

**ONE THING I'VE LEARNED...:
AN EXPERIMENTAL TEST OF BACKGROUND APPEALS**

Brian K. Arbour
University of Texas at Austin
Department of Government
1 University Station A1800
Austin, TX 78712
Phone: 512/231-5121
barbour@gov.utexas.edu

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association
Chicago, IL
April 12-15, 2007

Abstract

I hypothesize that the background of a candidate serves as a source credibility mechanism, conferring trust and authority on a candidate which is not evident for a candidate who does not talk about their record. To test this hypothesis, I conduct an experiment, holding constant the issue content of a message, but varying the background of a mock congressional candidate. In the control groups, no mention is made of the candidate's background. Absent a party cue, respondents who receive information about the candidate's occupation view the candidate more favorably than those in the control group. Partisanship affects respondents' perceptions of the candidate's sincerity, while background affects perceptions of effectiveness in office.

To voters, politicians begin as strangers. In running for office, campaigns not only want to make their candidate familiar to voters, but also make their candidate well liked. The attempt to create a friendship between candidates and voters is not easy. Voters start the relationship with a natural skepticism of candidates. Voters feel they have been fooled before by slick politicians and their highly paid operatives, who say one thing in a campaign and do another once in office (Downs 1957; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). Further, voters are busy, and have little time to dedicate to politics. Even the most sincere and well meaning campaign cannot make voters friendlier to their candidate if their message cannot reach voters.

The need to make voters like their candidate can be a daunting obstacle for a campaign. One method that campaigns commonly use to overcome voter skepticism and disinterest is to transmit messages about the background of their candidate. Discussions of the life of candidates, from cradle to the last legislative session, fill campaign advertisements, direct mail fliers, speeches by candidates, and all forms of campaign communications (Shyles 1984; McDermott 1999). In this paper, I hypothesize that background information about a candidate serves as a source credibility mechanism—conferring trustworthiness and expertise upon them. I then test if such a benefit occurs, using an experimental design, which varies the occupational background of a mock candidate while holding constant his issue position.

The results provide evidence that background information does positively affect perceptions of a candidate, albeit modestly. Respondents who viewed an appeal tied to the candidate's occupational background regarded him more favorably than those in the control group, who received no information about the candidate's occupation. I also

measure respondents' perceptions of the candidate's sincerity and effectiveness in an effort to examine the source of the background benefit. I find that background information does not affect perceptions of the candidate's sincerity, but does positively affect perceptions of the effectiveness of the legislator.

Occupational background is just one source of credibility for a candidate. Partisanship also contributes to perceptions of a candidate's credibility (Feldman & Conover 1983; Lodge & Hamill 1986; Philpot 2004). I also vary the candidate's partisan affiliation in addition to his occupational background. Partisanship affects overall perceptions of the candidate, with Republicans, not surprisingly, regarded less favorably. Partisanship has almost no effect on perceptions of the candidate's effectiveness, but does change perceptions of his sincerity.

The results provide evidence that campaigns use background appeals with such frequency for a simple reason—they work. Background appeals improve voter perceptions of candidates by improving perceptions of the level of expertise of the candidate. Respondents believe that a candidate with accomplishments in other areas of life will be better able to navigate the political difficulties inherent in trying to pass legislation.

Background as a Component of Source Credibility

Should the occupational background and political record of a candidate matter to voters? Political campaigns certainly behave as though the answer is yes. Information on a candidate's background, experience, and record are a staple of campaign advertising and literature (Shyles 1984; McDermott 1999). In fact, nearly 80% of television

advertisements aired in 2000 and 2002 Senate elections discuss the candidates' records (Arbour 2005). Why do campaigns spend so much time discussing what their candidate has done in the past, rather than on their plans for the future? Research indicates that campaigns do so because record appeals work. Campaigns that emphasize issues on which their candidate has a built a reputation increase their vote share on election day (Sellers 1998). Even the appearance of their occupational title of their candidate on a ballot helps campaigns secure more votes (McDermott 2005).

Why do campaigns benefit from using record appeals? I argue that record serves as a source credibility mechanism for voters. The theory of source credibility holds that the more an individual believes in the trustworthiness and expertise of the source of a communication, the more likely that a recipient will accept and be persuaded by the source's message (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley 1953; Sternthal, Phillips, and Dholakia 1978). The content of the source's messages does not have to vary for a respondent to change their opinion, only the respondent's perception of the source.

A wide body of literature has shown the importance of source effects in assessing political information. Individuals will be more likely to believe a source they consider sincere. As such, elements such as the trustworthiness (Popkin 1991), party reputation (Iyengar & Valentino 2000), and ideology (Zaller 1992) can affect an individual's perception of political information. The credibility of a source is also dependent on her perceived expertise, with factors such as status (Page et al. 1987) and public approval (Mondak 1993, Mondak et al. 2003) affecting perceptions. Thus, a source's credibility can vary. Individuals react differently based upon the perceived commonality of the source and recipient (Lupia & McCubbins 1998, Druckman 2001).

The need to develop sincerity can be daunting for a political campaign, primarily because voters assume that political messages are insincere, expressing a sentiment designed merely to win their vote on election day, and meaningless once the winning candidate takes office (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2002). Campaigns, of course, had an incentive to tell voters what they want to hear. Once in office, the candidate can go back to their sincere policy preferences. Voters, of course, want to avoid being duped by the cheap talk of slick politicians and operatives. Thus, voters prize “reliability” in a campaign (Downs 1957), which indicates that a candidate “says what he means, and means what he says,” to use a common colloquialism for an honest candidate. Since voters do not know what candidates will do once in office, their best gauge of future performance is past actions. Voters “must be able to predict their actions reasonably well from what [candidates] say” (Downs 1957, 107). The implicit message of a background appeal is that the candidate has supported this issue position in the past, so voters can trust the candidate to support the same position in the future.

Discussing a candidate’s background can also serve to improve perceptions of her expertise. Much like a job applicant who presents their resume to a potential employer, a campaign message that highlights the past accomplishments of a candidate indicates the level of skill a candidate will bring to elective office. If a candidate has passed legislation or implemented a government program in the past, a voter can assume they can accomplish similar tasks in the future. Highlighting the experience of a candidate in a particular field indicates the candidate’s knowledge about the issues facing that profession, which she should be better able to solve if elected. For example, voters view incumbents as more favorable because they regard them as more competent (Kahn 1993).

Regardless of whether background appeals increase perceptions of a candidate's competence or sincerity (or both), background appeals should improve the standing of a candidate in the eyes of voters.

An Experimental Test of the Experience Benefit

To assess whether a candidate's background serves as a source credibility mechanism, I use an experimental design that varies the occupational background of a candidate, while holding constant the issue content. An experimental design is necessary to isolate the value of background separate from other confounding factors. In the real world, campaigns connect a candidate's background to particular issue positions and trait characteristics, which complicates the task of isolating the effect of background.

Respondents view a mock direct mail piece from a mock congressional campaign. Then, respondents give their overall impressions of the candidate in a traditional 100-point thermometer rating. Respondents also give their impressions of the sincerity and effectiveness of the candidate, in an effort to measure the source of any background benefit. Respondents who learn about the candidate's background should give him higher ratings than the control group, which learns nothing of his occupational background, on each of these three measures.

In the experiment, the candidate and his health care plan are held constant. Respondents viewed a mock direct mail piece for the "Sam Kelley for Congress" campaign. Figure 1 shows one version of the mail piece. The mail piece was designed to look like as much like an actual campaign piece. I worked with a political consultant to

write and design the mock piece.¹ The front features a picture of the mock candidate, who says “My Number One Goal: Improve Our Health Care.” The back details the specifics of Kelley’s health care plans,² as well as a statement from Kelley that he “will wait no longer” to fix the nation’s health care system. All of this information was constant across each treatment group.

FIGURE 1 About Here

Variation comes from Kelley’s occupational background, and how his background is connected to his rationale for wanting to improve health care. Kelley can:

- 1) be a doctor who (“physician and surgeon at Memorial St. Joseph hospital”),
- 2) be a state legislator who “passed the Patient’s Bill of Right Act of 2004,”
- 3) be a “small business owner,” who “knows firsthand” the costs of health care,
- 4) have both 1 and 2 as his backgrounds, and
- 5) have no occupation background mentioned (the control group).

Each version of the mail piece includes a quote from Kelley connecting his experience to his advocacy for his health care plan (for the text of each experimental manipulation, see Table A-1). These particular occupations were selected to create variation in candidate background in a manner consistent with how real world campaigns employ background appeals. In particular, the text of the mock direct mail flier tries to mimic how campaigns try to connect a candidate’s background and issue agenda. A campaign for a doctor will almost assuredly highlight health care. Those campaigning for a candidate who passed a major health care bill in the state legislature will highlight that accomplishment in a campaign. The CEO treatment is employed to test if a background

¹ Before viewing the piece, respondents were told, “We’re interested in finding out how people react to some of the advertising that campaigns do. Following this is a direct mail piece from a congressional campaign for you to consider.”

² I tried to make the issue content of Mr. Kelley’s press release include non-contradictory proposals that come from both major parties. For example, in the health care plan, I took one element from the 2004 Democratic Party platform (guaranteeing patients to see the doctor of their choice, even if that doctor is a specialist), and one from the Health Care section of the White House website (ending regulations and laws require consumers to purchase health insurance only in the state in which they live).

that is tenuously related to the issue affects perceptions of the candidate in a similar way to more obvious connections.

In addition to testing the effect of background on voter perceptions, I also examine its relationship to the partisanship of the source. Partisanship serves as a source credibility mechanism for a candidate, connecting candidates to the party's history, issue stands, constituents, and symbols (Lodge & Hamill 1986; Philpot 2004). The two major American political parties have their own national stereotypes that alter voter perceptions of individual candidates (Rahn 1993). Voters regard candidates from the two parties as differently able to handle particular issues (Petrocik 1996) and possessing different trait characteristics (Hayes 2005). While I have no strong assumptions about how particular occupational backgrounds might interact with the candidate's party, the strong influence of partisanship and party stereotypes means that such an interaction is possible, and is worthy of examination. To test this, I vary Candidate Kelley's partisanship, in addition to varying his occupation.³

Experimental Procedure

The sample of 959 respondents comes from the University of Texas module of the Cooperative Congressional Election Study. The online survey was conducted by Polimetrix between late September and late October, 2006. Polimetrix matches randomly selected people from a list of all consumers in the United States to individuals who have agreed to take surveys as part of the Polling Point panel (see Rivers 2005 for more details

³ Kelley's party identification is in the campaign logo, and not part of the text of the message itself. Kelley can be identified as a "Democrat for Congress," a "Republican for Congress, and, in the No Party condition, simply "for Congress."

on Polimetrix’s sampling methodology.) This method is designed to produce a random sample of the national population within each module of the survey.⁴

The CCES is an online survey. Respondents first responded to 34 “common content” questions, which were asked to respondents in all modules of the survey.⁵ None of these questions directly addressed the health care issues in the mock mail piece, though respondents were asked about whether they would have voted to allow funding for stem cell research, and how they think their two Senators voted on such a bill.⁶ The respondents viewed a module of questions designed by scholars at the University of Texas at Austin. Before the experiment, respondents in the Texas module answered questions about their impressions of various national political figures, and questions about which party they trusted more to handle a series of issues, including health care.⁷

Respondents then viewed one of the 15 versions of the direct mail flier. After viewing the flier, respondents answered questions about their impressions of Sam Kelley, the candidate in the flier. Respondents were also asked to evaluate their feelings toward Mr. Kelley on a 100 point feeling thermometer rating (on a traditional 0 to 100 point

⁴ The CCES survey is biased towards the knowledgeable and the politically active. For example, 89% of unweighted respondents claim to have voted in the 2006 election. The experimental design of this paper reduces worries about the bias in the sample, but cautions are still in order.

⁵ A list of the common content questions is available at:

http://web.mit.edu/polisci/portl/cces/material/CCES_Common_Content_August_15_2006_final.pdf.

⁶ Specifically, the questionnaire said, “Now we’d like to ask about whether the government should fund stem cell research. Some politicians argue that this research may lead to cures for diseases and disabilities affecting large numbers of American, and should be funded. Others argue that a potential human life has to be destroyed in order to use these cells, and funding it would be unethical. What do you think? If you were faced with this decision, would you vote for or against funding this research?”

⁷ Specifically, the questionnaire said, “Please tell us which political party you think would do a better job handling each of the following issues.” The issues were shown in random order. The issues were the economy, national security, social security, health care, the federal budget deficit, and crime.

scale)⁸ Respondents were asked to include their perception of the candidate’s sincerity and effectiveness on an 11 point rating (on a 0 to 10 scale).⁹

No Party Results

Figure 2 shows the difference in thermometer ratings for respondents across occupational treatments among the 331 respondents who received no information about the candidate’s party affiliation. As expected, when respondents learned about the occupational background of the candidate, they viewed him more favorable. Respondents in the CEO treatment gave the candidate a mean rating of 59.4, which was 6.64 “degrees warmer” than respondents in the control treatment, who gave Kelley a mean 52.7 rating.¹⁰ This difference is statistically significant ($t = 2.10$; $p = .019$). Respondents also regarded the candidate as 5.52 “degrees” warmer as a Doctor, and 4.44 “warmer” as a Politician. Both are statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level (Doctor: $t = 1.61$; $p = .056$; Politician: $t = 1.31$; $p = .0962$). And while respondents regarded the Dr. Politician 4.08 degrees warmer than when Sam Kelley had no occupation, this difference is not statistically significant.

FIGURE 2 About Here

⁸ The text of the survey question is borrowed almost word for word from the National Election Study’s thermometer rating question. It reads, “Now that you’ve read the press release from Sam Kelley’s campaign, I’d like to get your feelings about him. Please rate Sam Kelley on a thermometer that runs from 0 to 100 degrees. A rating above 50 means that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. A rating below 50 means that you feel unfavorable and cool toward the person. A rating right at the 50 degree mark means you don’t feel particularly warm or cold. You may use any number from 0 to 100 to tell me how favorable or unfavorable your feelings are.”

⁹ Respondents used a widget to rank the candidate’s sincerity and effectiveness, which allowed them to see all 11 responses at the same time and place the widget at their preferred level. Under the 0 response was “Not Sincere/Effective at All, under the 10 response was “Extremely Sincere/Effective,” and under the 5 response was “Neutral.”

¹⁰ The mean values and the N for each of the experimental cells are included in Tables A2-4.

These results provide supportive evidence that the occupation of a candidate serves as a source credibility mechanism. When the candidate does not have an occupation, respondents do not have a particularly favorable view of him. When they learn that the candidate is an accomplished professional, they increase their regard for him. To examine why voters increase their regard for the candidate, I also asked respondents to rate the candidate's sincerity and effectiveness.

Figure 3 shows that, contrary to expectations, respondents in the control group regarded the candidate as the most sincere (mean rating of 5.93). Regardless of the candidate's occupation, respondents regarded him as less sincere than when Candidate Kelley had no occupation. These differences are not statistically significant, except for the Doctor, which reached the $p < .10$ level of significance.

FIGURE 3 About Here

Figure 4 examines the effectiveness ratings that respondents gave Candidate Kelley. These results fit expectations, in respondents regarded the candidate more favorably when he had an occupation than when they learned nothing of his occupation. However, these differences are not statistically significant in any experimental condition.

FIGURE 4 About Here

These results shown here do not provide much insight into why campaigns benefit when they make background appeals. The source credibility literature suggests that an increase in a source's credibility is driven by changes in the respondents perceptions of the source's sincerity or their expertise. Yet the measures used here to determine the sincerity and expertise of the legislative candidate do not detect any significant

differences in the expected direction. While voters regard candidates with occupations more favorable, the results here do not provide an explanation for why.

Occupation and Party

In addition to varying the occupation of the candidate, the experimental design also varied the party of Candidate Kelley. While the policy content of the direct mail piece was constant, Kelley's party would vary between Democrat, Republican and a No Party condition. Figure 5 shows the difference in thermometer ratings from the control group (None No Party) for each of the 14 other treatment groups. In general, the data show that perceptions of the parties are important in how individuals view a candidate. For example, Candidate Kelley was always perceived more positively as a Democrat, though none of these differences are significantly different than the rating for respondents in the "None No Party" category. Voters also regarded the candidate more favorably when he did not have a party affiliation and had an occupation background. These differences were statistically significant when Candidate Kelley was not a politician (i.e., a Doctor or a CEO).

FIGURE 5 About Here

While occupation had almost no affect on perceptions of the candidate when he was a Democrat or belonged to no party, his occupational background has a strong effect on perceptions of Candidate Kelley when he is a Republican. Respondents viewed him more favorably as a Republican Doctor or a Republican CEO than respondents in the control group. When Kelley is both a Republican Doctor and Politician, voters view him almost the same as if they learned nothing of his party or occupation. But when Kelley is

a Republican politician, voters view him significantly less favorably than the control group. In fact, respondents give the Republican politician a mean favorability of 48.4, the only “cool” rating among the 15 different treatment groups. The favorability rating for the Republican politician is significantly lower than every other treatment. These results show just how unpopular Republican politicians were in the Fall of 2006, which of course, was shown in the election results.

The measures for sincerity and effectiveness provide evidence that individuals regard party and occupation as different measures of a candidate’s trait characteristics. More specifically, respondents used party to make distinctions in the candidate’s sincerity, and occupation to make distinctions about his effectiveness.

Figure 6 shows that the candidate’s occupation mattered little to perceptions of the candidate’s sincerity. Regardless of whether the Candidate Kelley had an occupation or what that occupation was, respondents gave him similar ratings on sincerity. But differences in sincerity ratings are observed between parties. When Candidate Kelley is a Republican, respondents regard him as significantly less sincere than when he is a Democrat, or when No Party is mentioned. Perceptions of the candidate’s sincerity can hinge on his partisanship, but are not dependent on his occupational background.

FIGURE 6 and 7 About Here

The opposite is true for effectiveness ratings. Figure 8 shows that respondents gave Candidate Kelley significantly higher ratings for effectiveness when he as a Doctor, a Politician, or a Dr. Politician. On the other hand, no significant differences exist in the Kelley’s effectiveness ratings regardless of his partisan affiliation. Despite the general favorable trends for Democrats in the Fall of 2006, respondents did not regard a

Democratic candidate as more capable of passing health care legislation. Respondents did, however, think that a Doctor or a Politician, both of whom had shown expertise in another arena, would have more success at passing health care legislation if elected to Congress.

FIGURE 8 and 9 About Here

Assessing the effect of particular occupations across the various measures shows that respondents tend to regard doctors very favorably across different measures. Something very different occurs in the results for the CEO. In general, respondents found the CEO very favorably in the thermometer ratings. But the CEO ratings in the two component categories (sincerity and effectiveness) are hardly different at all from the control group. So respondents like CEOs, but there is not a measure to explain why they do. This result suggests that there are other reasons for the background benefit than just effectiveness and sincerity, and future studies need to identify other potential sources for the benefit.

Experience and Source Credibility

These findings provide some degree of supportive evidence that voters use the experience of a candidate as a source cue. When viewing a candidate without the cue of partisanship, respondents regard a candidate more favorably when a campaign connects an issue to their candidate's background than when respondents learn only about the candidate's issue position. Even with the strong cue of party, respondents tend to give higher ratings to the candidate when they learn of his occupational background. The results in the sincerity and effectiveness ratings indicate that the benefit of background

appeals comes primarily from changes in perceptions of the candidate's expertise. Voters do not change their level of trust based on the candidate's occupation.

Thus, these results fit with others that show the importance of competence or authority in developing source credibility. In one of the original studies into source credibility, psychologists found that subjects were more likely to believe a scientific statement when delivered by a source wearing a lab coat (Hovland & Weiss 1951). In political communication, campaigns can use a candidate's background similarly, conferring authority, competence, and expertise on their candidate, and producing more favorable impressions of their candidate. Others have found that voters can alter their assessment based on the source's status, such as incumbency (Page et al. 1987; Kahn 1993). Background appeal can confer status and authority on a candidate who would not have it just by discussing their issue agenda. Voters care not just about what a candidate says, but their assessment of the likelihood that the candidate can implement her preferred policies once elected to office.

Background appeals thus allow voters to use retrospective information to make a prospective judgment. Downs (1957, 107-109) argues that the uncertainty voters face about what an officeholder will do once given power makes considering the reliability of political parties and candidates a rational response for voters. Since voters do not know what candidates will do once in office, their best gauge of future performance is past actions. If candidates have implemented new government policies in the past, voters will be more likely to believe that they can do it again in the future. Of if a candidate has special knowledge about the subject at hand (such as a doctor on health care), voters believe the candidate will be able to utilize that expertise in the future.

The results also show that campaigns are well advised to highlight their candidate's record in their television advertisements, direct mail pieces, and other communications with voters. As noted previously, campaigns follow this advice, frequently discussing the occupational background and political record of their candidate in their advertising (Shyles 1984; McDermott 1999; Arbour 2005). Discussing the background of their candidate provides campaigns with an efficient manner to develop the credibility of their candidate. A record appeal provides voters with a greater level of certainty about who a candidate is, a level that is difficult to develop with appeals based solely on the issue positions or trait characteristics of their candidate.

Cautions about the Results

While the results presented here show a strong connection between a candidate's occupational background and voters' perceptions of that candidate, there are several cautions about the results worthy of mention. The first is the relative modesty of the results. Despite results that are consistent with expectations regarding overall perceptions and effectiveness ratings, background has only a modest, and often statistically insignificant, effect on the dependent variables. One argument is that one should not expect much effect from such an experiment. Respondents had only one exposure to one message via one medium. Thus, the nature of the experimental design inherently limits external validity, because respondents were not exposed to a wide variety of campaign messages, media reports, and friendly conversations about the candidates, like they could be in a real-world campaign.

On the other hand, respondents likely paid more attention to the experimental stimulus than they would a campaign commercial or direct mail flier. Another factor that may have led to respondents paying more attention than voters do in real world is the makeup of the respondents, who were more likely to vote and paid more attention to politics than the population as a whole.¹¹ It is likely that the respondents paid more attention to this flier and could connect what they saw in the flier to other political information more easily than if a truly random sample of the electorate was surveyed.

The experiment, by design, held issue content constant across experimental treatments. But real life campaigns will alter their issue agenda to better connect with the occupational background of their candidate. Some of this is observed in the results for the CEO, which were hardly different from the control group in the sincerity and effectiveness ratings. But why would a CEO care more about health care, or be more effective in passing a bill through Congress. A real-life campaign for a business owner would be more likely to emphasize his positions on issues such as taxes and jobs, which have an easier connection to his occupational background. And background is one of several credibility building mechanisms they can use to connect candidates and issues. Campaigns can try to build the credibility of their candidate through factors such as party issue ownership, party images, endorsements, and connections to local party leaders, among others. Campaigns are not limited to one mechanism in a campaign, or even in a single advertisement. More nuanced studies of background appeals should examine the role a candidate's record and occupational background plays in connecting candidates to policies.

¹¹ Among respondents in the Texas module of the CCES, 89.3% claim to have voted in the 2006 general election and 54.4% claim to be "very interested in politics."

The mock candidate presented here runs for a legislative office, and his political experience is limited to other legislative office. Voters may have different expectations based on different offices, and the role that experience plays for the candidate here may not be the same if he ran for an executive position. In particular, voters may place a greater value on competence and effectiveness for executive office, where the candidate must not only pass policies, but implement them. Again, this is a subject worthy of attention in future research.

Conclusion

References to a candidate's background tend to produce more favorable impressions of that candidate. The experimental data presented here show that respondents who read a campaign appeal that connected a mock candidate's background to his issue position on health care regarded him more favorably than those who just learned about the candidate's issue position. These results are consistent with the argument that a candidate's background serves as a source credibility mechanism. Further study shows that background does not increase perceptions of the sincerity of the candidate, but does have a positive effect on perceptions of his potential effectiveness if elected to office.

The study also examines how party interacts with background in influencing voter perceptions. When the candidate is a Democrat, he receives relatively consistent ratings regardless of his occupation. When the candidate does not have a party affiliation, respondents regard him more favorably when they learn of his occupation. When the candidate is a Republican, there are volatile fluctuations between more popular

occupations (Doctor and CEO), and really unpopular occupations (Politician). Also, the candidate's party affiliation has an effect on perceptions of the candidate's sincerity, but occupation does not. The opposite pattern is true for the effectiveness ratings—party has no effect, but respondents think the Doctor and the Politician will be more effective.

REFERENCES CITED

- Alvarez, R. Michael. 1997. *Information and Elections*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Arbour, Brian K. 2005. "Messages, Issues, and Experience: How Campaigns Use the Candidates' Records to Win Votes." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Washington, DC. September 1-4, 2005
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Druckman, James N. 2001. "On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who Can Frame." *Journal of Politics*. 63(4): 1041-1066.
- Feldman, Stanley & Patricia Johnson Conover. 1983. "Candidates, Issues and Voters: The Role of Inference in Political Perception." *Journal of Politics* 45(4): 810-839.
- Hayes, Danny. 2005. "Candidate Qualities Through a Partisan Lens: A Theory of Trait Ownership." *American Journal of Political Science*. 49(4): 908-923.
- Hibbing, John R. and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2002. *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work*. New York : Cambridge University Press.
- Hinich, Melvin J. and Michael C. Munger. 1997. *Analytical Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hovland, Carl I., Janis, Irving L., & Harold H. Kelley. 1953. *Communications and Persuasion: Psychological Studies in Opinion Change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, Carl I. & W. Weiss. 1951-1952. "The Influence of Source Credibility on Communication Effectiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 15 (4): 635-650.
- Iyengar, Shanto & Nicholas Valentino. 2000. "Who Says What? Source Credibility as a Mediator of Campaign Advertising." In *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and Bounds of Rationality*. eds. Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Kahn, Kim Fridkin. 1993. "Incumbency and the News Media in U.S. Senate Elections: An Experimental Investigation." *Political Research Quarterly* 46 (December): 715-40
- Lodge, Milton and Ruth Hamill. 1986. "A Partisan Schema for Political Information-Processing." *American Political Science Review*. 80(2): 505-519.
- Lupia, Arthur & Mathew D. McCubbins. 1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know*.
- McDermott, Monica L. 2005. "Candidate Occupations and Voter Information Shortcuts." *Journal of Politics*. 67(1): 201-219.

- McDermott, Monika L. 1999. "Shortcut Voting: Candidate Characteristics and Voter Inference." Ph.D. diss. University of California, Los Angeles
- McGraw Katherine M., E. Hasecke , and K. Conger. 2003. "Ambivalence, uncertainty, and processes of candidate evaluation." *Political Psychology*. 24(3): 421-448
- Mondak, Jeffrey J. 1993. "Source Cues and Policy Approval." *American Journal of Political Science*. 37(2): 186-212.
- Mondak, Jeffrey J., Christopher J. Lewis, Jason C. Sides, Joohyun Kang, J. Olyn Long. 2004. "Presidential Source Cues and Policy Appraisals, 1981-2000." *American Politics Research*. 32(2): 219-235.
- Page, Richard E., Robert Y. Shapiro, and G.R. Dempsey. 1987. "What Moves Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science*. 81(1): 23-43.
- Petrocik, John R. 1996. "Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study." *American Journal of Political Science*. 40(3): 825-850.
- Philpot, Tasha S. 2004. "A Party of a Different Color? Race, Campaign Communications, and Party Politics." *Political Behavior*. 26(3): 249-270.
- Popkin, Samuel L. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Rahn, Wendy M. 1993. "The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing About Political Candidates." *American Journal of Political Science*. 37(2): 472-496.
- Rivers, Douglas. 2005. "Sample Matching: Representative Sampling from Internet Panels." Available at: http://web.mit.edu/polisci/portl/cces/material/sample_matching.pdf. Accessed March 4, 2007.
- Sellers, Patrick. 1998. "Strategy and Background in Congressional Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 92: 159-171.
- Shyles, Leonard. 1984. "Defining 'Images' of Presidential Candidates from Televised Political Spot Advertisements." *Political Behavior* 6(2): 171-81
- Sternthal, Brian, Lynn W. Phillips, & Ruby Dholakia. 1978. "The Persuasive Effect of Source Credibility: A Situational Analysis." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 42(3): 285-314.
- Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Figure 1. Mock Direct Mail Piece, Version “Both Democrat”

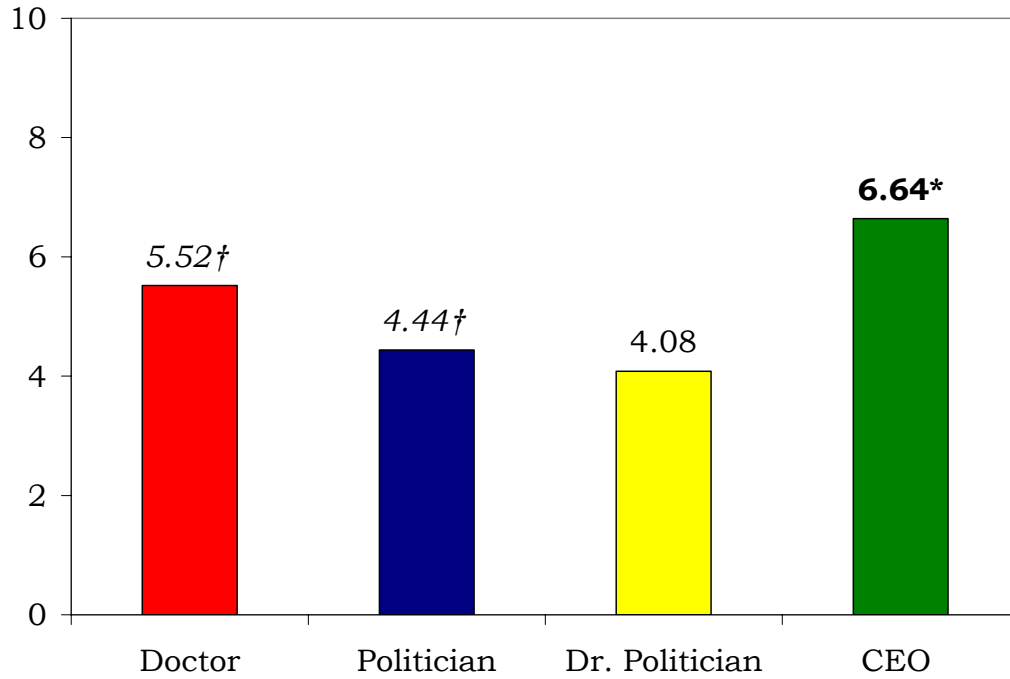
Front



Back

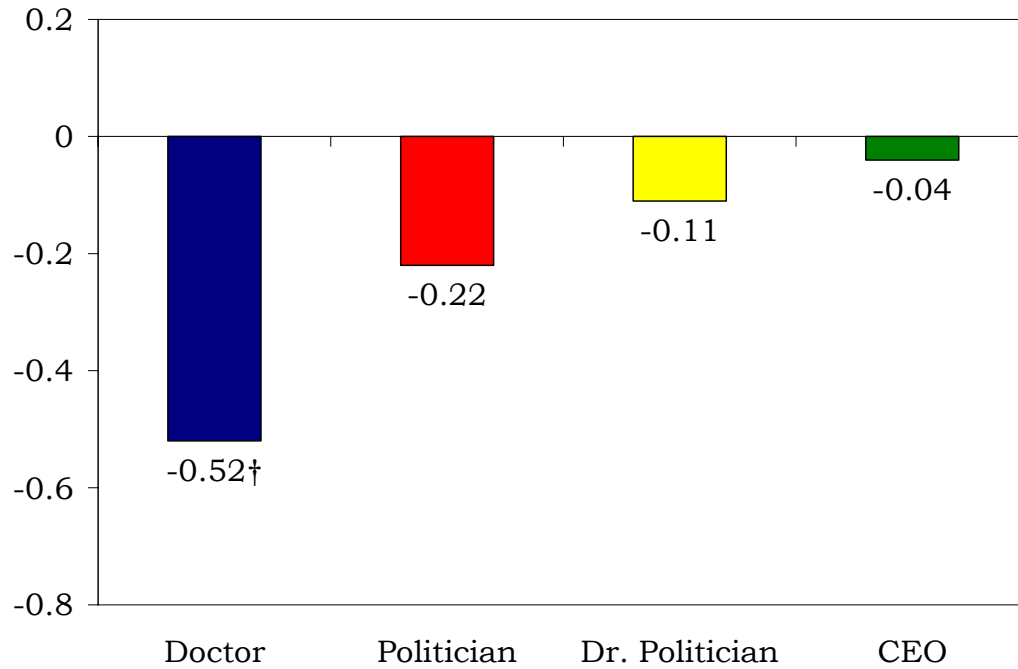


Figure 2. Difference in Thermometer Ratings from Control Group. No Party for Candidate



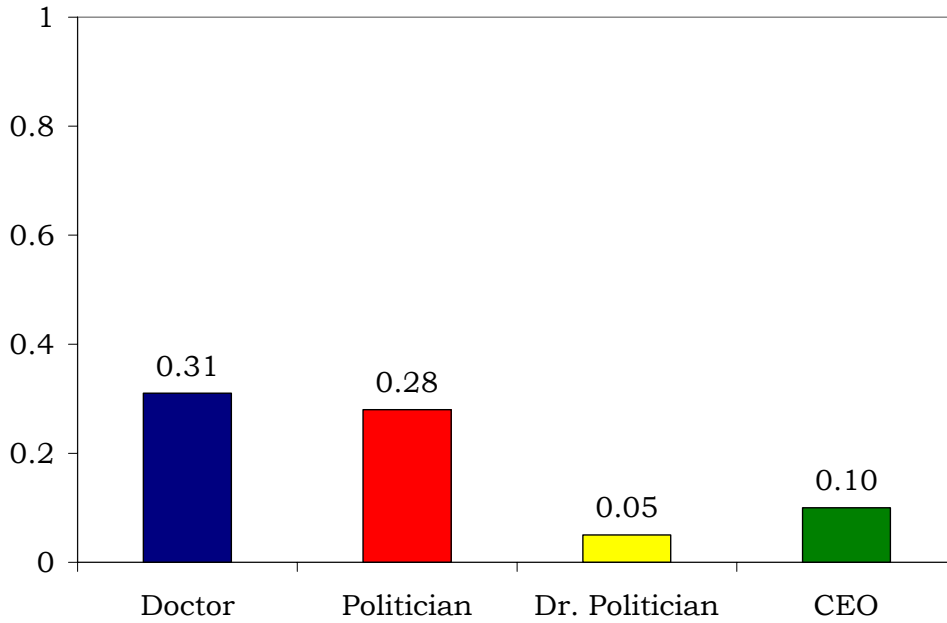
n = 331; * = p < .05; † = p < .10

Figure 3. Difference in Sincerity Ratings from Control Group. No Party for Candidate



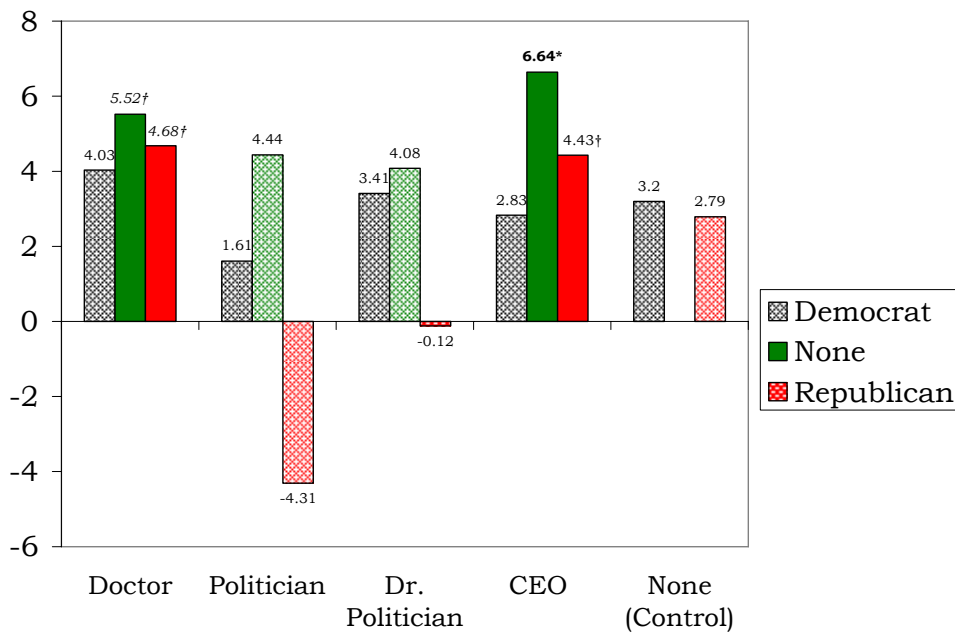
n = 331; * = p < .05; † = p < .10

Figure 4. Difference in Sincerity Ratings from Control Group. No Party for Candidate



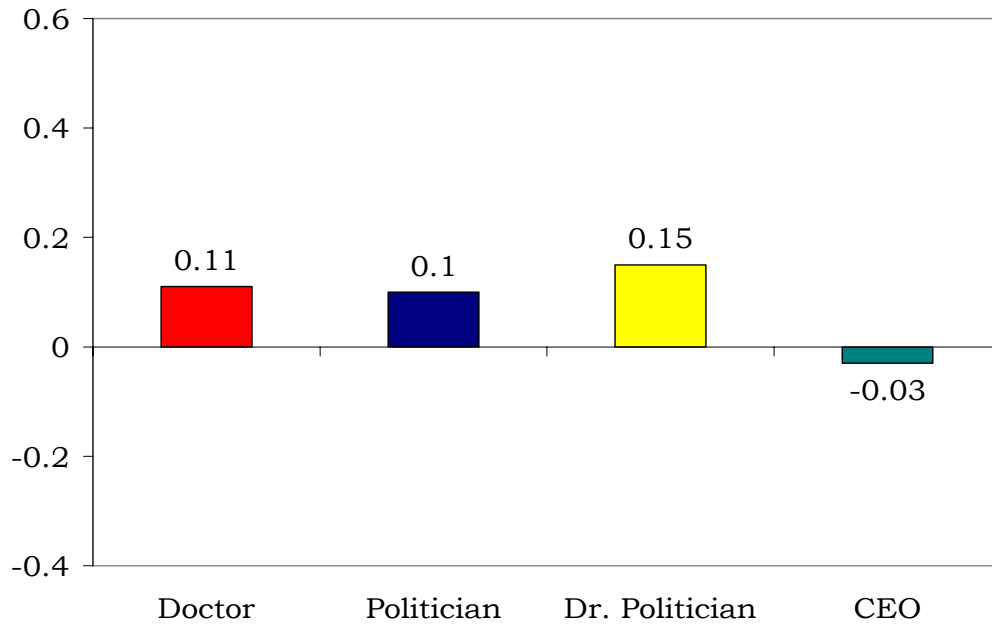
n = 331; * = p < .05; † = p < .10

Figure 5. Difference in Thermometer Ratings from Control Group. All Parties for Candidate



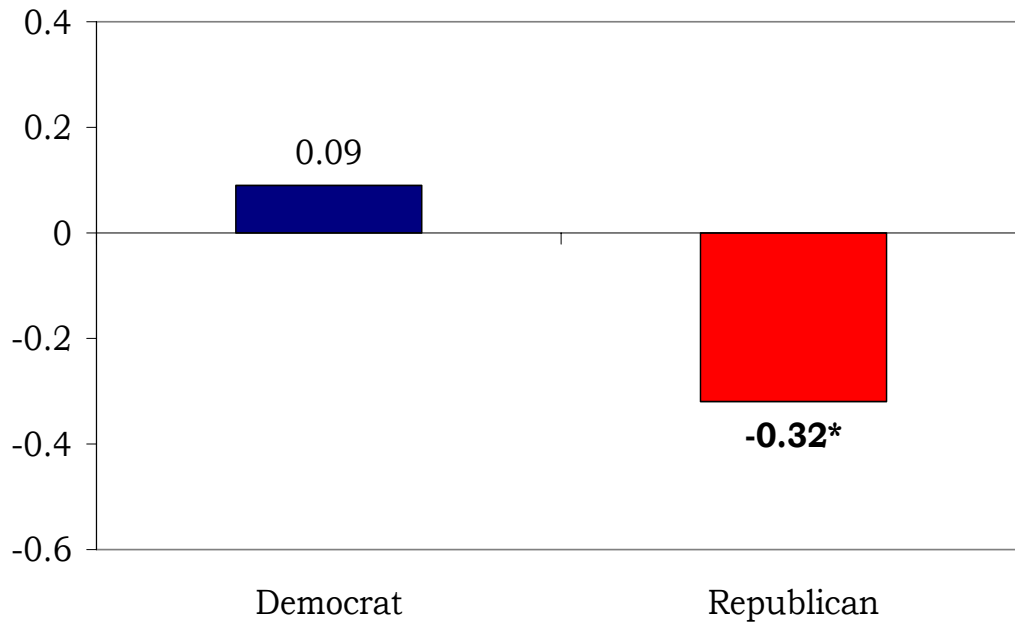
n = 959; * = p < .05; † = p < .10

Figure 6. Difference in Sincerity Ratings from Control Group. All Parties for Candidate



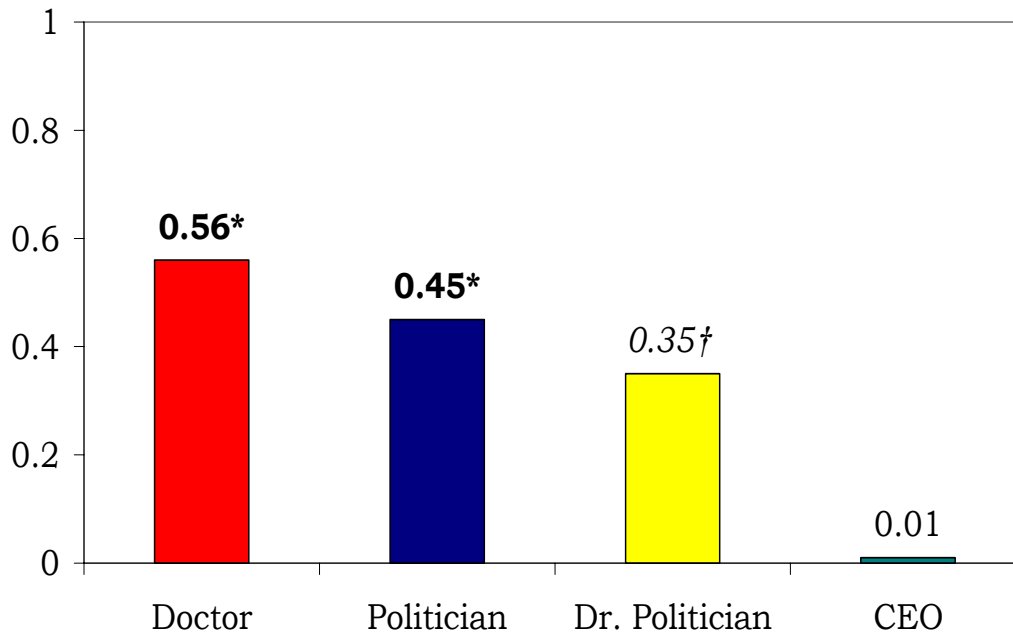
n = 959; * = p < .05; † = p < .10

Figure 7. Difference in Sincerity Ratings from Control Group. All Occupations for Candidate



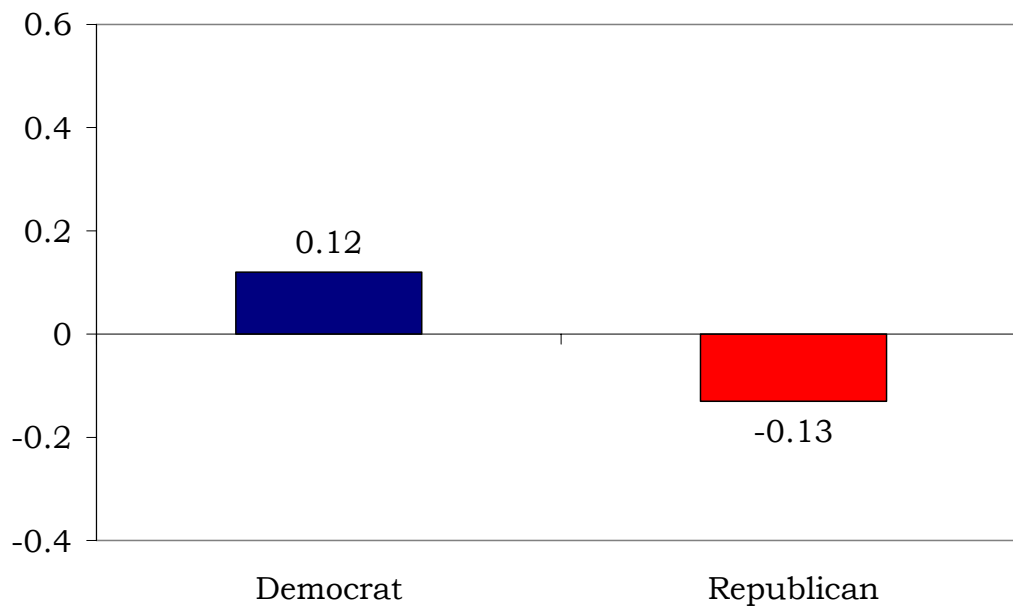
n = 959; * = p < .05; † = p < .10

Figure 8. Difference in Effectiveness Ratings from Control Group. All Parties for Candidate



n = 959; * = $p < .05$; † = $p < .10$

Figure 9. Difference in Thermometer Ratings from Control Group. All Occupations for Candidate



n = 959; * = $p < .05$; † = $p < .10$

Table A-1. Text of Experimental Manipulations

Treatment	Text
Doctor	<p>I've spent the last 15 years working for you as a <i>doctor and surgeon</i> at Memorial St. Joseph's Hospital.</p> <p>I know <i>first hand</i> what quality and affordable health care means to our families.</p> <p>And I will <i>never forget</i> that in Washington.</p>
Politician	<p>In the <i>state legislature</i>, I fought for and passed the Patient's Bill of Rights Act of 2004. It guarantees that patients can see the doctor of their choice.</p> <p>I've <i>fought hard</i> here to provide quality and affordable health care to our families.</p> <p>And <i>I'll fight just as hard</i> for them in Washington.</p>
CEO	<p>As a <i>small business owner</i>, I know first hand how far the cost of health care has skyrocketed. And how hard it is for families to afford health care.</p> <p>I'll take my experience and commitment to Washington to make sure that all our families can get the <i>quality and affordable health care</i> they need.</p>
Both	<p>I've worked every day for last 15 years to provide health care for our families. As a <i>physician and surgeon</i> at Memorial St. Joseph's Hospital, I know what quality and affordable health care means to our families.</p> <p>I brought that commitment to the <i>State Capitol</i>, where I passed the Patient's Bill of Rights Act of 2004. It guarantees that patients can see the doctor of their choice.</p> <p>I know first hand what <i>quality and affordable health care</i> means to our families. That's why I've fought so hard for health care at the State Capitol, and why I'll fight just as hard for it in Washington.</p>
None	No text.

Table A-2. Ratings for Each of the 15 Experimental Cells.

	Doctor	Politician	Dr. Politician	CEO	None (Control)
Democrat					
Thermometer	56.8	54.3	56.1	55.6	55.9
Sincerity	6.14	6.12	5.85	5.57	5.61
Effectiveness	4.69	4.62	4.43	4.00	4.37
N	(64)	(55)	(61)	(74)	(51)
No Party					
Thermometer	58.2	57.2	56.8	59.4	52.7
Sincerity	5.41	5.71	5.82	5.89	5.93
Effectiveness	4.49	4.46	4.23	4.28	4.18
N	(59)	(67)	(65)	(66)	(74)
Republican					
Thermometer	57.4	48.4	52.6	57.2	55.5
Sincerity	5.61	5.27	5.66	5.38	5.35
Effectiveness	4.61	4.38	4.53	3.92	3.7
N	(52)	(46)	(62)	(82)	(81)

Table A-3. Ratings for Occupation, Across All Party Treatments

	Doctor	Politician	Dr. Politician	CEO	None (Control)
Thermometer	57.4	53.8	55.2	57.3	54.6
Sincerity	5.73	5.72	5.77	5.59	5.62
Effectiveness	4.60	4.49	4.39	4.05	4.04
N	175	168	188	222	206

Table A-4. Ratings for Party, Across all Occupational Treatments

	Democrat	No Party	Republican
Thermometer	55.8	56.6	54.6
Sincerity	5.86	5.77	5.45
Effectiveness	4.41	4.29	4.16
N	305	331	323