communications members of Congress in our sample sent was 4.68; the median was three. All but four sent fewer than 10 pieces of franked mail.[5]

Only seven of the 34 incumbents running for re-election sent no franked mail. Consistent with past research connecting electoral vulnerability to the use of the frank (Goodman and Parker 2010; Lipiniski 2001), just over two-thirds of the franked communication we collected, and almost three-fourths of franked mail, came from incumbents who won less than 60% of the vote. We collected information on all franked communication in this analysis; however, we exclude mass franked communication that was not sent through the mail because of our inability to gather comparable campaign communication. Although the use of alternative franked communication is growing, these forms of communication are different than traditional franked mail and do not readily compare to the collection of campaign mail that we have.

Over a month was spent onsite collecting and photocopying the franked communications, as the Legislative Resource Center does not permit franked mail to be removed from the premises. After collecting the franked communications, we examined and coded the franked mail using a coding scheme identical to that used to code the campaign mail, detailing the images, the issue content, and the appearance of each piece.[6] Figure 1 displays an example of a piece of campaign mail and a piece of franked mail from a single incumbent.

FRANKED MAIL AS CAMPAIGN MAIL

The Timing of Franked Mail

Before turning to our hypotheses about the differences between campaign and franked mail, it is important to ascertain whether incumbents use franked mail for campaign purposes. The easiest way to determine this is to look at when franked mail is sent. If there is an even distribution of franked mail sent out over the course of the legislative session, it is unlikely that franked mail can be thought of as campaign mail. However, if we see franked mail disproportionately sent immediately prior to congressionally imposed deadlines before the election, it is more likely that incumbents are using the franking privilege as a campaign tool. In the process of collecting the franked mail from the Legislative Resource Center we also obtained information about the timing of the submission of the mail to the House Franking Commission. Statutory limitations dictate that members of Congress may not send mass communications through the frank less than 90 days before an election in which the incumbent was a candidate. Figure 2 show when franked mail was submitted to the House Franking Commission relative to the election where the incumbent would appear on the ballot.[7] Members of Congress send more mail as the election gets closer. Members of Congress sent no mail during 2005, and sent the majority of mail at the last possible moment before the primary or general election. The timing of franked mail is clear evidence of its use as a campaign tool.

Figure 1. Examples of Franked and Campaign Mail
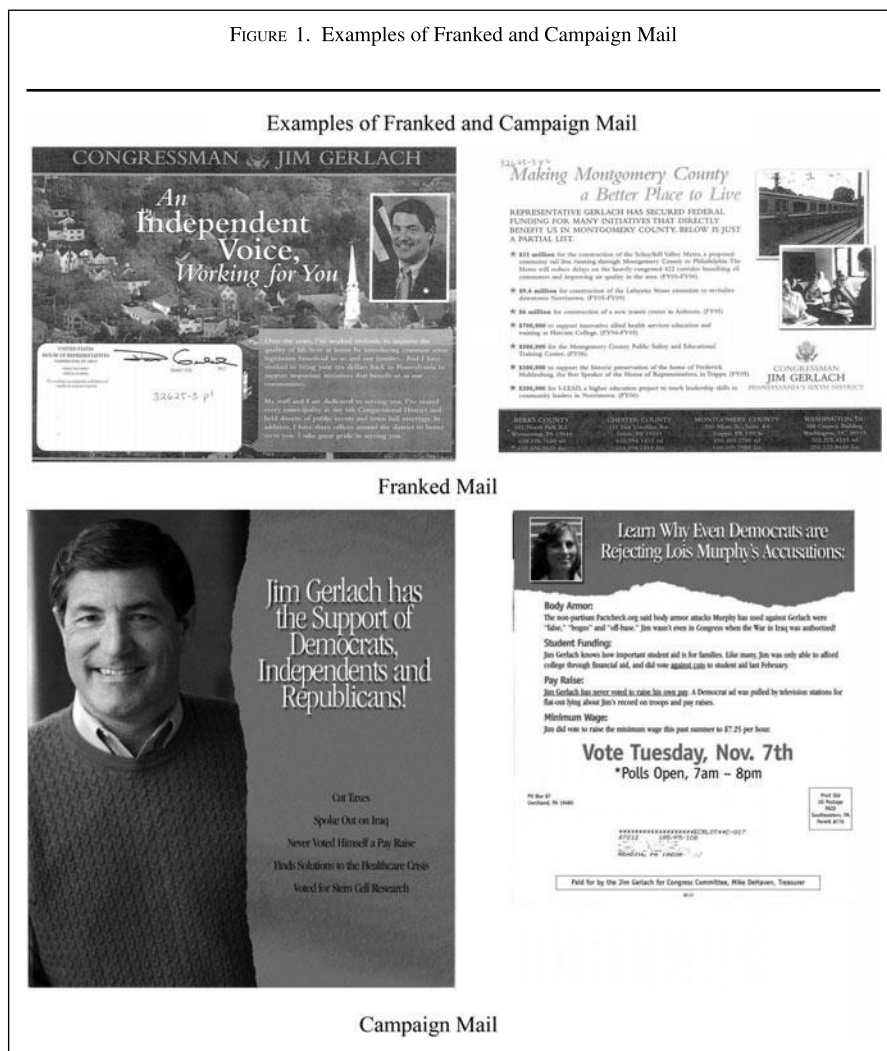
There are also differences in the timing of the mailings safe incumbents and vulnerable incumbents send. Figure 3 shows the timing and type of franked mail for incumbents in safe and competitive districts.[8] These figures show that members of Congress use the frank strategically. Unsurprisingly, vulnerable incumbents send much more franked mail. Both safe and vulnerable incumbents send the majority of their franked mail immediately prior to the election cutoff in an attempt to maximize the electoral usefulness of the frank.

In addition to the spikes right before the congressionally imposed deadline, the volume of franked mail from vulnerable incumbents also increases right after the primary. In 10 of the 18 districts with incumbents whose party

FIGURE 2. The Timing of Franked Mail

The Timing of Franked Mail

FIGURE 3. The Timing of Franked Mail for Safe and Vulnerable Incumbents
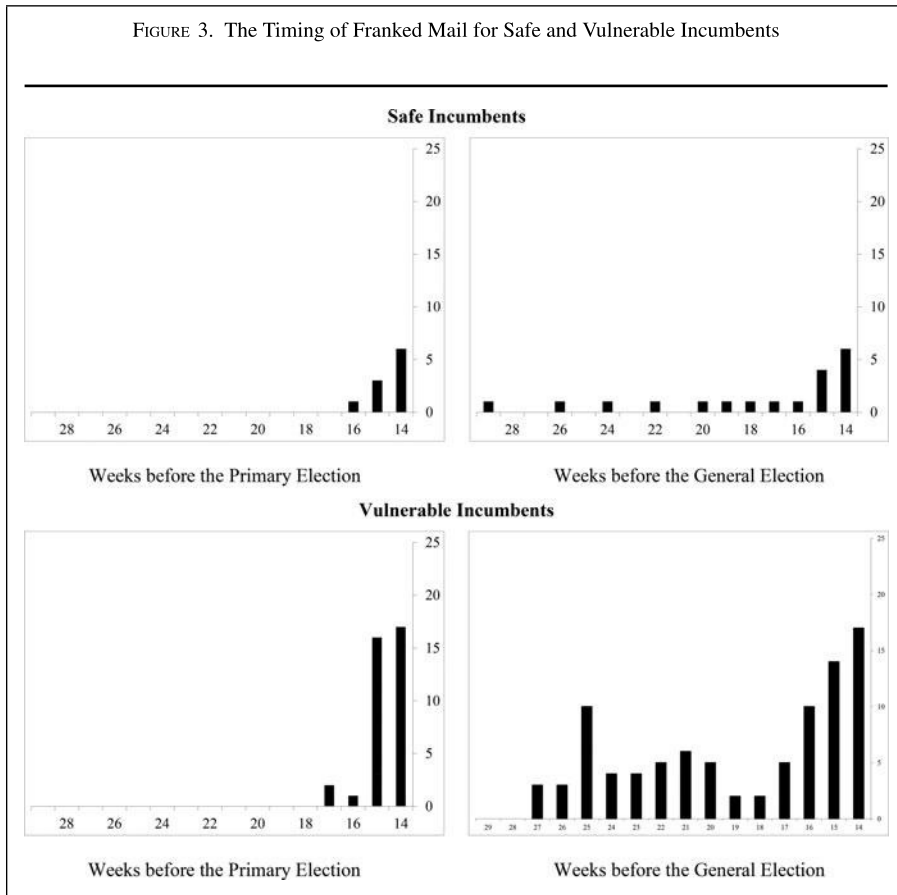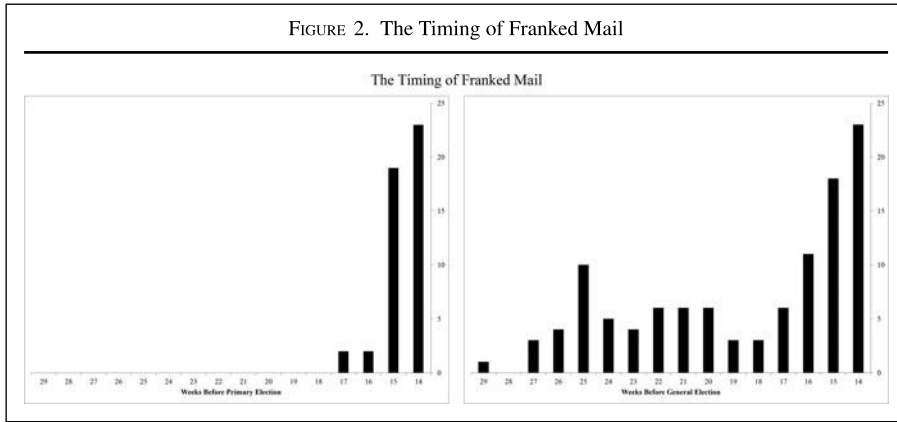
received 60% of the vote or less the opposing party had a competitive primary to face the incumbent in the general election. Conversely, there was a primary for the privilege to run against the incumbent in the general election in only one of the 16 districts where the incumbent's party won more than 60% of the vote. Because only three incumbents in the sample faced a primary challenger from their own party, and only one of those primary elections was competitive, that against scandal-embroiled Representative Bob Ney, the increase of franked mail around a primary election appears to be in response to the increased coverage of the opposing party's primary in the district.
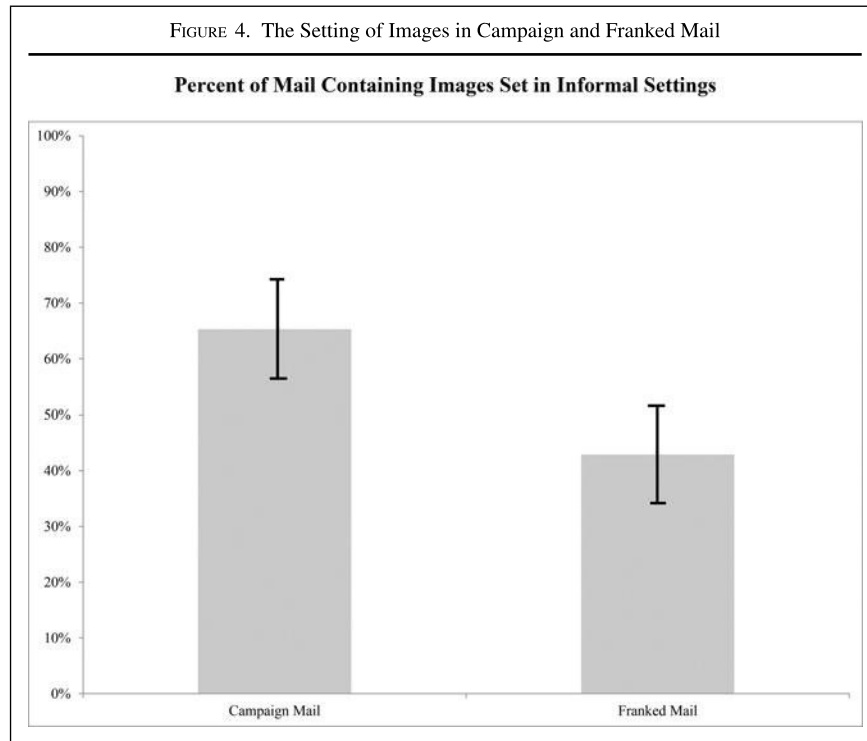
INCUMBENT COMMUNICATION THROUGH FRANKED AND CAMPAIGN MAIL

Images and Presentation of Self

To examine differences in an incumbents' presentation of self in campaign mail and franked mail we begin by identifying mail in both forms of communication that contain images. For each image we specifically coded the setting of the picture. Images set in formal or official settings highlight different aspects of the incumbent brand than images set in informal settings. Images set in informal settings suggest an attempt of the incumbent to connect or relate to his or her constituents. Images in formal settings, however, emphasize the legislative and official duties of the incumbent. Images that were coded as being set in informal settings included images set at a school, a health care facility, an old age home, a blue-collar worksite or white-collar office, a natural setting (such as a forest, a river, or a lake), a community park, a neighborhood, a farm, and a church.

Figure 4 compares the setting of images in campaign mail and franked mail. Images were 22% more likely to be set in informal settings in campaign communications. Over 65% of all campaign mailers with images contained images set in informal settings compared to only 43% of franked mail with images ($p<.01$, two-tailed test).[9]

It is important to note that the House Franking Commission only allows a single photo of a member of Congress appearing alone in franked mail, but allows up to two additional photos per page of the member appearing with other "clearly visible persons," a quantity which is similar to that of campaign mail. There are also no limits on the number of photos of constituents (House Franking Commission 2012). Thus even though the rules of the frank incentivize members of Congress to appear in more informal photos with their constituents rather than official photos, they are choosing not to do so.[10] Consistent with Hypotheses 1A and 1b, incumbents are significantly and substantially more likely to highlight their official responsibilities to constituents when communicating through franked mail.

FIGURE 4. The Setting of Images in Campaign and Franked Mail

Percent of Mail Containing Images Set in Informal Settings

   The imagery used in franked and campaign mail shows that there is a clear difference in the presentational style of the member of Congress in each type of communication. Comparing the pictures of Congressman Gerlach in Figure 1, we see that the campaign mail presents a more relaxed and informal version of Congressman Gerlach with no tie and a casual sweater (in the color photo the sweater was burnt orange) than does the franked mail, which presents Congressman Gerlach in front of an American flag using the official congressional photo. Whereas franked mail focuses on presenting the member of Congress in a more formal and official manner, campaign mail presents the member of Congress in a more informal way using casual portraits and informal settings. Franked mail works to associate the member of Congress with his or her official duties and responsibilities whereas campaign mail attempts to relate the member of Congress to constituents in a more informal manner. We find that members of Congress are not consistent in their presentational styles across different types of communication. Instead, the contextual framing of the frank shapes the presentation of a member of Congress in a way that is distinct from the presentation of self-prevalent in campaign mail.

Figure 5. Percentage of Mail with Issue Content
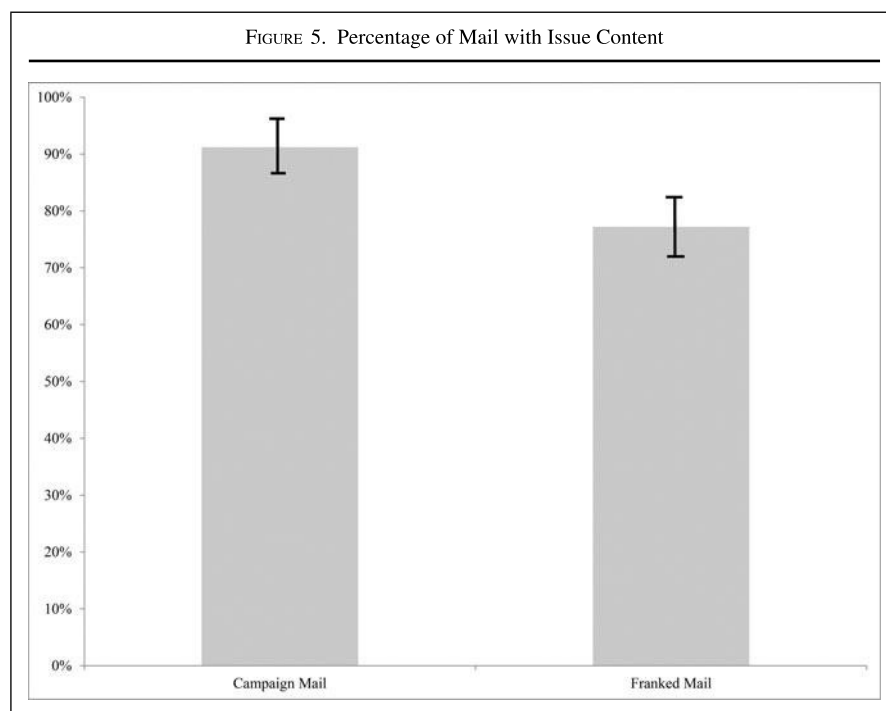
Issue Content

In addition to differences in presentational style, we also expect that franked mail will address issues less than campaign mail. In the example shown in Figure 1, the campaign mail talks about a number of policy issues, whereas the franked mail focuses on service to the district. Congressional regulations governing the content of franked mail limit the ability of incumbents to highlight issue differences between themselves and their opponents that are commonly used in campaign mail. Figure 5 shows the percent of franked and campaign mail that contains issue content.

Although both campaign and franked mail contains a lot of issue content, we do find a slight difference between the two means. More than 90% of campaign mailers contain issue content compared to 75% of all franked mail ($p<.01$, two-tailed test). The biggest difference in issue content is in the coverage of economic issues. The use of economic issues in franked mail decreases by 35% compared to its use in campaign mail ($p<.01$, two-tailed test). Figure 6 shows the percent of franked and campaign mail that contains issue content of a specific type.

Even though negative campaign communication is more likely to contain issue content (Geer 2006), franked mail is not merely less likely to contain issue content because of limits on negativity. As we explained before, members

FIGURE 6. Percentage of Mail with Specific Issue Content
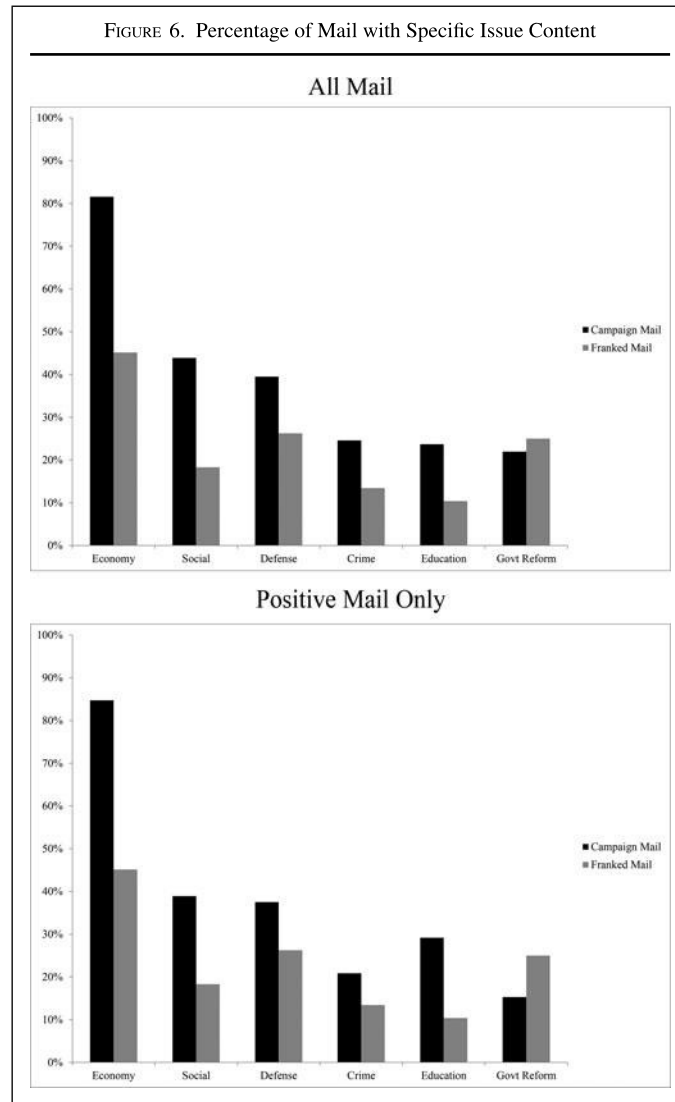
of Congress cannot direct messages to targeted political constituencies with franked mail. This limits their ability to exploit controversial issues that serve to motivate a targeted group of supporters or swing voters. Even if we exclude campaign mail that coders identified as being contrast or negative mail, we find that campaign mail still contains significantly more issue content. Figure 6 also shows the percent of franked mail and positive campaign mail that contained issue content of a specific type. Although positive campaign mail has slightly less issue content than its negative counterpart, the volume of issue content in positive campaign mail is still significantly higher than that of franked mail

FIGURE 7. Percent of Franked Mail with Issue Content
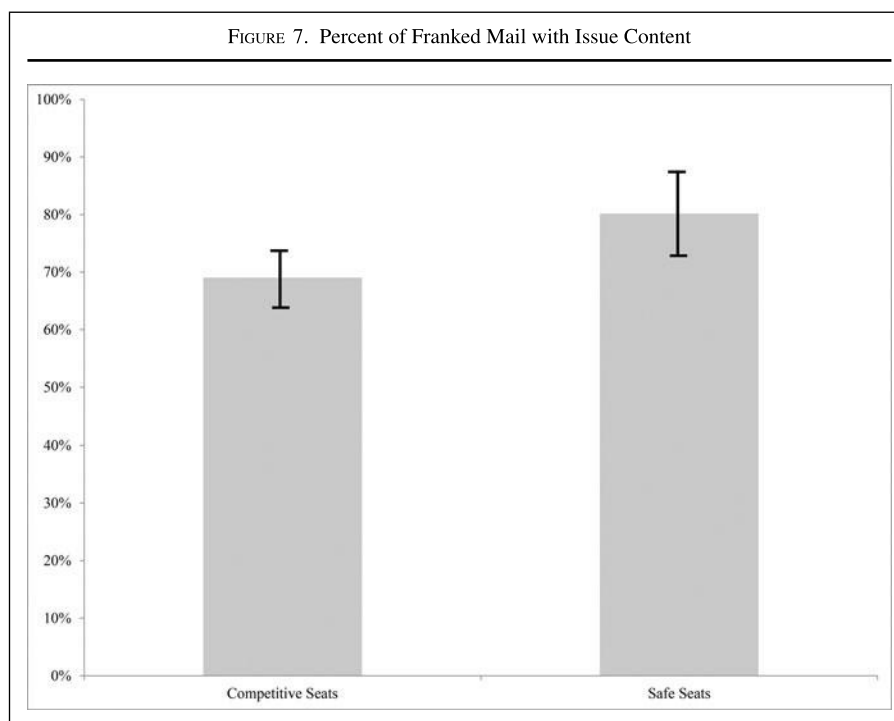
($p<.01$, two-tailed test). The institutional nature of the frank and the audience that receives it encourages its use as a congressional brand-advertising tool rather than a credit-claiming or position-taking tool.

The use of the frank as a means of publicizing the incumbent without reference to issues is also more prominent among incumbents facing a tough re-election challenge. Consistent with our expectations in hypothesis 2B, Figure 7 indicates that as an incumbent's electoral security increases, the issue content of franked mail also increases by almost 25% ($p<.01$, two-tailed test). Because they do not have to worry about a controversial issue position driving down support among key demographics needed to win an election, safe incumbents can safely expound their positions on issues.[11] Unable to target franked mail to supporters, however, vulnerable incumbents are less likely to use the frank as an issue platform.

DISCUSSION

Our results show that although the franking privilege available to members of Congress is a campaign tool, it is also, at the same time, a tool that presents a different image of members of Congress than the one sent out by political

campaigns. Contrary to Fenno's claim, members of Congress do vary their presentation of self across different means of communication.

Congressional scholars often think of campaigning and governing in two separate spheres "even though the two are inextricably linked" (Sulkin 2005, 4). As such, our study has important implications for our understanding of congressional representation. While both campaign and franked mail are used for campaign purposes, they present different variations of the member of Congress which, taken together, provide a broader perspective of representation than can be gleaned from examining only a single aspect.

Campaign mail and franked mail content do overlap to a certain extent, but their differences help highlight the different ways that members of Congress attempt to represent their constituents. Campaign mail, with its heavier focus on issues than franked mail, is consistent with the more traditional focus in the representation literature, beginning with Miller and Stokes (1963) on policy congruence. Virtually no campaign mail in our sample leaves out a reference to issues which are targeted to resonate with the recipient. In the same vein, members of Congress use campaign mail to relate to specific groups of individuals through its use of informal images and targeted issue content consistent with the dyadic representation that is given heavy attention in the existing literature.

Even though it is used in a campaign context just as campaign mail is, franked mail provides a different perspective on congressional representation than campaign mail. Franked mail presents a more formal image of the incumbent member of Congress and contains less issue content than campaign mail. Franked mail provides a presentation of the incumbent that focuses more on the prestige and formality associated with the congressional office, downplaying issue positions compared to campaign mail and up-playing the role of the members of Congress as participatory members of the federal legislative body and the constituent services they provide.

By comparing the content of two means of communication used for electoral purposes, we have shown that the representational presentation of a member of Congress is not consistent across different methods of communication. Critics of the frank might take some solace in the differences we find that suggest that franked mail differs substantially in its presentation of the incumbent from campaign mail.

Yet, there are also concerns that with the changing political landscape, the frank provides a form of representation that emphasizes public service. Concerns about the best way to use money allocated for franked mail has caused many members of Congress to find other more partisan ways to communicate with constituents (Krehbiel 2013). With the large influx of cash into campaigns in recent years, incumbents may be increasingly more reliant on campaign communication to buoy their campaigns and less reliant on official communication. These changes may not only change campaigns, but

also change how members of Congress represent their constituents, moving them away from constituent service and into more partisan position taking. On the whole, however, these findings suggests that to fully understand congressional representation requires an examination of the full range of congressional activities and that relying on just one might present a skewed picture of congressional representation.

FUNDING

NOTES

1. We do not have a clear hypothesis about how incumbents use issues in campaign mail as opposed to franked mail and whether they use one means of communication for position taking or credit-claiming. Although we did not distinguish differences in how members of Congress used issues in franked mail or campaign mail an analysis of a sample of these mailers suggest that position-taking and credit-claiming are present in both types of mail.
2. Members of Congress may also have less flexibility in how they want to highlight the issues because of limitations set by the House Franking Commission. These limitations may also discourage members of Congress from discussing issues when they are not able to frame the issue in way that is satisfactory to them.
3. It is important to note that electoral safety is different from ideological homogeneous districts (Levendusky and Pope 2011; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013). While a district may be homogenous in its ideological views, these shown that representatives from heterogeneous districts actually are more likely to be extreme in their political views as they adopt the views of their co-partisan constituency rather than of the median voter, especially when these co-partisans represent a large plurality in the district (Ensley 2010; Gerber and Lewis 2004). Consistent with these findings franked mail sent by incumbents with high levels of ideological heterogeneity (using data from Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2013) were more likely to contain issue content although the results were not quite significant at the 95% level. We appreciate the comments of Damon Cann about this point.
4. Prior to coding, coders were trained in an intensive two-hour training session prior to starting the coding on how to code the individual mail pieces. During the first few days following the training coders then practiced using a hard copy of the instrument and example mail pieces selected by the supervisor followed by a couple of days practicing coding example pieces using the data entry software. Coders were also provided with a detailed coding reference, a list of answers to common occurring questions, and were encouraged to ask questions about pieces that they were unsure about before continuing. In addition, coders were made aware that a random selection of mail would be re-coded to ensure the coding was done correctly. The errors found in the coding were then used to direct continued regular group training sessions held and to help guide one-on-one training that

occurred regularly throughout the process. Coding supervisors randomly recoded 10% of all mail pieces and found an error rate of just over 3.5%.

5. Michael Fitzpatrick (R-PA8) sent the most franked mail with 26 separate pieces.

6. Two coders undertook the coding of the franked mail. For all of the different variables coded, the two coders were in agreement independently on no less than 96% of the cases in the more than 40 pieces of franked mail that were dual coded.

7. Not shown here is the distribution of mailings between the standard letter format, usually on congressional letterhead, and the glossy and professionalized direct mail format replete with images, more commonly associated with campaign mail. About two-thirds of franked mail is of the glossy variety, with the other third written on formal congressional letterhead. There is, however, no significant change in the distribution of the format as Election Day draw nearer.

8. We classify safe districts as districts where the incumbent party received 60% or more of the vote in the current election. Using other slightly different measures of seat competitiveness has no significant effect on the findings.

9. We also examined images of the incumbent and found similar significant results. Images of incumbents were more likely to focus on official responsibilities rather than informal connections with the district. In these images we coded for the presence of an American flag in the background. The use of an American flag in the image of the incumbent is indicatory of a formal setting for two reasons. First, the most frequent, and almost universal, use of a flag in a picture of an incumbent member of Congress is the official congressional photos that show a headshot of the member of Congress with an American flag in the background. Second, in the few pictures of the incumbent with flags that are not official congressional portraits, incumbents are engaged in official congressional duties. In contrast, informal photos of members of Congress engaged in non-official business are generally flagless. The use of an official congressional photo or a photo of the candidate engaged in official government responsibilities serves to remind the recipient of the political prestige and responsibilities associated with being a member of Congress. to remind the recipient of the political prestige and responsibilities associated with being a member of Congress. Almost 90% of pictures of the incumbent contained flags in franked mail compared to only 25% of picture of the incumbent in campaign mail ($p<.01$, two-tailed test).

10. One argument might be that members of Congress do not choose to include informal pictures because the cost is prohibitive and members of Congress are allocated a limited budget for franked mail. This does not seem correct for two reasons. First, more than 75% of franked mail contains images, suggesting that it is not the cost of color printing that limits images in campaign mail. Second, less than half of those images of the incumbent are set in informal settings. This means that members of Congress prioritized formal images in franked mail while prioritizing informal images in campaign mail.

11. Incumbents in safe seats were more likely to discuss the economy, education, and defense issues than were vulnerable incumbents. There was no difference in the level of discussion of social issues or issues relating to guns and crime. Consistent with Figure 5, the economy was the most discussed issue for both safe and vulnerable incumbents.

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