

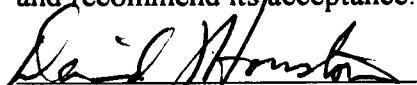
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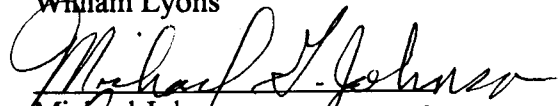
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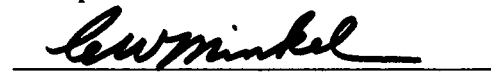


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**NEGATIVE VOTING IN CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS:
DOES REPRESENTATION REALLY MATTER?**

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sissie Hadjiharalambous
May 1996

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the "Three Wise Men" in my life

my advisor, Michael Gant,

my father, Themis Hadjiharalambous,

and my husband, Asim YarKhan.

Thank you all for pointing the way...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to whom I am grateful for making my time at the University of Tennessee so rewarding. Foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Professor Michael Gant, who has directed this dissertation. I shall never forget his endless encouragement throughout this project, his interest, and his patience. His jokes, his smile, and his reassuring words made all the difference at times that I had the "dissertation blues". I am also grateful to the rest of the members of my Dissertation Committee, David Houston, Bill Lyons, David Welborn, and Michael Johnson for their support and encouragement.

In addition, I owe much appreciation to my colleagues in the Political Science Department for cheering me along every bit of the way. In particular, I want to thank my office mates Chris Ludowise and Katherine Milikin. My special thanks goes to Lisa Zanetti, who besides being a wonderful office partner in the last three years, provided me with much needed early encouragement for this project when I felt that I could never settle on a topic -let alone finish a dissertation.

Lastly, the greatest debt is owed to my husband, Asim. He performed editorial and clerical tasks with enthusiasm, and aided more than once in sorting through the mysteries of why a computer program would not function properly. Most importantly, however, he was always there to ...tell me about "patience" and encouraged me to "enjoy the detours" along the way.

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I explore the phenomenon of negativity in the context of midterm congressional elections. Negativity is defined as the tendency of individuals to weigh negative bits of information (dislikes about a candidate) more heavily than equally extreme and equally likely positive bits of information (likes about a candidate). More importantly, within the broader framework of the quality of representation as perceived by the individual voter, I try to identify the type of incumbent who is more likely to be a victim of negative voting. I argue that those members of the House who are perceived by their constituents as responsive to the needs and desires of the district will be less likely to be damaged by unfavorable evaluations on Election Day. Furthermore, I try to identify some of the political characteristics that make a voter more likely to utilize the negative heuristic. Finally, I make an attempt to explore the implications of negativity in congressional elections for democratic theory (i.e., discuss the value of electoral outcomes for input in policy decisions when citizens' votes increasingly reflect disaffection with congressional candidates rather than approval) and to suggest some implications for campaign strategies that stem from the findings of this study. Survey data from the last five midterm congressional elections provided by the CPS American National Election Studies (1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1994) formed the basis for this analysis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Campbell et al. in their seminal work *The American Voter* noted that the electorate is "far more likely to punish an incumbent party for its mistakes than to reward it for its successes" (Campbell et al., 1960: 556). A number of scholars, in the decades that followed the publication of *The American Voter*, capitalized on this early observation with regard to the disproportionate influence of negative opinion in voting behavior and focused on relationships such as the one between candidate evaluations and negative voting (Key, 1966; Page, 1976; Luntz, 1988; Jacobson, 1995), economic conditions and negative voting (Kraemer, 1971; Tufte, 1975, 1978; Jacobson and Kernell, 1981; Norpoth and Yantek, 1983; Norpoth, 1984; Conover and Feldman, 1986; Alesina and Rosenthal, 1989; Erikson, 1990; Lynch and Munger, 1995), the emergence of specific policy alternatives and negative voting (Weaver, 1986; McGraw, 1990; Brady, Cogan, and Rivers, 1995), and media coverage of electoral campaigns and negative voting (Patterson and McClure, 1976; Kaid, 1981; Robinson, 1981a; Luntz, 1988; Kern, 1989; Diamond and Bates, 1992; Jamieson, 1992; Brooks, 1995). Furthermore, the presence of the phenomenon of negative voting in presidential contests has received some attention from political behavior scholars during the last decade because of the dramatic increase in the utilization of the negative heuristic by voters and the implications that this carries for democratic government (Weisberg and Grofman, 1981; Tyler, 1982; Gant and Davis, 1984; Feldman, 1985; Gant and Sigelman, 1985; Lau, 1985; Iyengar, 1987; Weaver, 1988; Sigelman and Gant, 1989; McGraw, 1990; Gant and Richardson, 1993; Richardson and Gant, 1995).

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the aforementioned studies have focused exclusively on the phenomenon of negative voting within the context of presidential elections. However, if negative voting is as important an aspect of American electoral politics as previous literature seems to suggest, there is no reason to expect this to be a trend that is unique to presidential contests only. If so many voters are indeed basing their electoral decisions on a dislike for the opponent, rather than affection for the preferred candidate, when choosing who should occupy the Oval Office, does it not make sense to expect the same heuristic being utilized when pulling the lever to elect representatives for lower offices?

Samuel Kernell's analysis of mid-term congressional elections from 1946 to 1966 provides the most systematic evidence for the presence of negative voting in the calculus of voting for U.S. Senators and U.S. House Representatives (Kernell, 1977). Kernell argues that the presence of negative voting is the major explanation for the tendency of the president's party to lose seats in mid-term elections. This is so, argues Kernell, because negative evaluations of presidential performance have a much stronger impact on congressional electoral decisions than do positive evaluations. However, Kernell's work is less than satisfying, in that heavy emphasis is placed upon the impact of presidential performance as the primary determinant of voters' evaluations of congressional candidates. Negative voting is not examined as a phenomenon in congressional elections in itself, but only in the light of voters' dissatisfaction with the incumbent president.

But then, if we limit our explanation to dissatisfaction with the White House, why do not *all* of the in-party's congressional candidates share the same fate? For instance, in the most recent off-year election in November of 1994 we witnessed the defeat of an unusually large number of Democratic incumbents. Most observers attributed Democratic losses to the public's dissatisfaction with the Democratic administration in the White

House, reasoning that voters expressed their disapproval for President Clinton's policy initiatives in the only way possible, by voting against Democratic congressional candidates (Wilcox, 1995). Not all Democratic candidates were punished by the electorate, however. Many Democratic incumbents were reelected by comfortable margins and a few even managed to increase their victory margins. Also, a handful of Democratic newcomers managed to get elected to serve for the first time. To explain this phenomenon, we must look beyond the effects of presidential popularity and job approval. Although the literature at the presidential level suggests that congressional candidates from the same party as the incumbent president are more likely to be victims of negative voting (e.g., Gant and Davis, 1984), the size for the advantage for their opponents should depend upon the individual candidate. Congressional elections provide a well set framework to test such a proposition.

The present research then is an attempt to go beyond presidential performance as a determinant of mid-term elections voting. I focus instead on the detailed evaluations of the congressional candidates *themselves*. Does the electorate vote against such candidates to a greater degree than it votes for them? If so, has this always been the case or is it a more recent phenomenon? If yes, why so? If not, then why has there been so much coverage given by the media to the negativity effect in recent elections? Furthermore, is the heuristic of negative voting used to a greater extent by certain segments of the electorate? For example, are those who are distrustful of the federal government more likely to vote against a congressional candidate rather than for him/her? Furthermore, while there has been no systematic evidence, intuitively it makes sense to expect that such a heuristic would be more prevalent in the voting calculus in races where a vulnerable incumbent has sought reelection, and in cases where the incumbent has compiled a service record (i.e., casework, issue position, etc.) that does not accurately reflect the desires of his/her electoral constituency. This study uses propositions from theories of

representation (Pitkin, 1967; Mayhew, 1974; Eulau and Karps, 1977) to cast light on these suppositions. Finally, a major concern of this research is the utilization of the negative heuristic by voters in mid-term congressional elections for democratic theory. The United States Congress is unique among national legislatures in the central role it plays in national policy making. If citizens' votes increasingly reflect dissatisfaction with congressional candidates rather than approval, then how can electoral outcomes be accurately translated in policy decisions?

Lack of answers to these questions is what initially attracted my attention to the need and importance of understanding the influence of negativity on voting behavior. This interest was indeed heightened at the aftermath of the 1994 congressional elections and the increased proportion of negative political advertising that was aired (Brooks, 1995). As a matter of fact, despite people's disapproval of negative advertising, politicians and their consultants seem to be firmly of the opinion that negative ads can, and do indeed, succeed in creating a significant level of dissatisfaction among voters through "unfavorable" impressions of the targeted candidate. More specifically, far from delivering "sympathy" votes for the targeted candidate, negative advertising seems to work in favor of his/her opponent. Especially at the congressional level, negative political advertising has been shown to have significant effects on voter attitudes and beliefs (Robinson, 1981). And as Kaid (1981) remarks, negative political advertising may also sustain a trend that helps promote not only the creation of candidate images which bear no relation to reality but also the destruction of the political system itself by emphasizing personalities over issues.

In sum, this study holds that, in the realm of congressional vote choice, the heuristic of negative voting by the public is not solely determined by presidential popularity. Furthermore, it is not simply a question of negative bits of campaign

information outweighing positive ones, or "sticking-out" against a background of predominantly positive information. Candidates' reputations are also important in influencing candidate evaluations and in determining whether it is the incumbent or the challenger who is preferred. Congressional candidates *can* and *do* influence their electoral fortunes by *their* actions. Lack of satisfaction with the White House or Washington in general, it is thought, translates into negative voting. What I suggest here is that, negative voting occurs because voters may be dissatisfied with their elected representatives. In this regard, those that utilize the negative heuristic in reaching voting decisions may be a lot more "responsible" than conventional wisdom suggests (Schwarz and Clore, 1988; Chaiken, Liberman, and Eagley, 1989; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991).

This study will proceed in the following manner: In Chapter II I will survey previous studies on the negativity effect, highlighting contributions on the subject and, more importantly, discuss in more depth the little that has been written so far about negative voting within the context of congressional campaigns. In the same Chapter, I will also examine evidence for the existence of voters' utilization of candidate evaluations (e.g., likes and dislikes) in determining their vote choice. In Chapter III, the major components of a theory of representation that is congruent with the phenomenon of negative voting will be presented. In the same chapter, I will argue that theories in that tradition are much more satisfying for developing explanations for negative voting in political science rather than continuing to rely exclusively on theories of decision making that are grounded in other fields (e.g., prospect theory, portfolio theory and other cost-oriented hypotheses rooted in economics; wishful-thinking tendency, Pollyanna effects and other propositions rooted in social psychology). By that, I do not suggest that we ought to dismiss these approaches, but rather that we need to look beyond them in order to understand the specifics of decision making *in the voting booth*. Furthermore, we should show more skepticism about the evidence for negativity presented by economists and social

psychologists because, as I will show in the next chapter, such evidence is largely limited to fairly artificial laboratory settings. Political behavior, however, needs to be studied in a more realistic context. In the last section of Chapter III, the major hypotheses and expected findings will be discussed in detail. In Chapter IV I will present the methodology and measures to be employed in the CPS/NES analysis. Chapter V will contain the results of the study. And finally, in Chapter VI, after summarizing the major findings of this study, some implications of these findings will be discussed and possible directions for future research will be briefly proposed.

CHAPTER II

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON NEGATIVITY

The role of negative information in decision making has been most frequently documented in two fields: social psychology and economics. Person perception and risk-taking are, respectively, the more specific areas within the aforementioned fields where research on negativity has received the most attention. It is essential to start with a review of this literature and only later to proceed to studies that examine negativity in political science since most of the latter are based on findings suggested by social psychologists and economists.

All works on negativity identified in the field of political science will be briefly discussed since their relatively limited number allows such a task. The following criteria were used for selecting material to be included in the review from the fields of social psychology and economics: First, the individual is the decision-making entity rather than the group, the institution, or the polity; second, only descriptive works of how negativity operates in the decision making process are selected rather than prescriptive analyses of how decisions might be made in the service of formal decision criteria; third, given my ultimate interest in candidate evaluations and vote choice, I confine my definition of decisions to cases in which individuals act in the service of preferences. Works that examine decision-making in the face of indifference are excluded since those with indifferent preferences usually stay home on Election Day. But, before turning to an examination of the literature, a word is in order about the meaning of the term "negativity".

2.1. Defining Negativity

Traditionally various "rational" models of human information processing have begun with the assumption that positive and negative information is equally important when the individual decision-maker integrates information bits to reach a preferred course of action. At first glance, this assumption seems reasonable enough. However, there have been numerous works whose findings suggest that the validity of this simple assumption needs to be questioned. Indeed, what is suggested is that for a variety of reasons different individuals weigh negative bits of information more heavily than equally extreme and equally likely positive bits of information in a variety of information-processing tasks. This finding will be referred to here as the "negativity effect" or the "negativity bias".

Within the context of voting behavior this same effect is referred to as "negative voting" since it is negative bits of information that are weighted more heavily in the process of candidate evaluations. A few works use the term "anti-candidate voting" (e.g., Gant and Sigelman, 1985; Sigelman and Gant, 1989). This should not be equated with "negative voting". "Anti-candidate voting" involves the individual's direct response to a question that taps on the prevalence of negative evaluations in voting decisions. More specifically, voters are asked "Would you say you're voting mainly for [candidate they supported] or are you voting mainly against [the opposing candidate]?" (SRC Election Study, 1964) or "Did you decide on your candidate mainly because you liked him, or because you didn't like the others?" (1980 CBS News/ New York Times Post-election Survey) or "Would your vote for [the preferred candidate] be a vote for him, or a vote against another candidate?" (1992 University of Tennessee Pre-election Survey). Unfortunately, a similar item has never been included in the American National Election Studies conducted by the University of Michigan. Since that is the data set that is most often used by political science scholars, those interested in exploring the role of negative

information bits in candidate evaluations have resorted to utilizing indirect measures of negativity. They "infer" that negative bits of information are weighted more heavily in the voting calculus by juxtaposing voters' "likes and dislikes" about or "feeling thermometer" ratings of the candidates. As a matter of fact, "like/dislikes" questions have been included on every American National Election Study for every presidential election since 1952. More specifically, the actual text of these questions is "Is there anything in particular about _____ that might make you want to vote for (against) him?" The same question has been included in all congressional studies (1978, 1982, 1986, 1992, and 1994). Similarly, "feeling thermometers" have been incorporated in most presidential election NES survey instruments and in virtually all of the off-year election studies. Studies that "infer" the role of negative information in the voting calculus using these indirect measures then, talk about "negative" rather than "anti-candidate" voting. For the purpose of this study only the term "negative voting"¹ will be used since it is only indirect measures of affect that are available in the context of congressional races.

2.2. Evidence and Explanations for the Negativity Effect in Social Psychology Research

Early on, empirical support for the negativity effect came mainly from the psychological study of person perception and decision-making (Kanouse and Hanson, 1972). The most widely studied forms of the negativity effect, therefore, have been primarily concerned with the evaluation of objects and persons². In the latter case, research on impression formation from trait characteristics (Anderson, 1965; Feldman, 1966; Wyer, 1970; Hamilton and Huffman, 1971; Hamilton and Zanna, 1972; Warr and Jackson, 1977; Cantor and Kihlstrom, 1989; Clore, 1992; Skowronski, Carlston, and

¹ More on the operational definition of the term will be offered in Chapter IV.

² More attention will be given to works concerned with evaluation of persons here, since that literature seems more useful for my purposes here.

Isham, 1993) and on behavioral information (Richey, McClelland, and Shimkunas, 1967; Briscoe, Woodyard and Shaw, 1967; Fiske, 1980) suggests that "ratings of people described by positive and negative adjectives are more negative than would be predicted by simply averaging the scale values of the adjectives when used alone" (Kanouse and Hanson, 1972: 14). Furthermore, secondary analyses of the data produced from some of the aforementioned studies suggest that the greater weight typically given to negative characteristics cannot be accounted for by such artifacts as the greater surprisingness (Kinder, 1971; Landman, 1987; Gavanski and Wells, 1989; Gleicher, Kost, Baker, Strathman, Richman, and Sherman, 1990) or lesser frequency of negative characteristics (Abelson and Kanouse, 1966; Markman, Gavanski, Sherman, and McMullen, 1993). Negativity effects remain strong even when such factors as frequency and surprisingness are controlled through partial correlation techniques. The next logical question then, is "why"? Why do overall evaluations of persons having both good and bad characteristics lie closer to the bad than the good side of the spectrum?

Numerous explanations are provided in the literature. The most prominent though is the cognitive viewpoint, or "figure-ground" hypothesis (Lau, 1985). Here the negativity bias is explained as a contrast phenomenon that facilitates people's efforts to sort out decisions on the basis of the allegedly more outstanding negative information (Kanouse and Hanson, 1972). Thus, Jordan (1965) confirms experimental findings by Rokeach and Rothman (1965) wherein subjects who rated two cognitive items separately and, later, in relation to each other, produce results that differed "to the extent that 'disliking' has a stronger effect upon behavior than does 'liking' " (Jordan, 1965: 318).

The "figure-ground hypothesis" is essentially a perceptual explanation. It assumes, like expectancy-contrast theories (Sears, 1983; Skowronski and Carlston, 1987), that human beings generally live in a positive world. Because of their relative infrequency,

negative actions and information tend to stand out against this positive background. A similar rationale is suggested by correspondent-inference theory (Jones and Davis, 1965; Jones and McGills, 1976) which explains negative behavior in terms of dispositional characteristics an observer infers from the cost an actor (the person performing the behavior) would incur. This approach focuses on the important actor-observer difference in attribution theory, namely, the saliency of dispositional factors when one tries to understand the behavior of others, and of situational factors when trying to understand one's own behavior (Jones and Nisbett, 1972).

In this context then, negativity is used as a heuristic to keep the information-processing demands of the task at hand within bounds. Behind this lies the assumption that individuals are limited in their information-processing capabilities (Dawes, 1976). This assumption has been supported by a substantial amount of empirical evidence produced by laboratory studies and others in a more natural setting (Miller, 1956; Newell and Simon, 1972; Kahneman, 1973; Simon, 1974; Broadbent, 1975; Russell, 1980; Zajonc, 1980; Lazarus, 1982; Marcus and Rahn, 1990). Heuristics, according to Braunstein (1976), are problem-solving methods which tend to produce efficient solutions by restricting the search through the space of possible solutions. Thus, in our case negative information bits are utilized more extensively (i.e., carry a heavier weight in the decision-making process) because they "stick out" in the plethora of information that surrounds the individual.

Great evidence for individuals' tendency to use negative bits of information as a shortcut in decision making has been found in literature that examines the circumstances that underlie impression formation. The work of Norman Anderson (1965, 1967, 1968a, 1968b, 1974), for instance, illustrates that when subjects evaluated a hypothetical person described by adjectives varying in negative or positive polarity, the highly polarized

negative adjectives significantly lowered the overall evaluation³. For the purposes of the present study, the most interesting data in Anderson's work are displayed in Table 2-1. The symbols, L and H, stand for adjectives of low and high scale values respectively. On the left side of the table are the mean ratings of hypothetical persons described by four very positive traits (HHHH), four moderately positive traits (M+M+M+M+), four moderately unfavorable traits (M-M-M-M-), and finally, four very unfavorable traits

TABLE 2-1: Impressions of Hypothetical People by Four Different Traits

Ratings of Homogenous Sets		Average of Extreme and Moderate Sets		Ratings of Heterogeneous Sets		Deviations from Predictions of Averaging Model
HHHH	79.39	71.30	HHM+M+	71.11	- .19	
M+M+M+M+	63.20					
M-M-M-M-	39.50	28.57	LLM-M-	25.67	-2.90	
LLLL	17.64					

SOURCE: Anderson, Norman. 1965. "Averaging vs. Adding as a Stimulus Combination Rule in Person Perception." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 70:393-400.

(LLLL). On the right side of the table are the mean ratings of a person described by two very positive and two moderately positive traits (HHM+M+), and of a person described by two very unfavorable traits (LLM-M-). If what is in effect is an "adding rule", then we would expect the individual to "add up" the values of the separate traits possessed by the stimulus (i.e., the hypothetical person) and to reach something approximating the *sum* of these trait values in his/her overall evaluation. However, Anderson's research suggests

³ The overall evaluation was a rating of 1-100 with 50 describing a person who the subject would neither like or dislike, lower numbers for persons he/she would dislike, and higher numbers for persons he/she liked. In other words, Anderson's measure of overall evaluations although not called so, greatly resembles what political scientists call "feeling thermometers". Similarly then, Anderson's measure is open to the same criticism that feeling thermometers have been subjected with respect to both their validity and reliability in measuring affection (for more on the problems associated with feeling thermometers, see Lau, 1985).

that an "averaging rule" provides a more accurate description of the evaluation process⁴. In other words, the individual averages the separate trait values in making his/her overall evaluation. An "averaging rule" then would predict in the scenario outlined in Table 2-1 that the HHM+M+ person should be rated midway between the HHHH person and the M+M+M+M+ person, while the LLM-M- person should be rated midway between the LLLL person and the M-M-M-M- person. Examining the ratings depicted in the second column of the same table we see that whereas the predictions are quite accurate with regard to the HHM+M+ person, the case is very different for the rating of the person described by two very unfavorable and two moderately unfavorable adjectives. More specifically, we see that the rating for that person is well *below* the predicted midpoint⁵. The very unfavorable traits evidently had disproportionate weight in the overall impression. Anderson goes on to point out that firstly, neither a simple averaging nor an additive model could predict this finding, and secondly, that the same effect was not obtained for highly polarized positive adjectives (Anderson, 1965)⁶.

Despite some evidence of individual subject differences in the weighting of traits or what Ostrom and Davis call "idiosyncratic weighting" (Ostrom and Davis, 1979)⁷, a number of studies that deal with impression formation concur with Anderson's general finding that negative adjectives have a stronger tendency to exert a "modifying capacity" (Feldman, 1966) than positive adjectives. Hodges (1974), for instance found that, while

⁴ For that reason and the sake of simplicity only expected ratings using the averaging rule are depicted in the table. For the exact predictions and outcomes associated with the adding rule, see the original work.

⁵ However, no statistical comparisons are reported in Anderson's work that would allow us to determine the reliability of the differential positive-negative impact.

⁶ In a later piece (1974), after repeated evidence illustrating the existence of negativity bias in overall evaluations Anderson, in search of an explanation, speculated that the magnitude of this negativity effect is not very large and that it may be restricted to only extremely negative stimuli (Anderson, 1974: 261). However, no attempt was made to test these speculations.

⁷ It is interesting to notice that in their study of "idiosyncratic weighting", Ostrom and Davis found that negative traits were not always weighted more heavily than positive traits. As a matter of fact, in more than 20% of the instances of unequal weighting, it was the more positive trait that was accorded a higher weight!

equal weighing occurred in person descriptions containing favorable information, in descriptions containing a mix of equally intense and equally likely favorable and unfavorable traits, the more unfavorable traits clearly received more weight. In a similar vein, both Rokeach and Rothman (1965) and Wyer (1969) found that ratings of hypothetical persons described by pairs of one positive and one negative adjective were closer to ratings of someone described by a positive trait alone.

Interestingly, this alleged stronger influence of unfavorable characteristics has also been supported by research on personnel interviewing (Bolster and Springbett, 1961), which suggests that interviewers probably use unfavorable information about job applicants as a basis for rejecting them to a greater extent than they use favorable information as a basis for hiring them. Given a sizable applicant pool, interviewers may even focus their attention on seeking unfavorable characteristics that can be used to disqualify applicants rather than positive characteristics that would enhance job performance (Webster, 1964).

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that a bias toward negativity in evaluations of persons or their work is even more likely to exist in particular social circumstances. More specifically, Amabile and Glazebrook (1981) claim that people who believe their audience to be of relatively high status do rate the stimulus person's intellectual qualities significantly more negatively. They introduce this idea as matter of fact, with an experience that a lot of people in the academia go through at some point in their life: their first invitation to review a manuscript. As Amabile and Glazebrook point out, given the insecurity and self-doubt that most of us are likely to feel at such a moment, we set out to detect fatal flaws in design or methodology, errors in logic and writing style, and other shortcomings which lead us to become brutally critical. Similarly, at academic colloquia, it often seems to be the graduate students who are the most searing critics of the speaker. In

short, we fall prey to a negativity bias - "a vigilance for faults, a blindness for strengths" (Amabile and Glazebrook, 1981: 2).

Besides the causal link between insecurity and negativity, the literature also suggests a link between the presence of time pressure in decision making and negativity. Wright (1974) hypothesized that under conditions of time pressure or distraction, individuals will tend to simplify the decision task by disproportionately weighting unfavorable information. Wright's prediction was supported: Time pressure did indeed increase reliance on unfavorable information, and distraction showed a tendency towards the same effect. In a similar vein, Wright and Weitz (1977) found that subjects evaluated possible unfavorable outcomes more severely when these outcomes were expected sooner rather than later and also when greater commitment to a chosen alternative was required. This tendency towards caution was also found by Hansson, Keating, and Terry (1974) in an investigation of student voting on pending state legislation. Students allowed two minutes to vote were significantly more conservative (e.g., status quo oriented) in their voting than were students allowed unlimited time. Ben Zur and Breznitz (1981) report similar findings for gambling decisions. Under time pressure individuals' primary objective becomes that of reducing the threat of negative consequences. To this end, subjects place heavy emphasis on unfavorable information about the available alternatives.

Previous research also suggests that the level of similarity, as perceived by the individual respondent, between himself/herself and the object of evaluation is strongly correlated to the emphasis placed on unfavorable characteristics. More specifically, when someone is similar to us in important ways, we often feel attracted to him or her (e.g., Byrne, Gouax, Griffitt, Lamberth, Murakawa, Prasad, Prasad, and Ramirez, 1971; Davis, 1984; Buss, 1985; Smeaton, Byrne, and Murnen, 1989; Moreland and Beach, 1992). And for an attractive person we are more likely to oversee negative information and focus on

positive traits. Furthermore, an attractive person is more likely to seem familiar to us and as result we become less likely to be critical of their behavior or character flaws (Gerard, Green, Hoyt, and Conolley, 1973; Matlin and Stang, 1978). In a similar vein, Moreland and Zajonc (1982) argue that familiarity, attraction, and similarity are strongly related to one another, combining to produce a sense of "affinity" that brings people together psychologically and makes them more likely to underweight negative bits of information in their evaluations of each other. On the other hand, we are more likely to weight such information more heavily in situations where we perceive the objects of evaluation as very different from us, unattractive, and have rarely -if ever- had an opportunity to socially interact with them.

Besides research on factors that tend to intensify the likelihood of placing a heavier emphasis on negative bits of information in forming overall evaluations, it has also been demonstrated that negative bits of information create impressions that are more resistant to change than those resulting from positive information (Richey, McClelland, and Shimkunas, 1967; Hamilton and Zanna, 1972).

Even more interestingly, it has been shown that introducing negative bits of information in the decision calculus can reduce to zero the weights associated with positive information. More specifically, Richey, Koenigs, and Fortin (1975) have written on the effect of contrasting information on character judgments and point to the fact that sometimes "a single negative behavior neutralized five positive behaviors" (Richey, Koenigs, and Fortin, 1975: 240). Such a finding sounds similar to a more recent argument made by Ottati and Wyer (1989) that an extremely negative behavior may reduce to zero the weights associated with other candidate information. A case in point is the "single issue voter" who may disregard all other information about the candidate once it is learned that the candidate takes an undesirable stand on a particular issue.

In sum, the evidence from social psychological research provides unequivocal support for the existence of a negativity effect. However, in their vast majority these studies were conducted in a fairly artificial laboratory environment. On the positive side, this ensures control over a variety of extraneous variables. Unfortunately, the ability to control for extraneous variables and the enhancement of the studies' internal validity is traded for the ability to ascertain that similar findings would hold true in a more natural setting (i.e., external validity). Luckily, there has been a short series of person perception experiments using more realistic stimuli than those used in the previously mentioned studies. In what might be called the "more equivalent" of Anderson's studies, Birnbaum (1972) described hypothetical people in terms of "immoral" acts which they supposedly performed. Their acts, which ranged from "poisoning a neighbor's dog whose barking bothers you" to "pocketing the tip the previous customer left for the waitress" were first rated in isolation and then in pairs. Birnbaum found that the fouler of the two deeds was consistently more important in determining the overall evaluation of the pair. These findings were basically corroborated by the rest of the experiments in the series (Freedman and Steinbruner, 1964; Leventhal and Singer, 1964; Mayo and Crockett, 1964; Briscoe, Woodyard, and Shaw, 1967; Lott et al., 1970; Beigel, 1973; Gray-Little, 1973; Izzett and Leginski, 1972; Bord, 1976).

2.3. Evidence and Explanations for the Negativity Effect in Economics Research

A negativity bias has also been found in decision making in the field of economics. One of the major differences between these studies and those conducted by psychologists is with respect to what is considered relevant in the evaluation of the different alternatives by the individual. Whereas psychologists are rarely concerned with probabilities and risks involved in the available choices, these are prime concerns for those studying decision-

making in the field of economics. As a matter of fact, there is an emphasis by the latter on explicit representation of individuals' subjective probabilities and the testing of particular formal models (Abelson and Levi, 1985).

In the tradition of the literature in decision-making that has its roots in economics⁸, four types of information ought to be relevant any time an individual has to make a decision: i) the probability of a positive outcome; ii) the pay-off/benefit associated with that positive outcome; iii) the probability of a negative outcome; and iv) the pay-off/benefit associated with that negative outcome. Furthermore, in terms of simple monetary bets, these four types of information may be translated into: i) the probability of winning (pW); ii) the amount which can be won ($\$W$); iii) the probability of losing (pL); and iv) the amount which can be lost ($\$L$).

"Rational" theories of decision-making state that individuals should act in such ways as to maximize their expected value -i.e., maximize ($pW \times \$W - pL \times \L). However, empirical evidence seems to suggest that, for a variety of reasons, people do not always act this way. In addition to that, a number of studies have demonstrated that when peoples' decisions deviate from the behavior predicted by "rational" theorists, they do so in a conservative rather than in a risky direction. In other words, often times pL and $\$L$ are given far more weight in the decision calculus than that assigned to pW and $\$W$ (Atthowe, 1960; Reilly and Taub, 1961; Slovic and Lichtenstein, 1968; Slovic and Lichtenstein, 1971; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Hogarth, 1975; Shapley, 1977; Slovic, Fischhoff, and Lichtenstein, 1977; Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; McCrimmon and Larsson, 1979; Schoemaker and Kunreuther, 1979; Hershey and Schoemaker, 1980; Einhorn and Hogarth, 1981; Kahneman and Tversky, 1982a; Kahneman and Tversky, 1982b; Machina, 1982; Payne, 1982; Pitz and Sachs, 1984).

⁸ In its vast majority this literature has its ancestry in the work of von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1947.

According to the risk-taking literature then, people often act as if they are "cost-oriented". Within the framework of this perspective, the negativity bias found in the evaluation of stimuli is defined as a tendency for perceivers to be cost-oriented in forming overall judgments. In other words, potential costs are more important in determining an overall evaluation than are potential gains. This concept suggests that in risk-taking people apparently attempt to protect themselves against eventual regret by weighing negative attributes more heavily than equally likely and equally powerful positive attributes. Following the work of Brehm (1956), who first reported on post-decisional spreading of alternatives (i.e., increasing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and/or decreasing the attractiveness of the forfeited alternative after making a decision), Kenny (1985) applied the regret minimization notion to the study of a series of "bets". Indeed, he found that what he calls "irrational decisions" -i.e., overweighing of the negative consequences of a decision- occurred 71% of the times. Only in 29 out of 100 "bets" subjects overweighed the possible gains involved. Evidently, "what if I lose" concerns were far more predominant in the decision-making process than "what will I gain" thoughts.

Such findings are indeed quite common in the experimental gambling literature. Slovic and Lichtenstein (1968), for example, found that "potential losses exert more influence on a gamble's attractiveness than potential gains of the same magnitude." These findings were corroborated by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) who went on to show that the slope of the value function (i.e., the rate of change in the perceived value of an outcome) is steeper for perceived losses than for perceived gains. In other words, a gain of \$5 has less impact on value and satisfaction than an equal loss of \$5. And finally, introducing various betting dimensions in his experiment, Slovic (1969) observed that

subjects were more conservative (i.e., cost-oriented) when gambling for real money than for imaginary money (e.g., poker chips, marbles, etc.)⁹.

Evidence of a negativity bias has also been found in studies of choices in "life dilemma" situations (e.g., Kogan and Wallach, 1967; Kahneman and Tversky, 1982; Wells and Gavanski, 1989). Typically subjects are asked whether a hypothetical person should choose a safe alternative which provides low levels of positive reinforcement (such as staying in his current job) or choose a much riskier alternative which will provide either much higher benefits, or very harsh costs (such as transferring to a new company at a higher salary, with no assurance that the company will not fail). The severity of the negative outcome is usually more important than the attractiveness of the positive outcome in determining subjects' recommendations. Or to put it all in Kogan and Wallach's words "the deterrence value of costs for failure exceeds the attraction of gains from success in affecting risk-taking" (Kogan and Wallach, 1967: 133).

In sum then, explanations of negativity rooted in the risk-taking literature presume that "as potential cost (and gains) increase, so should negativity" (Lau, 1985: 122). However, it is unclear *why* most people seem to be strongly motivated to be risk-averse rather than pleasure-seeking. Kahneman and Tversky in their seminal work on prospect theory (1979) argue that it is because the value function that represents individuals' gains has a concave shape, whereas the value function for losses is of a convex shape. Unfortunately, such a notion provides a neat, simple mathematical representation of why people are more sensitive to losses rather than gains, but it does not provide a concrete

⁹ It is important to note here that cost-orientation may not necessarily be unqualified by individual differences. According to Thibaut and Kelley (1959), it is individuals who are unable to control their outcomes who are cost-oriented; individuals who can control their own outcomes are reward-oriented (i.e., view rewards as more important than costs). A similar distinction is made by Canavan (1969) and Carroll (1982). However, given that the ultimate purpose of this study is to explain voting decisions and the fact that such decisions involve a good deal of uncertainty, the findings of this stream of literature are not deemed as relevant.

explanation of *why* the value functions are indeed shaped that way. Similarly, Kenny (1985) suggests that individuals act as if they were "cost-oriented" because they always try to minimize the regrets associated with their chosen action. But again, the explanation begs the question. Why indeed are individuals regret minimizers rather than pleasure maximizers? Overall, then, it seems fair to say that, whereas risk-taking literature has provided us with ample evidence about the existence of negativity, the explanations offered for the phenomenon are not very satisfying. Thus, claims that negative bits of information are often weighted more heavily because people are risk averse cannot be accepted fully as an explanation, for the suggested explanation itself begs explanation!

A second shortcoming, equally serious, with this literature is that the costs involved in the scenarios of most studies are not necessarily of the same intensity/value as are the rewards. This is a more serious problem in studies that deal with non-monetary costs and gains (e.g., ethical risks, life dilemmas, etc.), since determining the relative values associated with the different outcomes can be extremely subjective. As Kanouse and Hanson (1972) point out, it is of little interest to us to find out that subjects turned down a bet in which there was an equal chance of winning \$10 or losing \$1,000. "It would not be fair to conclude from this that subjects give *weight* to the value of the negative outcome" (Kanouse and Hanson, 1972: 6; emphasis in the original). Therefore, as long as researchers do not explicitly state the *relative* value of costs and benefits involved in the decision calculus, we are really unable to draw strong conclusions about the weight given to costs and gains in risk taking.

A final concern with respect to the evidence for negativity demonstrated in the risk-taking literature is associated with the setting of most of the studies that have found such an effect. Similar to studies conducted in social psychology, most of the evidence here also comes from laboratory experiments that involved hypothetical bets or actual bets

involving trivial amounts of money (e.g., 1/2 cent). However, it is not always easy to make the connection between subjects' predictions of behavior and their actual behavior. This shortcoming is somewhat remedied, though, by a couple of studies that asked subjects to choose between bets where their own, real money was involved (Slovic, 1969; Lubfer, Jones, and Quin, 1972). Both studies indeed found that subjects were even more conservative (i.e., even more cost-oriented) when their own money was involved¹⁰. Yet, I was unable to identify any study that involved decision making where the bets involved both real money that belonged to the subjects and where the amounts were also significant enough to resemble real life decision settings.

2.4. Evidence and Explanations for the Negativity Effect in Voting Behavior Literature

One of the most important consequences of person perception within the political environment is citizens' perceptions of political leaders. As a matter of fact, evaluation of candidates, along with party identification and issue orientation, has traditionally been seen by political scientists as one of the most crucial variables in explanations of citizens' voting behavior (e.g., Campbell, Gurin, and Miller, 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Brody and Page, 1968; Hinckley et al., 1974; Kelley and Mirer, 1974; Wright, 1974; Abramowitz, 1975; Kagay and Caldeira, 1975; Graber, 1976; Miller and Miller, 1976; Popkin et al. 1976; Rosenberg, 1977; Page, 1978; Markus and Converse, 1979; Page and Jones, 1979; Kinder et al. 1980; Kinder and Abelson, 1981; Dennis, 1982; Markus, 1982; Kinder, 1986; Lau, 1986; Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh, 1989; Rahn, Krosnick, and Breuning, 1994; Wattenberg, 1994). Candidate appeal obviously has an important impact on voting behavior, but evaluations of congressional/presidential candidates or incumbent presidents

¹⁰ In Lubfer, Jones and Quin's study it was actually group decisions with monetary bets that were evaluated. Strictly speaking, Slovic's 1969 study was the only one found that involved individuals' gambling decisions with their own money at risk.

have also been linked, on a broader level, to electoral change (Stokes, 1966; Kernell, 1977; Jacobson, 1981; Fiorina, 1981) and to the development of basic trust in a nation's system of government (Easton and Dennis, 1969; Miller, 1974; Citrin, 1974; Weatherford, 1992; Richardson and Gant, 1995).

Unfortunately, surprisingly little is known about the *source of evaluations* of political candidates. This is especially true at the congressional level, where we know very little about such evaluations except that they are strongly influenced by long-term party identification (Sears, 1969; Kostroski, 1978; Wright, 1978). Part of the problem relates to the relatively low levels of political knowledge exhibited by the American electorate (Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1964; Converse, 1975; Conover and Feldman, 1984; Smith, 1989; Bruce, 1994). What images people do have of political leaders seem to consist mainly of impressions of their personal qualities (e.g., Carter's morality, Ford's clumsiness, Reagan's friendliness, Bush's decency, Clinton's disingenuousness) or associations with simple valence issues (e.g., Nixon will end the war honorably, Reagan will provide strong leadership in our dealing with the Russians, Bush will provide strong leadership in resolving the Gulf conflict, Clinton will bring change after twelve years of Republican control of the White House) rather than information about the candidates' stands on more controversial political issues.

The picture of the "ideologically innocent" citizenry has repeatedly been challenged from the mid-1970s on (Achen, 1975; Judd and Milburn, 1980; Peffley and Hurwitz, 1985; McGraw, Lodge, and Stroh, 1990; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, 1991). It has become quite accepted today that voters are at least somewhat more aware of the positions of political candidates than they were during the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, some scholars have persuasively argued that even in cases where voters are totally unaware of the issues relevant to the campaign, they still vote on the basis of some overall

candidate evaluation rather than solely on long-term factors such as party identification. In these cases though, it is argued that affect towards the personality of the candidate is what guides the voter; negative and positive bits of affective judgments are used instead of cognitive bits (Zajonc, 1980; Shields and McDowell, 1987; Marcus, 1988; Ortony, Clore, and Collins, 1988; Sullivan and Masters, 1988; Marcus and MacKuen, 1993; Kinder, 1994). Of course, it is also common to utilize cognitive and affective bits at the same time (Conover and Feldman, 1984).

In general, works that have examined the effects of positive and negative information as sources of candidate evaluations can be divided in two major categories: those that use aggregate level data and those that utilize individual level data. A further distinction may be drawn between those studies that have focused on the role of such information upon the formation of cognitive evaluations on the one hand, and affective evaluations on the other. Since the second distinction is somewhat more "fuzzy" (i.e., a number of studies look upon both types of evaluations), it is easier to organize this review around the first dimension: aggregate versus individual level studies.

Aggregate Level Studies: Gerald Kraemer (1971) used aggregate level data to contrast the effects of positive and negative information or events on evaluations of political candidates. In his pioneering time-series analysis entitled "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964," Kraemer, using a multivariate regression model, empirically demonstrated the intuitively logical expectation that declining real incomes tend to reduce the vote for the party of the incumbent President, and rising incomes tend to increase it¹¹. Unfortunately, soon after the publication of

¹¹ Similar findings were reported in numerous works during the early 1970s. For instance, see Kraemer and Lepper (1972), Miller and Mackie (1973), Lepper (1974), Meltzer and Vellrath (1974), Boddy and Crotty (1975), Tufte (1975), Fiorina (1978), and Tufte, (1978). All of these studies utilized aggregate data to look at the role of macroeconomic indicators upon vote choice in U. S. elections. Helmut Norpoth's work about a decade later extended these findings in settings outside the United States. For instance,

Kraemer's work a debate was fueled with regard to the validity of this finding. George Stigler in "Micropolitics and Macroeconomics: General Economic Conditions and National Elections" (1973), refuted Kraemer's findings. And then, four years after Kraemer's seminal work, Francisco Arcelus and Allan Meltzer made the claim that economic conditions (with the possible exception of inflation) do not have any kind of an effect on the vote! (Arcelus and Meltzer, 1975).

Bloom and Price (1975) helped to resolve this controversy. They specified a simple equation regressing deviations from the expected congressional vote (as calculated by party identification) on changes in real per-capita income the year prior to the election. For our purposes the most interesting data in Bloom and Price's work is displayed in Table 2-2. The coefficient for the income change variable is not significant when all 37 elections from 1896 to 1970 (excluding that of 1912 which was an election with a very large third

TABLE 2-2: Regression of Short-Run Deviations in the Congressional Vote on Income Change (National, 1896 to 1970, Except 1912

	Elections Preceded by Declining Income (N=13)	Elections Preceded by Rising Income (N=24)	All Elections (N=37)
Coefficient of Income Change	0.66**	-0.19	0.17
Intercept	-0.02	-0.03**	-0.02**
R ²	0.67	0.12	0.07

Coefficients and intercepts bearing "*" are significant at the .01 level, two-tail; all others do not even attain significance at the .05 level, two-tail.

SOURCE: Bloom, Howard S., and H. Douglas Price. 1975. "Voter Response to Short-Run Economic Conditions: the Asymmetric Effect of Prosperity and Recessions." *American Political Science Review* 69:1240-1254.

party vote) are considered together. However, when the 13 elections which were preceded by years of rising income are considered separately, the results are very different. The coefficient of income change is highly significant in times of declining income and trivial (and as Bloom and Price point out, in the wrong direction) in times of rising

looking at elections in Great Britain he found that, in the aggregate, the British public tends to punish its government for unemployment, but refuses to reward it for success on inflation (Norpoth, 1987).

national income. Furthermore, 67% of the variance (R^2) in the deviation of the congressional vote from the expected levels can be explained by this one indicator of economic conditions in the elections preceded by declining national income, but *only* 12% of the variance can be explained in the elections preceded by rising levels of income (Bloom and Price, 1975).

In *War, Presidents, and the Public Opinion*, published in 1973, Mueller also postulated an asymmetric relationship between unemployment and presidential popularity. Mueller's dependent variable was presidential popularity. He looked at correlations of presidential popularity with the unemployment rate as a general indicator of economic well-being. He hypothesized that a high unemployment rate should be associated with low presidential popularity, while low unemployment should be associated with high levels of support for the president. Examining data from 1948 to 1969 period, however, Mueller found exactly the opposite to be true! High unemployment was found to be associated with high presidential popularity. Mueller attributed this unexpected finding to the fact that the highest rates of unemployment during the period examined occurred during the administration of Dwight Eisenhower, one of the most popular presidents.

In the same work, Mueller goes on to argue that, a more reasonable model would be one which used the level of unemployment at the beginning of a president's term as a base-line against which to judge his performance. Changes in the unemployment rate should be associated with changes in presidential popularity. Again, however, Mueller found that the correlations produced by the analysis were in the wrong direction. Increases in unemployment seemed to be associated with increases in presidential popularity, and decreases in unemployment were found to be associated with decreases in presidential popularity. In short, the public seemed to be more likely to reward the incumbent president at times when unemployment was at its highest level and to punish

him when unemployment fell. Mueller claimed that this odd finding could be "explained away" by the fact that both presidential popularity and unemployment were dropping throughout the 1960s.

Mueller, finally, rescued his theory relating unemployment and presidential popularity by adding another variable to his initial model. He created a dummy variable in a regression equation that was "0" whenever unemployment was equal to or lower than the level at the start of a president's term, and "1" whenever it was at a higher level. Now increases in unemployment indeed seem to lead to decreases in presidential popularity. This model though *assumes* that decreases in unemployment (that is, positive events) have no effect on presidential popularity but that increases in unemployment (negative events) do. This obviously stacks the deck in favor of a negativity effect¹².

In the decade of the 1980s though numerous independent studies continued to document Mueller's main finding: economic fluctuations have a strong impact on midterm and presidential year congressional elections, with negative events having a disproportionately high impact on the fate of the incumbent party's candidates (Lewis-Beck and Rice, 1984; Hibbs, 1986; Oppenheimer, Stimson, and Waterman, 1986; Hibbs, 1987; Jacobson and Kernell, 1987; Alesina and Rosenthal, 1989).

Recent findings by Erikson (1990) though cast doubt on the robustness of the relationship between aggregate level economic variables and congressional elections, *particularly for midterm races*. Most disturbingly Erikson (1990), like Stigler (1973), found that "tinkering" with alternate specifications of the major existing models had profound, and contradictory, effects on the results. Lynch and Munger (1995) suggest that the problem may lie largely in the fact that the theoretical effects of economics on

¹² Stimson (1976) replicated Mueller's analysis, including a quadratic variable explicitly measuring time to reflect the systematic decline in presidential popularity as a president's term in office lengthens. Stimson found that once time is measured, none of Mueller's other variables matter much.

Congress are difficult to measure, and require very careful statistical specification before a definitive answer is possible. "Unlike Presidents, individual members of Congress may be perceived to have at most only a subsidiary role in affecting aggregate economic conditions, despite the obvious power of members over allocation of the budget and determination of regulatory policy" (Lynch and Munger, 1995). If this is the case then, it would seem more appropriate to utilize personal economic indicators when one examines congressional election results. Surely, a district's congressional member shares responsibility with the President and 434 other representatives for the state of unemployment and inflation across the nation, but responsibility with respect to the financial conditions of members of his constituency rests more squarely on his/her own shoulders. Thus, it is to works that test for the existence of negativity effects at the individual level that we turn to next¹³.

Individual Level Studies: Kernell (1977) used individual level data (six off-year House elections held between 1946 and 1966; Gallup samples) to test the following four hypotheses: 1) *ceteris paribus*, individuals who disapproved of the president's performance were more likely to turn out to vote than those who approved; 2) partisans of the president's own party who disapproved of his performance were more likely to defect in their voting decision than were partisans of the opposite party who approved (the defection hypothesis); 3) identifiers with the president's party who approve of him will vote for their party's congressional candidate at lower levels than will identifiers with the opposite party who disapprove of the president's performance vote consistent with their party identification (the reinforcement hypothesis); and 4) independents who disapprove of the president will vote for the candidate of the opposite party more than will independents

¹³It is worth mentioning here that Kraemer (1983) cautions against individual-level analyses altogether. He asserts that individual-level effects involve two components: government-induced changes in a voter's real income and idiosyncratic changes in that income. Since the two are not distinguished from one another in existing measures, this confusion results in biased, underestimated individual-level effects.

who approve of the president vote for the candidate of the president's party. The common thread across Kernell's hypotheses, then, is that negative evaluations are more instrumental than positive ones in determining vote choice and turnout. That is because his negative-voting model underscores the fact that the failures of incumbents are more important than their achievements. Furthermore, due to the greater strength of negative evaluations, voters upset with an incumbent's performance may be more prone to vote against the individual than are satisfied voters likely to support him.

Kernell's testing of the above hypotheses lends considerable support for a negativity effect. To summarize the results briefly, the first hypothesis was supported for independents and people who identify with the opposite party from the president, but not among identifiers with the president's party. That is, among those who identify with the party controlling the White House, those who approve of the president's performance are just as likely, if not more likely, to vote than are those who disapprove of the president's job performance. Clear evidence providing support for the other three hypotheses was documented.

Although it has been argued that Kernell's work provides the most systematic support for a negativity effect in political behavior (Lau, 1982), it has not gone without criticism. Lau, for instance has pointed out that "disapproval" and "approval of the president's job performance may not be equally extreme (Lau, 1982)¹⁴. The theory predicts that *equally extreme* positive and negative judgments will have differentially

¹⁴ In a recent article, Green and Citrin argue that researchers' practice of grouping into "batteries" items that share similar wording and response format -which is the case for items that tap on "approval" and "disapproval" of political candidates- often times introduces non random response error into the data, rendering invalid standard approaches to reliability assessment and structural equations modeling. Specifically, they demonstrate that "when answers to balanced questions are contaminated by response sets of this kind, the resulting data will generally conceal the underlying polarity of positive and negative affect and will suggest that favorable and unfavorable beliefs about the same objects are not strongly related. The reason for this, is that response set bias works to inflate all of the interitem correlations, driving negative correlations toward (or past!) zero." (Green and Citrin, 1994).

strong effects. But if, indeed, negative judgments expresses a much stronger sentiment than the positive ones, one would not be surprised that negative opinions have stronger effects than positive.

A second criticism that Lau has raised relates to the lack of control variables in Kernell's analysis. Specifically, Kernell does not include in his analysis the necessary controls on the different propensities of Republicans and Democrats to defect from their party (Lau, 1986). This necessary control is simply party identification. Overall, Democrats do have a greater tendency to defect from their party than do Republicans (Converse, 1966). Given this fact, it would be an error to simply present the raw data, for negativity would look much greater with a Democratic president (and his party's defectors) than with a Republican president. Indeed Kernell's analysis, which does not control for this difference, is exactly consistent with these expectations: the negativity effect looks much stronger in the four elections he studied with the Democrats controlling the White House than in the elections with the Republicans controlling the White House.

A third concern with Kernell's findings relates to the causal direction in his model. Kernell assumes that positive and negative evaluations of the incumbent president *cause* the evaluations of political figures of the president's party. However, as a few scholars have pointed out (Kinder, Peters, Abelson, and Fiske, 1980; Lau, 1982; Sears and Lau, 1983; Rahn, Krosnick, and Breuning, 1994) the possibility exists that the variables used to predict evaluations of the political figures are in fact *rationalizations* of those evaluations.

Finally -and related to the previous criticism- there is Sears and Lau's (1983) suggestion that the relationship between economic self-interest and electoral choice reported in Kernell's study is basically a methodological artifact, stemming from placement of the economic item close to the political item in the survey instrument. In their view, the proximity of these items induces an artificial consistency in the answers, as the respondent

tries to "rationalize" his or her choice. For instance, suppose that after a respondent claims that she is worse off financially, she is asked how she will vote. She is more likely to "personalize" her political response, saying she will vote against the incumbent president and other candidates of the same party. Or, suppose that the respondent first voices his intention to vote against the incumbent president and other candidates of the same party, and then he is asked about his financial situation. In this case, he will tend to "politicize" his economic response, making it more consistent with a vote against the party of the incumbent president. Fortunately, Michael Lewis-Beck in his work "Pocketbook Voting in U.S. National Election Studies: Fact or Artifact?" (1985) rescues works like Kernell's that utilize survey data to investigate economic voting (Fiorina, 1978; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979; Fiorina, 1981; Feldman, 1982; Kiewiet, 1983). Utilizing the 1956-1982 Michigan CPS-SRC election surveys, Lewis-Beck tested the hypothesis that the strength of correlation between individual economic situation and political preference is a simple function of the nearness (i.e., proximity) of the two items in the survey instrument. He failed to find any evidence that supported such a claim, thus dismissing Sears and Lau's suggestion regarding an artifact¹⁵.

Several scholars have attempted to correct for the above mentioned shortcomings of Kernell's seminal work on economic voting. Richard Lau (1982) included partisanship as a control variable in Kernell's model and extended the original findings to the 1974 and 1978 congressional elections. Lau's work provided further evidence for a negativity bias; he showed that negative evaluations of the presidential candidates in 1968, 1972, and 1980, had a stronger influence on vote choice than positive evaluations. As a matter of

¹⁵ To support their assertion Sears and Lau (1983) looked at three types of evidence: a survey experiment, media exit polls from 1976 and 1980, and published analyses of the Michigan Center for Political Studies-Survey Research Center (CPS-SRC) surveys from 1956 to 1978. As Lewis-Beck (1985) suggests, while a literature review of published studies is worthwhile, it creates numerous problems for hypothesis-testing (e.g., different studies use different political variables, different models, different codes, etc.) It is also important to point out that Lewis-Beck's work provides a defense for only those studies that have used the CPS-SRC data set to examine the phenomenon of negativity.

fact, in each year he examined the regression weight associated with the negative information variable was roughly two or three times larger than the comparable regression weight associated with positive information variable. In another replication of Kernell's study, Albert Cover (1986) provided further evidence for a negativity bias with respect to vote choice using data from the 1974, 1978, and 1982 congressional electoral contests.

Although several scholars in political science have confirmed by their work the initial suspicion that negativity is not simply a laboratory phenomenon, there have been far fewer who have explored the conditions under which people are more likely to utilize negative bits of information, the characteristics of individuals who are more likely to utilize such a heuristic, the characteristics of candidates who are more likely to be affected by such a voting decision heuristic, and the general implications that the exercise of negative voting by citizens may have for governance in general. Most works have considered negative voting in the context of the incumbent president's popularity. Relatively little is known about negativity in the context of congressional candidates themselves and their campaigns. Furthermore, a good number of the works in the field that deal with the phenomenon of negative voting either rely heavily on social psychology and/or economics for a general theoretical framework or they are purely descriptive, making no attempt to explain negativity in political behavior.

Richard Lau's work is one of the few who have explicitly tested competing theories of negativity in political behavior. On the one hand, the perceptual "figure-ground" negativity based on the greater salience of negative information in a largely positive world was found to be useful in explaining voters' evaluations of both presidential and congressional candidates. The motivational "cost-orientation" negativity based on the survival value of avoiding costs rather than approaching gains, on the other hand, Lau found to be useful in explanations of voters' evaluations of presidential candidates only. In

other words, Lau's findings suggest that the dynamics of political evaluation may be fundamentally different for different types of political figures (e.g., presidents versus congressmen, House members versus Senators, etc.). Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify any other works that try to make explicit the circumstances under which different aspects of negativity may surface.

Turning to the second area that has previously been identified as lacking in terms of scholarly attention -i.e., specifying the characteristics of voters that are more likely to engage in negative voting-, one is again left with a lot of questions. Sigelman and Gant (1989) looked at the characteristics of those who were more likely to use their vote as an opportunity to express disapproval of a candidate rather than approval. More specifically, they examined the possibility that negativity in vote choice may be a residue of cross-pressures. If that was the case, they expected to see those whose partisanship, ideology or past voting record (i.e., partisan defectors and vote switchers) were in conflict with their candidate preference to be more likely to use the negative heuristic in the voting booth by conceptualizing their support for a candidate as a rejection of the candidate's opinion. Unfortunately, they found very little support for the cross-pressures hypothesis when they examined data from the 1984 presidential election. Sigelman and Gant went on to suggest that this finding might not necessarily mean that cross-pressures interpretation of negativity is wrong, and argued that it was the uniqueness of Reagan's candidacy in 1984 (i.e., the election was primarily about Ronald Reagan with very little attention given to Mondale's candidacy) that did not allow one to observe cross-pressured voters act in the expected way. The conclusion sounds plausible especially since earlier work that looked at cross-pressures (Gant and Sigelman, 1985) had turned up more promising results. Unfortunately, because of data limitations the cross-pressures hypothesis cannot be tested in the context of congressional elections. However, the data allow one to examine the possible effects of some other political characteristics on the likelihood of negativity. For

instance, it sounds plausible that those with low levels of trust in the federal government, or those who have little confidence in the nation's political institutions and/or political leaders are more likely to utilize the negative heuristic in the process of voting decision-making, than those who are more trustful and express a more positive opinion about government, its institutions, and its leaders. A series of hypotheses are proposed in the next chapter, then, in an effort to draw a profile of those citizens who are more likely to use the negative heuristic in the setting of congressional elections.

2.5. A Short Note on Evidence from the Other Side: A Positivity Bias in Political Behavior

The empirical support for negative voting is not unqualified. Kiewiet (1983), for instance, found little support for negative voting in his individual-level analysis of the effects of economic judgments on electoral behavior. Similarly, Rosenstone (1985) after examining aggregate level data (i.e., presidential vote for each state), reported that he saw no indication of negative voting. Born's (1986) examination of five midterm elections (1966 to 1982) concludes that economic conditions have a "less than overpowering" influence on the individual vote for Congress than Kernell's study suggested. Lockerbie's (1991) analysis of the 1956 to 1988 congressional elections finds support for negative voting in only the 1958, 1974, 1982, and 1988 elections. Finally, Lewis-Beck (1988) found no support for negativity in his study of Western European electorates. As a matter of fact, his findings suggest that Western European "electorates are 'even-handed' " in their economic judgments, voting *for* governments that are liked and *against* governments that are disliked."

The phenomenon of negativity takes even more puzzling dimensions as a result of extensive evidence for the existence of a positivity bias (Sears and Whitney, 1973; Sears,

1983). A positivity bias is based on the notion the pleasantness seems to predominate in every conceivable situation, presumably stemming from a generalized preference for pleasant affects rooted in simple hedonism (Sears, 1983). Earlier works in social psychology had identified such a bias as a "Pollyanna bias" (Boucher and Osgood, 1969; Matlin and Stang, 1978).

Within the political domain then, it has been suggested that Americans tend more often to be positive than negative in evaluating political figures (Sears and Whitney, 1973). What is also interesting is that Sears and Whitney found a positivity bias only in people's evaluations of individuals in public life but not in their evaluations of the public institutions that those individuals were affiliated with. For example, they suggest that in recent years Americans have invariably evaluated their own individual congressman predominantly favorably, whereas their evaluation of Congress as a whole has been predominantly negative, by equally large margins. Similar findings were reported for other institutions and their members (e.g., the United States Supreme Court, the media, gas and electric companies, etc.). Such findings have led credibility to the notion that a special bias towards positive evaluations accrues to individual persons as attitude objects, above and beyond what ever factors influence evaluations of other kinds of objects. Sears (1983) refers to this "special" positive inclination as a "Person-Positivity bias".

It seems, then, to be the case that a strong and pervasive bias toward positivity appears to be the opposite of an equally powerful bias toward negativity. Both perspectives certainly are backed by compelling research findings. Unfortunately, there is virtually no research that directly addresses the issue of what specific factors, when operative in a particular setting, eliminate one bias and induce the other. And, as Sears (1983) also points out, there has been no explanation for the apparent inconsistency between the person-positivity bias and the so-called negativity effect in person-perception.

Markus and Zajonc (1985), however, argue that "positivity bias is not contradictory to negativity bias in that the former refers to making guesses when virtually no information is available. ...[Negativity] occurs under lesser uncertainty and is manifested in the differential weighting of information that is positive or negative with respect to a given target" (Markus and Zajonc, 1985: 182). They go on to suggest that negativity can act as a useful and defensible heuristic that serves the individual well on appropriate occasions. From this perspective then, voters are more likely to exhibit a negativity bias against candidates that they have more information available (usually the incumbent), than against candidates about whom they know very little (usually challengers, and candidates in open seat races). The positivity bias, on the other hand, is more likely to be strongly evoked with respect to candidates about whom very little information, if any at all, is available.

This perspective, and its implications for congressional voting behavior, will be developed and explained more fully in Chapter III. In addition to that, a series of propositions that stem from theories of representation will be developed to cast farther light on the phenomenon of negativity. As mentioned earlier, I feel that in order to develop a better understanding of negativity in the setting of congressional elections, one ought to pay more attention to citizens' perceptions of the degree to which they feel that their district's representative fulfills his/her duties. Although -as suggested by the review of the literature in this chapter- other fields have provided us with critical knowledge about negativity, sole reliance on theories of decision-making that are grounded in social psychology and economics does not allow one to understand the specifics of decision making *in the voting booth*.

CHAPTER III

EXPLAINING NEGATIVE VOTING IN THE CONTEXT OF CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATION

The United States Congress is unique among national legislatures in the central role it plays in national policy making. It is also unique in an historical context because the House of Representatives was among the first national legislatures to function as a representative body. The special fiduciary relationship of the legislator to the sovereign electorate has been a foundation for classical doctrines of legislative supremacy, as enunciated by John Locke and others (Locke, 1947). Congressmen are elected by popular vote from relatively small geographical districts which they then are expected to "represent" in their capacity as national policy makers. This linking function of Congress and other democratic legislatures has attracted wide attention as a cornerstone of the democratic polity. Theorists who would specify the concept of representation have devoted no small amount of effort to that task¹⁶, while others have attempted to measure the extent to which legislators actually represent those who elect them. A body of work that is related to the second, more empirical, tradition deals with the study of individual voters' perception of the ability of the district's representative to perform his/her duties and how this perception may influence the voter's decision on Election Day.

This study falls squarely into this latter body of work. Congressional elections are seen as more than means by which elites are brought *into* office; they are also the means by which incumbents are *removed*. This sanctioning ability of the constituency offers a real potential for mass control of elite behavior provided legislators' perceptions of

¹⁶ An excellent review of pertinent philosophical literature as well as a thorough conceptualization of representation can be found in Pitkin (1967).

constituent preferences are reasonably accurate. It is this great significance that congressional electoral decisions have in a democratic polity, that dictates the need to understand exactly how citizens decide whether to retain someone or to remove someone from office, and the meaning for governance that such a decision carries.

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the major tenets of a theory of representation that is congruent with the phenomenon of negative voting. In order to accomplish that, first a handful of key pieces of literature in the area of determinants of congressional vote choice are reviewed, and then the theoretical framework that they provide is expanded to include some additional dimensions of representation and some other factors that may be included in an effort to construct a more complete picture of the calculus of voting in congressional elections. The chapter will be concluded with a series of explicit hypotheses derived from the outlined theoretical framework; these hypotheses will be farther operationalized in Chapter IV, and ultimately tested in Chapter V. But before, turning to the task of outlining the theoretical construct from which this work stems, a word is in order about the meaning of the term "representation".

3.1. Defining Representation

For the purpose of this study, "representation" in legislatures takes four different forms. Firstly, it is conceived as congruence between the behavior of the legislator and the opinion of the individual member in his/her constituency on comparable policy dimensions. This definition is in line with Pitkin's conceptualization of political representation:

Representation here means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them. The representative must act independently; his action must involve discretion and judgment; he must be the one who acts. ...And, despite the resulting potential for conflict between representative and represented about what is to be done, that conflict must not normally take place. The representative must act in such a way that there is no

conflict, or if it occurs an explanation is called for....[Political representation] is representation if the people (or a constituency) are present in governmental action, even though they do not literally act for themselves. Insofar as this is a matter of substantive action for others, it requires independent action in the interest of the governed, in a manner at least potentially responsive to them, yet not normally in conflict with their wishes (Pitkin, 1967: 209-210, 220).

Following Pitkin, then, it seems appropriate to focus on the behavior of congressmen and the members of their constituency, rather than, for example, the demographic composition of Congress. Furthermore, the working definition of representation for this study assumes that the best measure of the "interest(s) of the governed" is in fact their wishes or opinion on the relevant issues.

It is quite clear from the above operationalization that "policy responsiveness" is what is indeed at the heart of Pitkin's definition of representation. Although this relationship between legislators and constituents on policy matters has received by far the widest attention of scholars in the field (Jewell and Lowenberg, 1979; Jewell, 1983; Collie, 1984), research on representation -especially, in the last couple of decades- has come to encompass three additional components. Eulau and Karps (1977) formally defined these three supplementary components of representation: Service Responsiveness -defined as "the advantages and benefits which the representative is able to obtain for particular constituents"; Allocation Responsiveness -defined as "legislative allocations of public projects [that] involve advantages and benefits presumably accruing to a representative's district as a whole"; and Symbolic Responsiveness -defined as a relationship "built on trust and confidence expressed in support that the represented give to the representative and to which he responds by symbolic, significant gestures, in order to, in turn, generate and maintain continuing support" (Eulau and Karps, 1977: 242-245).

Numerous activities that relate to all three of these additional dimensions of representation are pursued by legislators in order to further the interests of their constituents. Constituency service, district attentiveness, casework, acquisition of federal projects and monetary funds for the district are some of these activities that encompass these additional dimensions of representation. Unfortunately, these aspects of representation had until recently received very little attention from students of Congress, and -as the review of some of this literature will reveal later in this chapter- there is still very little agreement among researchers with regard to the electoral and policy effects of these activities, as well as the purposes that lie behind, and the factors that cause, differing levels of constituency service and attentiveness.

Different hypotheses tested in this study tap on these alternative dimensions of representation. Each of the four components of representation outlined in this section - policy responsiveness, service responsiveness, allocation responsiveness, and symbolic responsiveness- is addressed by at least one of the hypotheses offered. Failure on the part of the incumbent member to provide responsiveness (whether it is conscious and deliberate because of the style chosen to adopt as a representative, or it is accidental due to the member's inability to correctly perceive his/her constituency's attitudes on relevant political issues and the needs of those in the district) is expected to be positively related with the likelihood that the member will be a victim of negative voting.

3.2. Determinants of Congressional Vote Choice

The vast majority of the literature on congressional vote choice until the early 1980s placed heavy emphasis on voters' perceptions of the incumbent president. Due to the lack of individual level data, most of these studies relied exclusively on aggregate measures, to show that higher degrees of presidential popularity, combined with

improving economic conditions, reduce the vote loss for the incumbent president's party in midterm elections (Tufte, 1975; Tufte, 1978). In short, congressional elections -and especially midterm elections- were seen as referenda on the policies pursued by the incumbent president. The candidates themselves were seen as relatively unimportant players in the electoral process. As Tufte argued "Because there are no other targets available at the midterm ... the vote cast in midterm congressional elections is a referendum on the performance of the president and the administration's management of the economy" (Tufte, 1975: 813). What was lacking, however, in the referendum discussion was consideration of other elements of the congressional election context, which might also contribute to individual voting patterns and the overall election results. It is on a few of these additional elements of the vote choice that I focus here.

The Role of Partisanship: Although damaging evidence with regard to the degree of the importance of partisanship has surfaced throughout the decades following the publication of the *American Voter*, party identification continues to be cited by scholars of voting behavior as the most reliable predictor of vote choice across different electoral settings. Most works conceive of partisanship, in the tradition of the "Michigan model", as a long-term predisposition or a long-term psychological attachment of an individual to a political party (e.g., Mann and Wolfinger, 1980; Hinckley, 1981; Jacobson, 1981; Cover, 1986; Abramowitz, 1988; Collie, Karp, and Lin, 1995). Some have operationalized the term as more short-term experiential judgments (e.g., Dobson and St. Angelo, 1975; Trilling, 1976; Fiorina, 1981; Carmines, Renten, and Stimson, 1984; Abramowitz, Cover, and Norpoth, 1986; Brown and Woods, 1991).

Regardless of the choice for operationalization, all of the aforementioned studies have empirically confirmed the important role that partisan loyalties play in midterm contests. Abramowitz, Cover, and Norpoth (1986), for instance, have showed that, in the

1974, 1978, and 1982 House races, both party identification and short-term party evaluations (i.e., responses to how well the party solved national problems) significantly affected vote preferences. More specifically, they argued that the effects of economic conditions and presidential popularity on congressional elections are mediated by short-term party evaluations. What connects congressional candidates with the performance of the president and the state of the economy (the variables traditionally employed to explain midterm outcomes) is the voter's perception of the Democratic and Republican parties. Miller (1991) reports similar findings with regard to the role of partisan loyalties after controlling for the effects of race and region.

The Role of Ideology and Issue Positions: While recognizing the importance of party identification, scholars became increasingly unsatisfied from the late 1960s on with the notion that congressional elections constitute non-issue oriented, strictly partisan affairs. Thus, whereas early research on the voting calculus in midterm elections focused on partisanship, a second major thrust of research was concerned with the extent to which issues are tied to voter preferences. RePass (1971) argued that, contrary to the traditional view of the ignorant electorate, congressional voters are aware of candidate stands on issues personally salient to them. Indeed, by letting voters choose salient issues rather than aggregating their responses across a predetermined list, RePass found a greater amount of issue voting -in the calculus of the vote for both the occupant of the White House and congressional representatives- than the level suggested by earlier works.

Despite these early promising findings with regard to the role of issue voting in congressional contests, most of the issue voting controversy that characterized much of the electoral behavioral research in the 1970s centered on presidential elections (e.g., Pomper, 1972; Margolis, 1977; Bishop et al., 1978; Brunk, 1978; Sullivan et al., 1978). Those that noted the need for more work on the role of issues in congressional elections

reported the limitations imposed by the then-available data base and the sample of respondents (Hurley and Hill, 1980).

Finally, the 1978 CPS election survey brought the opportunity to examine more closely the role of issues in the voting calculus in midterm contests. Considerably more questions were added that year on the perception of Congress and its members, as well as of challengers in congressional races. Furthermore, for the first time, congressional districts became the primary sampling units rather than census tracts, thus insuring a more even distribution of respondents across districts. Similar surveys followed for the 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1994 contests.

Using this data base, Parker (1981) found that, indeed, one of the most important predictors of incumbent popularity is perceived vote agreement between the respondent and the representative. The same connection between issue positions and vote preferences was illustrated for challengers by using issue proximity measures as surrogates for vote agreement (Brown and Woods, 1991). Wright and Berkman (1986) demonstrated evidence of policy voting in congressional elections as an interaction between the ideology of the candidate and that of the respondent. Similar findings have been suggested by Wright, Erikson, and McIver (1985), Wright (1989), Miller (1990), and Lodge and Stroh (1993).

The Role of Candidate Characteristics: The comparative assessment of candidates became an extremely important component of electoral research at both the presidential and congressional level from the early 1970s on. In terms of congressional elections, the importance of candidate evaluations was seen in their having a major influence on the vote, separate from incumbency and party (Hinckley, 1980a; Ragsdale, 1980; Ripley, Patterson, Maurer, and Quinlan, 1992). More specifically, the strength of the candidate variables clearly indicated that midterm voting involved voters' specific perceptions of and

preferences for particular candidates. Furthermore, when looking across time, it was found that the impact of candidate specific characteristics have had an increased impact on vote choice throughout the late 1980s, while the effects of presidential popularity, party identification, and congressional incumbency have all been diminishing (McGraw, 1990).

A few scholars have sought to establish the variables most central to developing a fuller understanding of the components of these evaluations. Parker's work has focused on the effects of what he calls "district attentiveness" -a "complex concept [that] entails behaviors on the part of the incumbents that are designed to demonstrate the members' concern for the district and its constituents" (Parker, 1981: 253). Congressmen are also popular with their constituents to the extent they provide services, give evidence of listening to constituents' wishes, and become salient through advertising and credit claiming. Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina's (1987) work on the "personal vote" in the United States and Great Britain illustrates the effect constituency service can have on the popularity of representatives, and, in turn, on their electoral fortunes. In short, it is variables that relate to the reputation of the member of Congress himself that are found here to be of relevance. It becomes implicit then that certain activities that candidates are engaging in *do enable them* to improve their electoral lot. It is towards these activities that shape members' reputations, then, that I turn my attention to next.

3.3. Candidate Reputations as Sources of Voter Preferences

David Mayhew in his seminal work *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (1974) argued that, despite the fact that most citizens pay little attention to what goes on in Washington, a congressional member's activities do have implications for reelection. Furthermore, Mayhew identified three types of activities which shape a member's reputation. The first type of activity Mayhew calls "advertising". It is defined "as any

effort to disseminate one's name among constituents in such a fashion as to create a favorable image, but with messages having little or no issue content" (Mayhew, 1974: 49). The second type of activity that affects a member's likelihood of reelection is "credit claiming". It involves "acting so as to generate a belief ... that one is personally responsible for causing the government, or some unit thereof, to do something ... desirable" (Mayhew, 1974: 52-53). The third type of activity that members of Congress engage in is "position taking". It involves "the public enunciation of a judgment statement" on an issue with the intent to please one's electoral constituency (Mayhew, 1974: 61).

The fundamental premise of Mayhew's argument is that representatives act purposively. The primary goal toward which they direct their behavior is reelection. Indeed, Mayhew starts the presentation of his whole argument with a statement that makes this premise explicit to the reader: "United States congressmen are interested in getting reelected -indeed [they are]... interested in nothing else" (Mayhew, 1974: 13). Studies that start with this basic assumption in order to understand representative-constituency linkages are said to be in the tradition of the Rational Choice approach (see also Fiorina, 1974; Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1975; Fiorina, 1975; Wright, 1977; Alpert, 1979; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987; Wright, 1989).

A particularly appealing aspect of the Rational Choice approach, as exemplified by works as Mayhew's, is that it requires the researcher to state explicitly his assumptions - though not necessarily in mathematical terms-, his substantive concepts, and the precise relationships between them (Kuklinski, 1979). This type of scientific discourse facilitates review by other scholars, who then can question easily any part of the argument. However, from the point of view of this study, it is a second aspect of the Rational Choice school of thought that makes it a promising approach for understanding the linkage

between legislators and voters. More specifically, while other approaches (e.g., the Longitudinal-Correlational approach, the Integrated Decision-making approach, the Participant Observation approach) tend to equate representation with policy responsiveness and symbolic responsiveness alone, studies utilizing the Rational Choice approach tend to recognize also the increasing importance of allocation responsiveness and service responsiveness. More specifically, while the former approaches focus exclusively on answering the question "how faithfully does the representative respond to the wishes of the district in words and deeds?", those that utilize the Rational Choice approach examine also questions such as "does the representative work to ensure that his/her district gets a fair share of government projects, programs, and expenditures?" and "does the representative and his/her staff pay close attention to requests from individuals and groups in the district for assistance in dealing with the government bureaucracy?". Since, as Eulau and Karps (1977) suggest, representation involves all of these components and perhaps others, any approach that focuses exclusively on policy responsiveness alone would yield an incomplete picture when we try to assemble the pieces of the voting decision making puzzle. If, indeed, these additional dimensions of representation are perceived as important by the electorate and voters expect duties that relate to these other dimensions to be fulfilled by their representatives, then it is plausible to expect candidate evaluations to be influenced by the degree to which incumbent members are able to carry out these duties. Furthermore, it should come as no surprise if constituents cast a vote against the incumbent member on Election Day if he or she has failed to fulfill one or more of these duties. As a matter of fact, given previous findings on negativity, it is expected that failure to perform the activities, which are expected by the members of the district, will be weighted more heavily in the voting calculus than legislators' accomplishments.

Critics of the Rational Choice approach have argued that work done in this tradition tends to lose sight of the distinction between fact and assumption. The premise

that a representative's primary, if not only, goal is reelection is a working assumption and not an irrefutable fact. Determining whether responsiveness of any kind manifested by the actions of the representative is voluntary (at least in part) or electorally induced represents a formidable task, for as long as an electoral threat exists, responsive behavior can be attributed to it. In essence, the fundamental assumption of the Rational Choice perspective borders on being unfalsifiable. However, one could argue that such a criticism is unfounded, since one can deduce testable predictions with regard to the behavior of congressional candidates, indeed, because of the axiomatic nature of the assumption.

A second criticism, that can be leveled toward works that start with the basic premise that the primary goal of legislators is reelection and then go on to examine the electoral effects of specific activities that the representative engages in, relates to the lack of agreement with regard to the impact of these activities upon congressional vote choice. For instance, while a number of studies on casework and congressional elections have concluded that members who engage in constituent service are evaluated more favorably and are more successful in their attempts to be reelected (Yiannakis, 1981; Epstein and Frankovic, 1982; Bond, Convington, and Fleisher, 1985; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987; Serra and Cover, 1992), others have found a considerably weaker link between constituency service and citizens' voting decisions (Feldman and Jondrow, 1981; Johannes, 1984; Johannes and McAdams, 1981; McAdams and Johannes, 1987).

When viewed in combination, these findings -and similar ones with respect to the effects of Mayhew's "advertising" and "position" taking activities- are troubling (Fiorina, 1981). Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina (1987) also express puzzlement over the multitude of non-relationships and even the "few perverse negative relationships" between incumbent efforts and constituent perceptions or evaluations they encountered in their study. "An intelligent layman pursuing the political science literature could arrive at the remarkable

conclusion that House incumbents can close their district offices, fire their staffs, stop doing casework, abandon their quest for federal money, give up their district residences, choose committees purely on the basis of personal interest, tell the political action committees where to put their money, and still get as many votes -perhaps more- than if they continued to behave as incumbents presently do" (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987: 123).

In the past, only a handful of the studies that have looked upon the effect of members' reputation upon electoral outcomes have done so in a multivariate fashion (e.g., Jacobson, 1981; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987). In their majority, studies that have probed the aforementioned connection focused on a single type of activity rather than all three. Yet, in reality "advertising", "credit claiming", and "position taking" are often all simultaneously at work in shaping members' reputation. For instance, in a mailing designed to make members of one's constituency aware of how their representative voted on an important bill ("position taking"), there might also be implications outlined with regard to the benefits that passage/failure of such a legislation could bring to the specific district ("credit claiming"). Furthermore, the same letter might make some aware for the first time of the name of the person representing the district in Washington ("advertising"). As such, in order to properly estimate the effects of all three types of activities it is important to consider them in a multivariate context.

Furthermore, and more important from the standpoint of this study, no previous work could be identified that looked at the effects of members' reputations upon voters' decisions to cast a ballot *against* a congressional candidate. In other words, members' reputations have not been explicitly linked to the phenomenon of negative voting¹⁷. Part of the purpose of this work then, is to determine whether a congressional member's

¹⁷ Fiorina and Shepsle (1989) in their attempt to test for the asymmetric effects of positive and negative evaluations on vote choice, use Mayhew's "position taking" element as the case to base their analysis.

reputation, as defined by all three types of activities outlined by Mayhew, has an effect on the voters' overall evaluation -as reflected in the "positive" and "negative" mentions. In turn, a second major question is whether "negative" mentions have a heavier impact on vote choice than "positive" ones. More specifically, given previous findings on negativity, it is expected that one "dislike" for the incumbent is going to be more detrimental to the latter's electoral prospects than one "like" would be beneficial. The current project, therefore, is concerned primarily with the effects of reputation upon likes and dislikes, and in comparing the weight of one positive reason with that of a negative reason on vote choice. The actual hypotheses relating to this purpose are presented in Section 3.5.

3.4. Political Characteristics of Negative Voters

The second concern of this project is to identify the characteristics of individual voters that make him/her more likely to use the negative heuristic when calculating decisions with regard to vote choice in congressional elections. While from a rational perspective it makes sense for all voters to utilize such a heuristic given cognitive limitations, given the time limitations for information processing and the plethora of information made available during the course of the campaign, there is good reason to expect some individuals to be more prone to weigh negative bits of information more heavily in the calculation of their vote preference. The individual's perception of the effectiveness and responsiveness of the political system and the degree of confidence one feels that public officials running government institutions are trustworthy are a couple of the possibilities examined here for detecting differences between voters with regard to the extent to which they are likely to utilize the negative heuristic in the voting booth. Furthermore, I look at the individual citizen's psychological attachment to the political system (i.e., internal and external political efficacy) and explore any implications its

absence might have for the likelihood to emphasize negative bits of information when forming overall evaluations of political candidates.

Numerous studies in the 1990s have empirically demonstrated a pronounced sense of dissatisfaction among Americans with regard to the direction and operation of government (Parker, 1989; Born, 1990; DeHoog, Lowery, and Lyons, 1990; Beck, Rainey, and Traut, 1991; Weatherford, 1992). One stream of the literature on citizens' attitudes toward government points out that at the root of this sense of dissatisfaction seems to be a concern over the quality of those who are in charge of government institutions. According to this viewpoint, the majority of Americans continue to believe in the quality and potential of the political institutions themselves (Davidson and Oleszek, 1985; Lipset and Schneider, 1987; Mitchell and Scott, 1987), and it is only lack of confidence in the leaders' ability to run those institutions that the crisis is confined to. A second stream of literature suggests that the problem is not with the individuals serving in political institutions, but that citizens have lost trust in the institutions themselves (Smith, Taylor, and Mathiowetz, 1980). Clearly, such a situation presents a far more serious danger in a democratic society. Finally, a third stream of the literature on citizens' attitudes toward government and its officials offers findings that suggest that citizens are dissatisfied with *both* leaders and the institutions they serve in. The assumption underlying this last view is that most citizens cannot really differentiate between their feelings towards institutions in general and the particular individuals that serve in these institutions. As a result the institutions-leaders dichotomy is rejected in favor of a claim that the two share the same fortunes (Parker, 1981; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987; Born, 1990).

To settle the debate between these alternative views on citizens' attitudes toward government, is beyond the goals of this project. Here I only intend to test the proposition that disaffection with government, institutions or individuals who serve in those

institutions, is likely to be positively related with negative voting. That is, disaffection with the system and/or its actors is likely to be expressed on Election Day by letting negative bits of information weigh more heavily than positive bits in the voting calculus.

A strong sense of political efficacy¹⁸ -external or internal- is also expected to be positively correlated with an increased likelihood to use the negative heuristic in the voting booth. Political efficacy is the feeling that one can have an impact on decisions made in the political system. Such a feeling is purely subjective. In other words, the idea of political efficacy does not require that a person actually has an effect on political decisions; it only refers to the person's belief.

A sense of political powerlessness (i.e., low political efficacy) would imply an absence of a sense of control over the political sphere on the part of the individual. One psychological need that has been repeatedly suggested as affecting political participation is the need for a sense of mastery or control, which varies among individuals both in level and scope (Finifter, 1970; Conway, 1991). For those who lack such a sense of control or power, political events are seen as unpredictable and unpatterned. As a result any conscious effort to influence government decisions is rejected as futile. More interestingly, and of direct relevance here, attaching different weights to information may be essentially irrelevant for those with low levels of political efficacy: why bother to send a message to the incumbent, for example, by weighing more heavily the negative bits of information with regard to his candidacy, if you believe that your participation will have

¹⁸ It is important to make the distinction here between the terms "trust" and "efficacy" since I expect them to operate very differently on the likelihood to utilize the negative heuristic. Trust is a belief that the present political system is not corrupt and will serve the interests of citizens. Efficacy is a belief that citizens can influence the political system (Gamson, 1968; Aberbach, 1969; Finifter, 1970; Macke, 1979). Converse (1972) argues that individuals do not maintain this distinction empirically. In contrast, House and Mason (1975) argue convincingly the opposite. The results of subsequent studies have also pointed fairly consistently to the usefulness of the distinction between a trust dimension and an efficacy dimension (e.g., Wright, 1976; Weatherford, 1992).

no effect? The actual hypotheses relating to the role of political efficacy and feelings of trust towards government are also presented in Section 3.5.

3.5. Hypotheses

As suggested in Section 3.3., the first set of hypotheses that I set out to test in this study relate to incumbents' reputation activities -as defined by Mayhew (1974)- and voters' evaluations of the incumbent as reflected in the likes and dislikes mentioned when the interviewer probes for the reasons for a given voting preference in the congressional race.

Incumbents' "Advertising" Activities and Respondent Likes/Dislikes: While candidate visibility cannot be readily translated into electoral success, it has been demonstrated that familiarity is an essential threshold in most congressional campaigns (Parker, 1981; Cover and Brumberg, 1982). According to this view, campaign themes, appeals, and issues will have only limited electoral impact until citizens gain a minimal awareness of the candidate. Only then can the images that candidates proclaim emerge upon the consciousness of the electorate.

Name recall or at the very least name recognition usually constitute that threshold of familiarity. There are several "advertising" activities that incumbent members of Congress engage in, in order to make sure that members of their constituency cross that threshold. Media exposure (newspaper, radio, and television communication), mailings sent to members of the constituency from the office of the incumbent, forums and meetings the incumbent attends in his/her district, are all means utilized to make constituents aware of who their representative is. Since incumbents allocate valuable, scarce resources on these activities it makes sense to expect that those that are successful in getting their message across (i.e., making members of their constituency aware of who

they are) are more likely to be positively evaluated by their constituents. To use Eulau and Karps' (1977) terminology, members who are able to properly utilize these activities are said to have fulfilled their duty for symbolic responsiveness. More specifically then, it is hypothesized that, *in comparing individuals, those who are familiar with the name of their representative will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.* In a similar vein, *individuals who have been exposed to advertising activities arranged by the incumbent's office staff (e.g., direct mailings, media ads) will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.* Finally, *those individuals that have come in contact with the incumbent in the past (e.g., attended a personal meeting, a forum where the incumbent was present) will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.*

Incumbents' "Credit Claiming" Activities and Respondent Likes/Dislikes: Taking credit for any benefits that the incumbent representative was instrumental in bringing to the district (i.e., government contracts, public works, etc.) and personal services provided to members of the constituency by the incumbent and/or his office staff are also expected to make a difference in shielding the incumbent from negative evaluations. These activities clearly relate to Eulau and Karps' (1977) allocation and service components of representation. More specifically then, it is hypothesized that, *in comparing individuals, those that can recall some benefit/service in the district that the incumbent was responsible for will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.* Also, *those that have gotten help in a personal matter from the office of the incumbent will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.*

Incumbents' "Position Taking" Activities and Respondent Likes/Dislikes: Despite evidence that suggests that voters are not always familiar with candidates' stands on specific issues, numerous studies have produced empirical evidence with regard to the role of ideological proximity in determining candidate evaluations and vote choice in congressional races (Hinckley, 1980b; Mann and Wolfinger, 1980; Ragsdale, 1980; Markus, 1982; Abramowitz and Segal, 1986; Abramowitz, 1988). It is hypothesized here that, *in comparing individuals, those who feel closer ideologically to their district's representative will be more likely, than those who feel ideologically distant, to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.* Also, agreement on specific policy matters between the incumbent and members of his/her district will be utilized to tap on "position taking" activities. Roll call voting is the most obvious way voters can check their representative's positions on a wide spectrum of issues. As Kingdon suggests, the average constituent will not comb through the *Congressional Quarterly* or keep track of newspaper box scores, but he certainly can be made to see the relevance of incumbent members' roll call decisions by other elite actors in the electoral context (e.g., political opponents, the media, etc.) (Kingdon, 1973). This information in turn can play a vital role in citizens' evaluations of the incumbent. A survey item that inquired if the respondents approved or disapproved of the incumbent member's voting record is available only for the 1982 and 1986 contests. As a result, voters' perceptions of the incumbent's position on a series of policy issues is utilized here. More specifically, it is hypothesized here that *individuals who feel that their views on specific issues are more in agreement with the incumbent rather than the challenger will be more likely, than those who feel less comfortable with the incumbent's positions, to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.* This linkage between legislators and constituents on policy matters taps on the degree to which

voters perceive their representative to be responsive in terms of policy (Eulau and Karps, 1977).

Once the degree to which these reputation activities influence respondents' mentions of likes and dislikes is established, I will turn to test the proposition that *voters are inclined to rely more heavily on negative rather than positive bits of information when forming their vote preference*. In effect, evidence will be sought for voters' apparent readiness to punish behavior or views of which they disapprove rather than to reward those of which they approve.

The final set of hypotheses that will be tested in Chapter V, as mentioned earlier, relates to some political characteristics of those who are more likely to utilize the negative heuristic in the voting booth.

The Government Trust Hypothesis: As suggested in the previous Section, I propose here that dissatisfaction with government, institutions or individuals who serve in those institutions, is expected to be related to voters' tendency to weigh more heavily negative bits of information relating to the evaluations of candidates running for a congressional office rather than positive bits.

Three constructs are used in order tap on disaffection with the federal government. One relates to disaffection with political institutions in Washington in general, or what Miller (1974) calls "a simple barometer or satisfaction with the political system." The second relates to disaffection with Congress as a collectivity. Finally, the third measure is designed to tap specifically on disaffection towards political actors (i.e., incumbent members of Congress, incumbent president). More on the operationalizations of these constructs is offered in Chapter IV. For now, suffice is to say that, with regard to the role of government trust it is hypothesized that *in comparing individuals, those who display*

lower levels of trust in federal government (i.e., institutions and actors) will be more likely to utilize the negative heuristic in their effort to reach a voting decision than the rest of the electorate.

The Political Efficacy Hypothesis: For reasons outlined earlier, I expect those who feel they can exert an influence upon the political system and those that think that government officials are listening to what they have to say to be more likely to use the negative heuristic in their attempt to reach a voting decision.

Two constructs are used in order to tap political efficacy. One relates to a belief that one can understand politics and government and that political events can be influenced by activities of individuals like oneself. This attitude is called internal political efficacy. The second construct taps on the belief that public officials are responsive to the interests of individuals like oneself and that governmental and political institutions, such as legislatures and political parties, help make the government responsive to people like oneself. This attitude is called external political efficacy. The final hypothesis tested in the current project then, is that *in comparing individuals, those who display higher levels of political efficacy will be more likely to utilize the negative heuristic in their effort to reach a voting decision than those who exhibit lower levels of political efficacy.*

3.6. Summary of Hypotheses

In short, then, the following hypotheses are tested in this study:

1a. In comparing individuals, those who are familiar with the name of their representative will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.

1b. In comparing individuals, those who have been exposed to advertising activities arranged by the incumbent's office staff (e.g., direct mailings, media ads) will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.

1c. In comparing individuals, those who have come in contact with the incumbent in the past (e.g., attended a personal meeting, a forum where the incumbent was present) will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.

2a. In comparing individuals, those that can recall some benefit/service in the district that the incumbent was responsible for will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.

2b. In comparing individuals, those that have gotten help in a personal matter from the office of the incumbent will be more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.

3a. In comparing individuals, those who feel closer ideologically to their district's representative will be more likely, than those who feel ideologically distant, to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.

3b. In comparing individuals, those who feel that their views on specific issues are more in agreement with the incumbent rather than the challenger will be more likely, than those who feel less comfortable with the incumbent's positions, to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit.

4. Voters are inclined to rely more heavily on negative rather than positive bits of information when forming their vote preference.

5a. In comparing individuals, those who are dissatisfied with political institutions in Washington are more likely, than the rest of the electorate, to utilize the negative heuristic in their effort to reach a voting decision.

5b. In comparing individuals, those who are dissatisfied with Congress as a collectivity are more likely, than the rest of the electorate, to utilize the negative heuristic in their effort to reach a voting decision.

5c. In comparing individuals, those who are dissatisfied with political actors (i.e., incumbent members of Congress, incumbent president) are more likely, than the rest of the electorate, to utilize the negative heuristic in their effort to reach a voting decision.

6a. In comparing individuals, those who display higher levels of external political efficacy will be more likely, than the rest of the electorate, to utilize the negative heuristic in their effort to reach a voting decision.

6b. In comparing individuals, those who display higher levels of internal political efficacy will be more likely, than the rest of the electorate, to utilize the negative heuristic in their effort to reach a voting decision.

CHAPTER IV

MEASURES AND METHODS

In this chapter I describe the operationalizations of the key concepts used in the analysis that follows. All measures, as well as the ensuing analysis, are based on survey data from the five most recent midterm congressional elections provided by the CPS American National Election Studies (1978, 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1994)¹⁹. As mentioned in Chapter I, the decision to focus on off-year elections was based on the lack of previous literature on the phenomenon of negative voting in such an electoral context. The choice to start with the 1978 election was dictated by the shortcomings of the CPS data base before that date.

In 1978, for the first time, there were considerably more questions that focused on respondents' perception of Congress and its members. Also for the first time, a series of questions pertaining to the challengers and their perceived positions on a series of policy items was included. Furthermore, the format of several questions with regard to congressional candidates also changed. For instance, whereas before 1978 respondents were asked to produce from memory the names of the candidates, in all off-year surveys that followed respondents were given the opportunity to rate contenders for the office after being presented with the names of those running in their district. Finally, in 1978 there was also an important change in the sampling procedure utilized by the Center of

¹⁹ The data for the 1978, 1982, 1986, and 1990 contests were extracted from the American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1952-1992 (ICPSR 8475). The data for the 1994 contest were extracted from a separate file, the American National Election Study, 1994 (ICPSR 6507). The sample size varied from year to year: for 1978 there were 2304 respondents interviewed, in 1982 only 1418, in 1986 there were 2176, in 1990 the survey included 1980 respondents, and in 1994 the sample size was 1795. This variation in sample size for the different years included in the study is reflected in the multivariate analysis presented in the next chapter.

Political Studies. For the first time, congressional districts -rather than census tracts- constituted the primary sampling units for the collection of the data, thus insuring a more even distribution of respondents across congressional districts.

For all parts of the analysis presented in Chapter V, only congressional contests involving an incumbent running against a challenger from the opposite party will be examined. Furthermore, only races for the House of Representatives are included. The decision to focus on incumbent House elections was based primarily on three reasons. First, there is more than enough evidence in the literature that deals with congressional electoral behavior that suggests that House elections involving an incumbent should, as a matter of course, be evaluated differently than Senate or open-seat House elections (Hinckley, 1980a; Mann and Wolfinger, 1980; Parker, 1981; Jacobson, 1987; Gelman and King, 1990; Brown and Woods, 1991; Jacobson, 1992; Chappell and Suzuki, 1993). Second, a number of questions that tap on candidates' reputations that have consistently been included in the CPS survey with regard to candidates running for the office of the House of Representatives, have not been asked with regard to candidates running for the Senate. For instance, whereas respondents have been asked to mention specific benefits to the district for which the incumbent House candidate is seen as responsible, a similar question that could be utilized to tap on incumbent Senators' "credit claiming activities" has not been asked with respect to senatorial candidates. Finally, Mayhew's argument with regard to the electoral impact of reputation activities was developed in the context of House elections. Thus, in order to be faithful to the literature from which the set of the propositions that relate to such activities were derived, it was deemed proper to focus on House races.

In the following sections I discuss the operationalization of all concepts presented in the hypotheses discussed in the previous chapter. Ultimately, the dependent variable of

interest here is vote choice (wherein negative bits of candidate-related information is weighed more heavily than positive bits in the voting calculus and, if so, what kind of voters are more likely to do so); a discussion of that measure is presented in Section 4.1. However, for the hypotheses relating to the effects of reputation activities a measure of candidate evaluation that is based upon the number of reasons offered by respondents for liking/disliking the major House candidates is utilized as the dependent variable. A discussion of this measure is presented in Section 4.2. The operationalization of all other variables utilized in the ensuing analysis is offered in Section 4.3. The measurement of Party Identification, which is treated as a control variable, is discussed in Section 4.4. In the last section of this chapter, I discuss the methods utilized for the testing of the proposed hypotheses.

4.1. Congressional Vote Choice

Since the main concern of this project is assessing the effects of incumbents' reputation activities upon candidate evaluations, and in turn the effects of those evaluations upon likelihood to cast a vote for or against the incumbent, the dependent variable of ultimate interest is vote choice. For every midterm election year considered here, the NES/CPS Michigan survey included the following question: "Who did you vote for in the election for the House of Representatives in Washington?". By itself, however, this variable is of little use here. To construct a measure of incumbency voting, therefore, the vote choice variable was related to another variable that described the type of congressional race in which voters participated to elect a House member²⁰. Although this latter variable includes several different types of races, only those cases were selected where a Democratic incumbent ran against a Republican challenger or other candidates,

²⁰ For 1994 alone, this step was not necessary since there was a variable in the data base that reflected incumbent voting directly.

and where a Republican incumbent ran against a Democratic challenger or other candidates.

In this manner, the new incumbency voting measure (VOTINC) is a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent voted Democrat and resided in a district held by a Democratic incumbent, or if the respondent voted Republican in a district held by a Republican incumbent, and takes the value of 0 for all other cases. This ignores the few cases where respondents stated that they voted for liberal, conservative, and Independent, or minor party candidates that resided in districts other than those where a Democratic or Republican incumbent ran against a rival party candidate (e.g., when a Democratic or a Republican incumbent ran unopposed).

4.2. Measures of Candidate Evaluations

To examine the effect of negativity on incumbent voting, this project uses as independent variables open-ended questions in each of the NES/CPS Michigan surveys which elicit from respondents reasons for liking or disliking the major House Representatives. Responses to these same questions are utilized in the earlier part of the analysis that follows in order to construct a dependent variable in testing for the effects of incumbents' reputation activities. In this respect, the purpose of these variables -which are seen as measures of candidate evaluations- is two-fold. As such, close attention is given in this section upon these variables, their operationalization and their content.²¹

²¹ Frequencies for these open-ended questions that are designed to elicit reasons for "liking"/"disliking" each of the major House candidates are displayed in Appendix I. A quick comparison of those respondents who offered one or more reasons for "liking" or "disliking" at least one of the candidates confirms the findings of previous studies that suggest that those who are better educated and express a higher interest in politics are far more likely to be able to articulate a response to open-ended survey items than the rest of the electorate (Luskin, 1987; Bennett, 1988; Bartels, 1990; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1993). For instance, looking at the 1994 sample we see that those people who offered no "likes"/"dislikes" for either of the candidates, 20.7 percent were "very much interested" in politics, 47.9 percent were "somewhat interested", and 31.4 percent were "not much interested". On the other hand, of those people

It is assumed here that responses to the questions inquiring about respondents' reasons for liking or disliking the candidates running for office in the district provide a fairly accurate measure of the relative amount of positive and negative information each respondent has about each candidate. In each of the NES/CPS Michigan surveys these questions were worded as follows: "Next I would like to ask you some questions about the candidate(s) who ran in this district for the U.S. House of Representatives. Was there anything in particular that you liked about (name), the Democratic/Republican candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives? What was that? Anything else that you liked about this candidate?" Similarly, respondents were then asked whether there was anything that they did not like about the same candidate. Up to four positive and four negative responses about each Democratic and Republican candidate were recorded for 1978, 1982, and 1986. Up to five positive and negative mentions about each Democratic and Republican candidate were recorded for 1990 and 1994.

As the National Election Studies code books indicate, reasons for respondents' likes and dislikes can fall into overlapping categories. These categories, in turn, can refer to parties as well as to candidates. For instance, "very conservative ideas" can be cited as a reason for liking or disliking either a candidate or his/her party. In the five years under review, however, respondents were rather clear about their preferences. One observes, in fact, that on average 77.5 percent of the reasons for liking a candidate referred specifically to "candidate only" characteristics such as experience, leadership, and personal attributes such as honesty, intelligence, compassion, decency, morality, caring, etc. Reasons for

who offered one or more "likes"/"dislikes" for either of the candidates, 39.0 percent were "very much interested" in politics, 45.6 percent were "somewhat interested", and only 15.4 percent were "not much interested". Also, looking at education we see that of those who offered no "likes"/"dislikes" for either of the candidates, 18.8 percent did not complete high school, 35.6 percent completed high school only, and 45.6 percent had some education beyond the high school level; on the other hand, of those who offered one or more "likes"/"dislikes" for either of the candidates, only 11.4 percent did not complete high school, 29.3 percent completed high school only, and as many as 59.4 percent had some education beyond the high school level. Differences between the two groups were not as sharp in terms of other demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and race.

disliking a candidate represented roughly 62 percent of the same category. In general, about 70 percent of all reasons provided by respondents related exclusively to candidate characteristics.

This fact is particularly significant because it indicates that congressional voters may attach greater importance to personal qualities than the candidate's party affiliation or issue stands when evaluating candidates. This seems contrary to the early literature on congressional elections which depicted such contests as mere presidential referenda. Even more interesting is the fact that when looking across time, one observes mentions of personal characteristics becoming increasingly more frequent, with the opposite being true for mentions relating to partisanship or ideology. For instance, whereas in 1978, only 56.2 percent of the total number of likes and dislikes mentioned referred specifically to candidates' qualities, 77.6 percent of the total number of likes and dislikes mentioned in 1994 referred to such traits. Similarly, whereas in 1978, almost half of the responses offered to the likes and dislikes items related to partisan or ideological loyalties, less than a quarter of the answers offered to the same items in 1994 related to such loyalties. In light of these figures, it is safe to assume that congressional contests are indeed becoming also candidate-centered events, similar to what we observe across time in presidential races.

Turning now specifically to the reasons offered by respondents for their positive evaluation of a congressional candidate (i.e., content of "likes"), seven content areas predominantly stand out. These relate to the following descriptions: (i) being "a good man" or "a good guy"; having qualifications, and/or general ability; possessing favorable "personality" traits; and enjoying a good reputation; (ii) doing "a good/fair job so far"; helping out respondents at hard times; getting things done; having good ideas; and trying to do the right thing; (iii) representing adequately the views of the district; being close to the people in the district; coming home regularly to mix and chat with the people;

(iv) keeping the people well informed about governmental matters; communicating with constituents; explaining matters well so people can understand, especially through newspapers and communications; (v) listening to people; soliciting public opinion; and being accessible to constituents; (vi) being honest; sincere; man of integrity; being open; straightforward; fair; not tricky; means what he says; having attractive physical characteristics; and (vii) being a public servant; man of duty; conscientious; hardworking; dedicated; genuinely interested in serving people; having a good attendance record in Congress; and revealing potential to occupy the White House.

The reasons for disliking a congressional candidate, on the other hand, are more widely distributed. In this respect, the most common content areas include references to the candidate's (i) record in public service; performance in previous office; and voting record in Congress; (ii) failure to get programs off the ground, produce results, or do anything for the district; (iii) weakness; indecisiveness; lack of self-confidence; laziness; and vagueness on issues; and (iv) not being close to the people in the district, interacting with people or representing inadequately the views of the district.

An interesting aspect with regard to negative mentions is the respondents' large number of references to mudslinging and negative campaign tactics. Negative campaign tactics are defined as unflattering or challenging statements -personal or policy related- made by a candidate or those acting on his behalf in order to enhance his/her electoral prospects. As a matter of fact, for each of the five elections under review, members of the public suggested that "cheap attacks" on the character or record of the opponent constituted prime reasons for disliking a Republican or a Democratic candidate. Furthermore, there has been an increase in comments that suggest such tactics as the basis for disliking a contestant. For instance, in 1978, 16 percent of the respondents who answered the first dislike question about the Republican candidate signaled their

dissatisfaction with mudslinging and negative campaign tactics. In 1986, 20 percent of the respondents expressed similar feelings, and the trend continued in 1994, with 27 percent of the respondents complaining about such tactics. These numbers are hardly surprising though, given the well-documented increase in the use of negative advertising in recent congressional races (Jamieson, 1992; West, 1993; Brians and Wattenberg, 1996). Finally, the fact that negative tactics are far more likely to be mentioned in conjunction to dislikes for a candidate, is not surprising given previous literature that has linked such tactics to increased political cynicism, negative affect toward candidates, and reduced interest in voting (Garrazone, 1984; Merritt, 1984; Basil, Schooler, and Reeves, 1991; Ansolabehere et al., 1994).

From the open-ended questions, then, four independent variables were created to measure evaluations of the incumbent and the challenger. Likes and dislikes for the Democratic and Republican candidate, therefore, were transformed into likes and dislikes for the incumbent and the challenger, using a two step procedure: (1) by a simple count of positive and negative reasons given by all respondents for liking and disliking the incumbent and for liking and disliking the challenger, and (2) by relating the likes and dislikes to the type of congressional race wherein incumbents contested. This resulted in four variables:

(i) LIKINC represents the number of likes for the incumbent. If there is a Democratic incumbent then LIKINC represents the count of likes for the Democratic candidate; if there is a Republican incumbent, LIKINC represents the count of likes for the Republican candidate.

(ii) LIKCHAL represents the number of likes for the challenger. If there is a Democratic challenger then LIKCHAL represents the count of likes for the Democratic

candidate; if there is a Republican challenger, LIKINC represents the count for the Republican candidate.

(iii) DSLKINC represents the number of dislikes for the incumbent. If there is a Democratic incumbent then DSLKINC represents the counts of dislikes for the Democratic candidate; if there is a Republican incumbent, DSLKINC represents the count of dislikes for the Republican candidate.

(iv) DSLKCHAL represents the number of dislikes for the challenger. If there is a Democratic challenger then DSLKCHAL represents the count of dislikes for the Democratic candidate; if there is a Republican challenger, DSLKCHAL represents the count of dislikes for the Republican candidate.

Ultimately, I am interested in testing whether one "dislike" for the incumbent is more detrimental to the latter's electoral prospects than one "like" is beneficial. Once again, then, it is important to note that what interests me here is the weight of one positive reason versus the weight of one negative reason on the voting calculus. Toward this end the simple count of likes and dislikes was considered more appropriate than Lau's (1982, 1985) method of considering likes *relative* to dislikes²². Also, given the limited purpose

²² Lau (1982) used data from three presidential elections to construct variables that simply represented likes and dislikes for the two presidential candidates. Lau's procedure, however, was very different from that adopted here. Lau (1982) argued that these two variables represented an excess of positive over negative (or negative over positive) information. This he did by subtracting the number of negative reasons from the number of positive reasons (and vice-versa) and collapsing the results of this difference into 0. In Lau's (1982, 1985) opinion, positive and negative reasons should be considered in relative terms since (to cite his own example) a person who gives five reasons to vote for a candidate and four reasons to vote against him represents a less negative evaluation than another voter who simply gives only three reasons to vote against the candidate.

Apart from the fact that this technique can be theoretically questionable, the procedure also involves problems from a technical perspective. The average number of individuals who actually responded to the like/dislikes questions did not exceed 62 percent for any of the elections considered in the present analysis. Out of these an average of 35 percent responded in the affirmative when questioned about reasons for liking or disliking a Democratic or Republican congressional candidate. Lau's (1982) procedure to create two variables that represent an excess of positive over negative information, and vice versa, further restricts the fairly modest percentage of responses to likes and dislikes questions since the manner of collapsing variables into net quantities would eliminate those cases whose respondents give

of this project, the procedure utilized by Gant and Davis (1984) was considered as a less desirable option²³.

Even for the earlier part of the analysis, where I examine the effects of incumbents' reputation activities upon the likelihood of respondents' offering positive or negative comments with regard to the incumbent candidate, the simple count method suffices. All I am interested in here is whether activities that are supposedly important ingredients for the make-up of a better image for the incumbent, a better reputation so to speak, do indeed result in a higher likelihood of positive mentions (i.e., LIKINC) occurring rather than negative ones (i.e., DSLKINC). What serves as a dependent variable, then, for this part of the analysis is an indicator constructed from collapsing the items that reflect the positive and negative mentions about the incumbent. The resulting variable is called EVALINC. Those who offer at least one reason for liking the incumbent and no negative mentions are coded as 1; alternatively, those who offered at least one reason for disliking the incumbent and no positive mentions are coded as 0. Finally, because these reputation activities are seen as results of effort -or lack of it- of the incumbent member likes and dislikes

equal amounts of positive and negative reasons. Individuals in this latter category would be classified with others (about 65 percent of respondents) who declined to offer any reason for liking or disliking a candidate.

²³ Gant and Davis (1984), rather than counting the number of "likes" and "dislikes", treat the responses to each question as a "set" of responses. With a set of "likes" and "dislikes" for each of the two major party candidates, there are four sets of responses for each respondent. If a respondent gave no response to a question, that set they consider to be "empty". If one or more responses to a question were given by a respondent, the set of responses to that question they consider to be "non-empty". For Gant and Davis (1984) negative voting refers to the proportion of voters who voted for their least-disliked candidate as assessed by using the likes/dislikes questions. In other words, they include in their analysis only respondents who voted and offered dislikes for one candidate, and either had no mentions or *both* likes plus dislikes for the other candidate. It is important to note here that, like Lau (1982, 1985), Gant and Davis (1984) focus also on presidential candidates. Given the lower turnout rates in congressional contests and the lower visibility of congressional candidates, a definition of negativity as restrictive as that utilized in their work would reduce the effective sample for the ensuing analysis to such an extent as to make any attempts to use multivariate techniques impossible. As such, and once again given also the scope of the research question outlined above, the procedure discussed in this section for utilizing the likes/dislikes items was deemed as a necessary compromise.

mentioned with regard to the challenger's candidacy (i.e., LIKCHAL and DSLKCHAL) are omitted from this part of the analysis.

4.3. Measures of Incumbent Reputation and Measures of Voters' Characteristics

Incumbent Reputation: Familiarity with the incumbent is one of the measures used to tap on incumbents' "advertising activities". Both the respondents' ability to recall and to recognize the name of their districts' representative are taken as evidence of familiarity. The inclusion of both has been suggested by several scholars, who have argued that spontaneous name recall is an overly demanding measure of respondent familiarity with political candidates compared to the actual requirement of recognizing the name on the ballot (Abramowitz, 1975; Neumann, 1976; Mann, 1978; Tedin and Murray, 1979; Parker, 1981; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987; Dubow, 1994; Shoemaker, Schooler, and Danielson, 1989; du Plessis, 1994; Gibson, 1994; Ross, 1994). Whereas there is a direct question in the CPS survey that elicits recall, there is no equivalent question for recognition. As a result, the feeling thermometers were used to elicit recognition, "on the assumption that any response other than 'Don't know anything about this person' is tantamount to recognition" (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987: 28-29). For the multivariate analysis, Familiarity with the Incumbent was treated as a trichotomous variable and respondents were classified in the following response categories: respondent recalled incumbent's name; respondent recognized but did not recall the incumbent's name; respondent did not recognize or recall the incumbent's name.

Whereas measures of familiarity may be seen as the result of incumbents' "advertising activities", contact with individuals in the district constitutes more of an input in the incumbent's effort to make himself/herself known in the district. Ragsdale (1981) differentiates between candidate initiated contact and constituent initiated contact. The

same differentiation is used in the present analysis. More specifically, incumbent initiated contact is contact that respondents made without intention, by being exposed to the media and from mailings sent to the respondent from the office of the incumbent. Survey items that probe whether the respondent has read anything in the newspaper, heard anything on the radio, saw anything on television, and whether he/she has received any mailings from the office of the incumbent are all utilized here as measures of incumbent initiated contact for the purpose of "advertising" their candidacy. At the stage where multivariate analysis is utilized, Incumbent Initiated Contact is an index that is comprised of the four previously mentioned items²⁴. Respondents were classified in five categories depending on how many types of contact they had experienced (0-4).

Finally, another aspect of "advertising activities" that incumbents might be involved in is by making themselves available for meetings with one or more members of their constituency or making available staff members for such meetings. Survey items that probe whether the respondent has ever personally met the incumbent, or attended a meeting where the incumbent spoke, or talked with the incumbent's staff are all utilized here as measures of constituent initiated contact. At the stage where multivariate analysis is utilized, Constituent Initiated Contact is an index that is comprised of the three previously mentioned items²⁵. Respondents were classified in four categories depending on how many types of contact they had experienced (0-3).

The following measures are utilized to tap incumbents' "credit claiming" activities:

- 1) Recall Service to the District; this is a dichotomous variable that classifies constituents' response to whether or not they could recall anything special the incumbent has done for the district.
- 2) Satisfaction with Personal Service; this is a dichotomous variable that

²⁴ Similarly to other studies which utilize an index of such activities, all items are given an equal weight (e.g., Jacobson, 1981; Ragsdale, 1981; Ripley, Patterson, Maurer, and Quinlan, 1992).

²⁵ Here, once again, each of the three items used to built the index were assigned an equal weight (Jacobson, 1981; Ragsdale, 1981; Ripley, Patterson, Maurer, and Quinlan, 1992).

classifies constituents' response to whether or not they were satisfied with the response they got to requests for help they made to the incumbent's office (retrospective). 3) Expected Helpfulness; this a dichotomous variable that classifies constituents' response to whether or not they expect the incumbent's office to be of help in solving personal problems (prospective).

General Ideological Proximity with the incumbent and agreement or disagreement on a number of Specific Issues are the two measures utilized to tap the "position taking" activities of incumbent House members. General Ideological Proximity is a trichotomous variable and respondents are classified in the following categories: perceiving oneself closer to the challenger on the liberal/conservative continuum; perceiving oneself equidistant from both the incumbent and the challenger; and, perceiving oneself closer to the incumbent with respect to an overall ideological orientation. In order to develop a measure of respondent agreement/disagreement with the candidates' position on specific policy issues, a four-item index was built with questions that tapped on the following issues for the 1994 election: government guarantee of jobs/standard of living; government aid to blacks; government services/spending; and, federal health insurance. For 1990 and 1986 such an index was not built since similar items tapping on policy issues were not included in the survey. Finally, for 1982 and 1978 a three-item index was built with items that focused on the following issues: government guarantee of jobs/standard of living; government aid to blacks; and, women's rights²⁶.

²⁶ For both constructs utilized to tap the "position taking" activities, simple spatial differences were used. To estimate these differences for General Ideological Proximity, responses to three different survey items were employed: respondent's self-placement on the liberal/conservative continuum, respondent's perception of the incumbent member on the same continuum, and finally, the respondent's perception of the challenger on the liberal/conservative continuum. In order to estimate the differences with respect to specific policy items, once again, I relied on three different items for each issue: the respondent's position, the incumbent's position on the same issue as perceived by the respondent, and the challenger's position on the issue as perceived by the respondent. For the exact wording of the survey items that relate to different policy items, and all other measures of members' reputation activities, see Appendix II.

Measures of Voters' Characteristics. The measures utilized here to get a better understanding with respect to the type of individuals who are likely to use the negative heuristic more heavily relate to government trust and other aspects of affect toward the political system. In addition to those, two measures of political efficacy are utilized for the same purpose.

More specifically, I used responses to the following four items to construct an index of Government Trust: (i) "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do the right thing?"; (ii) "Do you think that people in government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?"; (iii) "Would you say that the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all people?"; and (iv) "Do you think that quite a few people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all?"²⁷. Those who said that they trust the federal government only some of the time or none of the time, or that government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or felt that government wastes a lot of money we pay in taxes, or that quite a few of those running the government are crooked are classified as less trustful of government. Those who answered that they trust the federal government most of the time or just about always, or that government is run for the for the benefit of all, or felt that people in government do not waste much of our tax dollars, or that not many or hardly any of those serving in government institutions are crooked are classified as more trustful of government. Utilizing an index rather than a specific item is preferred since the literature on

²⁷ All four items used to build the Government Trust index were assigned equal weight. House and Mason (1975) were the first to demonstrate empirically the validity of the construct, and several studies on government trust take a similar approach with respect to the operationalization of the term (e.g., Wright, 1976; Miller, 1979; Weatherford, 1992).

government trust suggests that the combination of all four questions provides a much more reliable indicator of general trust than does any single item (Miller, 1979).

Responses to the survey item that asks respondents to say whether they approve or disapprove of the way Congress operates as an institution is the second measure utilized to gain a better understanding of the kind of individuals who are more likely to utilize the negative heuristic. Furthermore, in order to check if dissatisfaction toward political actors/leaders is also related to usage of the negative heuristic, I utilize the survey item that asks respondents whether they approve or disapprove of the way the incumbent member is handling his/her job, as well as the item that asks respondents whether they approve or disapprove of the way the incumbent president is handling his job. In all three cases, I expect those who approve of the institution or the political actors to be less likely to use the negative heuristic.

Finally, I use responses to the statement "Public officials don't care much what people like me think" to measure external political efficacy and responses to "People like me don't have any say about what the government does" to measure internal political efficacy. Those that agreed with these statements are classified in the "low efficacy" category of the variables INTEFFIC and EXTEFFIC, whereas those who expressed disagreement are classified in the "high efficacy" category of these indicators.

4.4. The Role of Party Identification

As mentioned earlier, according to the social psychological (or Michigan) approach to voting behavior, party identification is the major element in the "field of psychological forces" that determine partisan choice (Campbell et al., 1960: 9). In congressional contests party identification is generally seen also as a significant factor in

vote decision. Most congressional candidates are less well known and well publicized than presidential candidates (Flanigan and Zingale, 1988). For the average voter, they remain "unknown quantities" and, consequently, he or she may only be aware of the candidates' party affiliation and whether or not they are incumbents. As Stokes (1966: 126-127) argued, in deciding how to vote, citizens may find "great psychological convenience" in examining the "party symbol stamped on certain candidates, certain issue positions, [and] certain interpretations of political reality." Others, however, see voters' assessments of the two candidates as no less important than party attachment in determining their vote choice (e.g., Abramowitz, 1975; Hinckley, 1980b; Jacobson, 1981).

The decline of partisanship notwithstanding (e.g., Wattenberg, 1984), party identification can hardly be ignored as an important determinant of individual vote choice²⁸. In light of its durability, party identification is here considered, along with positive and negative evaluations of candidates, as an important predictor of vote choice.

Thus, in order to control for the influence of partisanship, two dichotomous variables were constructed, representing Democrats and Republicans, with Independents serving as the base category. To do this, the standard (seven-point scale) party identification variable in the CPS survey was collapsed into three categories that comprise: (1) Democrats (strong, weak, and leaners); (2) Independents; and (3) Republicans (weak, strong, and leaners)²⁹. In turn, DEMMTCH and REPMTCH represent correspondence between the respondent's partisanship and the party affiliation of the incumbent candidate.

²⁸ Evidence about the powerful role that partisanship continues to exert upon congressional vote choice is abundant. Looking at the results of the most recent off-year election, we see that over 78 percent of those who identify with the Democratic party cast a vote for their party's candidate; if the Democratic candidate was also the incumbent the percentage increases to 91.2 percent. The same pattern holds for Republicans. Over 83 percent of those who identify with the Republican party cast a vote for their party's candidate; if the Republican candidate was also the incumbent the percentage increases to 94.8 percent.

²⁹ The decision to classify leaners with partisans was based on the increasing volume of literature that suggests that individuals who describe themselves as leaners act far more similar to partisans than those who classify themselves as Independents without leaning towards either of the two major political parties (Keith et al, 1986; Carmines, McIver, and Stimson, 1987; Mattei and Niemi, 1991).

More specifically, if the respondent is a Democrat residing in a district represented by a Democratic incumbent, then DEMMTCH equals 1; if the respondent is a Democrat residing in a district represented by a Republican candidate, then DEMMTCH equals 0. On the other hand, if the respondent is a Republican residing in a district represented by a Republican incumbent, then REPMTCH equals 1; if the respondent is a Republican residing in a district represented by a Democratic candidate, then REPMTCH equals 0.

Having established the variables of interest, the next step is the selection of a statistical analysis technique that is appropriate to the type of study conducted and, more specifically, to the form of the data being used in the study.

4.5. Method of Analysis

A commonly used approach to estimate models with a dichotomous dependent variable is known as the Linear Probability Model (LPM) (Aldrich and Cnudde, 1975; Pindyck and Rubinfeld, 1976; Maddala, 1983; Aldrich and Nelson, 1987; Gujarati, 1988). Since the LPM is linear in parameters, although not necessarily in the variables, it is possible to estimate the LPM by the standard OLS method -mainly by interpreting the conditional mean value of the dependent variable as the conditional probability that an event will occur, given the values of the explanatory variables (i.e. $\Pr(Y_i=1/X_i)$). Such an application, however, can present several problems that include (1) non-normality of the disturbances; (2) heteroscedasticity; and (3) pathological estimates with probabilities lying outside the 0-1 bounds; (4) questionable value of R-square as a measure of goodness of fit (Gujarati, 1988).

These problems are surmountable and can be corrected through various techniques. For instance, we can use weighted least squares to resolve the

heteroscedasticity problem (Aldrich and Nelson, 1987), or increase the sample size to minimize the non-normality problem. By resorting to restricted least-squares or mathematical programming techniques we can even make the estimated probabilities lie in the 0-1 interval (Gujarati, 1988). Unfortunately though, the resulting models still do not fit the correct functional form for dichotomous dependent variables. In other words, a dichotomous dependent variable should be considered in terms of probability (i.e., the probability of events occurring or not occurring). That is, a nonlinear probability model is needed that adopts a method different from OLS regression (where a unit increase in an independent variable has the same impact on the dependent variable) and avoids the problem of pathological estimates -by "squeezing" the estimated probabilities inside the 0-1 interval through the use of the S-shaped feature of the cumulative distribution function (CDF) (Aldrich and Nelson, 1987: 26).

In this project, the cumulative distribution function (CDF) chosen to represent the 0-1 response model is the logistic one³⁰. Like the normal CDF, which gives rise to the probit (or normit) model, and also restrains the CDF estimated probabilities within the 0-1 range, the logistic CDF guarantees a nonlinear relationship between the dependent and explanatory variables with estimates that are best, consistent, and unbiased. Theoretically, the logistic and probit formulations are very similar, the main difference being that the former has slightly flatter tails than the cumulative distribution of the latter (Gujarati, 1988). Additionally, the use of the logistic function involves less of a computational cost (Aldrich and Nelson, 1987). The logistic model has been used extensively in analyzing growth phenomena, such as population, GNP, money supply, etc. (Gujarati, 1988).

³⁰ The cumulative logistic distribution function is represented by the equation: $P_i = 1/(1+e^{-Z_i})$, or $P_i = e^{Z_i}/(1+e^{Z_i})$ where, P_i is the conditional probability that the event will occur given X_i (i.e. $\Pr(Y_i=1/X_i)$), $Z_i = \sum_{k=1}^K \beta_k X_{ik}$ and e is the base number of the natural logarithm. It can easily be shown that the above equation is not only continuous but, unlike the linear specification, can also restrain P_i within the 0-1 range without any constraint on Z_i (Aldrich and Nelson, 1987: 31-32; and Gujarati, 1988: 481-483).

The logistic model has the following features: i) although the probabilities (of necessity) lie between 0 and 1, the logits are not so bounded; ii) although the log of the odds ratio (L) is linear in X, the probabilities themselves are not; iii) the slope measures the change in the odds ratio (L) for a unit change in X -i.e., it tells how the log-odds in favor of the event described by the dependent variable change as the independent variable changes by a unit; iv) the intercept is the value of the log-odds in favor of the event described by the dependent variable if the independent variable is zero; and v) given a certain value for the independent variable, it is possible to estimate the exact probability that the event described by the dependent variable will occur using the cumulative logistic distribution function (Gujarati, 1988). This last feature of the logit model is used extensively in the analysis presented in Chapter V.

In short, in the model explored here, analysis using the cumulative logistic distribution function would produce the equation:

$$P_i = E (VOTINC=1/X_i) = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + u_i$$

where,

VOTINC = a dummy variable (scored 1 if respondent voted for the incumbent; 0 if respondent voted for the challenger);

$$P_i = E (VOTINC=1/X_i);$$

a = intercept (value of the log-odds in favor of voting for the incumbent when X_i equal zero);

X_1 = the number of likes for the incumbent (LIKINC);

X_2 = the number of dislikes for the incumbent (DSLKINC);

X_3 = the number of likes for the challenger (LIKCHAL);

X_4 = the number of dislikes for the challenger (DSLKCHAL);

X_5 = dummy variable (1 if Democrat residing in a district represented by a Democratic incumbent; -1 if Democrat residing in a district represented by a Republican incumbent; 0 otherwise);

X_6 = dummy variable (1 if Republican residing in a district represented by a Republican incumbent; -1 if Republican residing in a district represented by a Democratic incumbent; 0 otherwise);

u_i = error term.

For the early part of the analysis presented in Chapter V, where I explore the effect of different reputation activities upon the likelihood to mention "likes" rather than "dislikes" about the incumbent, I also utilize a logistic function but in this case the dependent variable is EVALINC (1 = those who offer at least one reason for liking the incumbent and no negative mentions; and 0 = those who offer at least one reason for disliking the incumbent and no positive mentions) and the numerous measures of reputation activities discussed earlier in this chapter are entered as independent variables. More specifically, the estimated model with regard to the reputation activities is as follows:

$$P_i = E(\text{EVALINC}=1/X_i) = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + b_7X_7 + u_i$$

where,

EVALINC = a dummy variable (scored 1 if respondent offered at least one reason for liking the incumbent and no negative mentions; 0 if respondent offered at least one reason for disliking the incumbent and no positive mentions);

$$P_i = E (EVALINC=1/X_i);$$

a = intercept (value of the log-odds in favor of mentioning at least one reason for liking the incumbent and no negative mentions when X_i equal zero);

X_1 = dummy variable (1 if Democrat residing in a district represented by a Democratic incumbent; -1 if Democrat residing in a district represented by a Republican incumbent; 0 otherwise);

X_2 = dummy variable (1 if Republican residing in a district represented by a Republican incumbent; -1 if Republican residing in a district represented by a Democratic incumbent; 0 otherwise);

X_3 = respondent initiated contact with the incumbent (CONTRESP);

X_4 = respondent's recall of incumbent's benefit/service to district (SERVDIST);

X_5 = respondent's satisfaction with request for casework (CASEWORK);

X_6 = respondent's perception of expected help from the incumbent (XPTHELP);

X_7 = respondent's perception of general ideological proximity to incumbent and challenger (IDEOPROX);

u_i = error term.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

In the previous chapter I specified a series of propositions pertaining to the phenomenon of negative voting. These propositions can be classified into three broad categories. One set deals with various activities undertaken by the incumbent member of Congress in order to enhance his/her chances for reelection. I begin the analysis presented in this chapter by examining the effects, if any, that such activities have upon incumbent overall evaluations as reflected in the number of likes and dislikes offered by the respondent. In the second part of this analysis, I search for empirical evidence with regard to negative voting in congressional races. Negative voting has already been defined as the voters' alleged inclination to rely more on negative than positive bits of information pertaining to a candidate. In effect, at this stage evidence will be sought for voters' apparent readiness to punish behavior or views they disapprove rather than to reward those of which they approve. In the final stage of my analysis, I attempt to gain a better understanding of the type of individuals who are more likely to utilize the negative heuristic.

5.1. Test of the Incumbent Reputation Hypotheses

A major expectation of this research is that incumbents' reputations do matter. The better the image an incumbent is able to build for himself/herself the more likely those in the district will evaluate the incumbent in a positive manner. As suggested in Chapter III, incumbents actively seek to build a good image for themselves by engaging in three types of activities: "advertising", "credit claiming", and "position taking".

Responses to survey items designed to elicit information with respect to voters' familiarity with congressional candidates illustrate that, for every year examined in this study, incumbents enjoyed higher levels of recall and recognition when compared to challengers (see Table 5-1). In 1978, for instance, whereas over one third of the voters could recall on their own the name of the incumbent running in their district, a little more than a mere ten percent could recall the name of the challenger. The disparity remains when simple recognition is substituted for recall. Looking at the same year, whereas eighty percent of the voters could recognize and rate -using a feeling thermometer- the incumbent running in their district, barely forty percent could do the same with respect to the challenger. Finally, whereas only slightly over eighteen percent of the voters could neither recall or recognize the name of the incumbent, well over half of them (59.8 percent) could not recall or recognize the name of the challenger.

The fact that incumbents enjoy such far greater levels of familiarity, compared to challengers, is hardly surprising given findings of previous studies on the effects of incumbency. What is more interesting here is the fact that we do not see much variation across time. Challengers in recent years have been far more successful in raising money than they were a decade ago (Wilcox, 1995). Certainly, they are still trailing far behind incumbents in spending but the gap has narrowed. Unfortunately, increased financial resources do not seem to readily translate in higher visibility for the challenger. Looking at the familiarity levels enjoyed by challengers in the 1994 race, for instance, we see really not much of a different picture than the one described for 1978. More than half of the voters (53.6 percent), in 1994, could still not recall nor recognize the name of the challenger running in their district.

With respect to both candidate initiated contact activities and citizen initiated activities that are aimed to increase voters' level of familiarity with the candidates running

TABLE 5-1: Incumbency Status and Voters' Reports of Familiarity, Candidate Initiated Contact, and Citizen Initiated Contact

	1978		1982		1986		1990		1994	
Voters' Reports	Inc	Chal	Inc	Chal	Inc	Chal	Inc	Chal	Inc	Chal
Recalled Candidate's Name	34.7 (545)	10.9 (171)	36.1 (357)	17.7 (175)	26.7 (392)	8.2 (121)	25.4 (329)	5.3 (68)	36.2 (499)	14.2 (189)
Recognized Name and Could Rate Candidate	80.4 (1261)	38.9 (610)	78.4 (775)	47.9 (473)	77.7 (1142)	36.0 (529)	79.2 (1025)	40.1 (487)	83.0 (1108)	45.5 (607)
Neither	18.5 (291)	59.8 (938)	20.7 (205)	50.9 (503)	21.6 (318)	62.9 (924)	20.3 (263)	60.8 (669)	16.2 (223)	53.6 (715)
Received Mail from the Candidate	55.8 (875)	12.8 (201)	56.6 (559)	18.2 (180)	58.5 (860)	11.8 (174)	50.4 (653)	7.4 (96)	47.0 (627)	17.2 (229)
Read about Candidate in the Press	55.4 (870)	23.3 (365)	52.5 (519)	28.8 (285)	51.6 (758)	20.8 (306)	48.3 (626)	13.3 (172)	49.0 (654)	23.4 (312)
Heard Candidate on the Radio	27.7 (434)	11.2 (176)	28.6 (283)	15.2 (150)	25.9 (381)	7.9 (116)	25.5 (330)	5.8 (75)	26.1 (348)	13.9 (185)
Saw Candidate on the Television	43.6 (684)	20.3 (319)	51.6 (510)	28.3 (280)	49.9 (733)	19.1 (281)	47.8 (619)	13.1 (169)	54.2 (723)	27.7 (370)
Met Personally with the Candidate	14.9 (234)	2.8 (44)	9.9 (140)	6.5 (64)	11.9 (175)	3.2 (47)	13.1 (170)	1.3 (17)	10.6 (141)	2.7 (36)
Attended Meeting where Candidate Spoke	13.0 (204)	2.0 (32)	10.4 (103)	4.1 (41)	10.5 (154)	1.8 (26)	11.0 (143)	1.6 (21)	9.5 (127)	1.8 (24)
Talked with Candidates Staff Member	8.4 (132)	1.5 (24)	8.4 (83)	2.5 (25)	9.4 (138)	1.2 (17)	7.4 (96)	1.0 (13)	9.6 (128)	2.9 (39)

NOTE: Numbers in cells represent percentages. Numbers in parentheses represent frequencies.

for the House, we once again see incumbents being at an advantage compared to challengers. More voters are likely to meet with the incumbent, to attend one of his/her speeches, to talk to his/her staff, to receive a piece of mail from the office of the candidate, or to hear, read, or see something relating to his/her candidacy on the media. For example, looking again at the most recent congressional election, almost half of the voters received a mailing from the office of the incumbent, whereas only a little over seventeen percent of them received something from the office of the challenger. Also, whereas close to ten percent of the voters came in contact with the office of the incumbent, less than three percent came in contact with the office of the challenger. Again, this is hardly surprising given franking and other office/staff privileges that incumbents enjoy. Once again also, we do not see any changes across time: the disparity remains fairly constant across congressional election years.

Incumbent advantages in terms of both familiarity levels and contact levels, provided they are indeed worthwhile "advertising activities" designed to aid with incumbents' reelection motives and -to use Eulau and Karps'(1977) terminology- are positively related to the degree representatives are perceived to fulfill their function of "symbolic representation", should translate into more positive mentions when members of the district are asked to evaluate their representative. Evidence with respect to this proposition will be examined shortly, but first I turn to take a look into voters' reports of experiences that relate to "credit claiming" and "position taking" activities. The data in Table 5-2 reveal that, for every year examined here, well-over three-quarters of the voters that contacted the office of the incumbent in order to receive help on a personal matter left satisfied. Furthermore, when asked to forecast on the level of helpfulness expected in a future request for casework, voters express positive feelings toward their incumbent and his/her office staff. This optimism for receiving adequate help, I find interesting given the well-documented increase in citizens' dissatisfaction with government in Washington

TABLE 5-2: Voters' Responses with Regard to Incumbents' "Casework" and "Position Taking" Activities

Activities	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
Satisfaction with Requested Help (retrospective)					
<i>Not Satisfied</i>					
<i>Satisfied</i>	9.7 (21)	14.9 (18)	12.6 (23)	15.9 (25)	16.5 (28)
	90.3 (195)	85.1 (103)	87.4 (160)	84.1 (132)	83.5 (142)
Expected Helpfulness (prospective)					
<i>Low</i>	13.3 (156)	14.8 (107)	12.6 (139)	15.5 (165)	18.8 (204)
<i>High</i>	86.7 (1021)	85.2 (616)	87.4 (960)	84.5 (898)	81.2 (882)
Recall Service to District					
<i>None</i>	77.9 (1218)	79.2 (778)	83.1 (1216)	84.2 (1071)	80.3 (1057)
<i>Yes</i>	22.1 (346)	20.8 (204)	16.9 (248)	15.8 (201)	19.7 (259)
Ideological Proximity					
<i>Closer to Ch</i>	21.0 (65)	29.6 (68)	27.5 (84)	30.0 (61)	39.6 (168)
<i>Equidistant</i>	50.0 (155)	33.5 (77)	34.3 (105)	33.5 (68)	28.1 (119)
<i>Closer to Inc</i>	29.0 (90)	37.0 (85)	38.2 (117)	36.5 (74)	32.3 (137)
Specific Issue 1 (Job/Living)					
<i>Closer to Ch</i>	24.8 (75)	26.7 (66)	Not Asked	Not Asked	33.1 (156)
<i>Equidistant</i>	43.6 (132)	34.8 (86)			36.3 (171)
<i>Closer to Inc</i>	31.7 (96)	38.5 (95)			30.6 (144)
Specific Issue 2 (Aid to Blacks)					
<i>Closer to Ch</i>	21.2 (69)	29.2 (69)	Not Asked	Not Asked	30.1 (326)
<i>Equidistant</i>	50.5 (164)	34.7 (82)			35.0 (379)
<i>Closer to Inc</i>	28.3 (92)	36.0 (85)			34.9 (378)
Specific Issue 3 (Spending)					
<i>Closer to Ch</i>	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	31.0 (143)
<i>Equidistant</i>					37.7 (174)
<i>Closer to Inc</i>					31.4 (145)
Specific Issue 4 (Women)					
<i>Closer to Ch</i>	17.1 (57)	24.2 (59)	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked
<i>Equidistant</i>	58.3 (194)	45.1 (110)			
<i>Closer to Inc</i>	24.6 (82)	30.7 (75)			
Specific Issue 5 (Federal Health)					
<i>Closer to Ch</i>	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	Not Asked	37.8 (111)
<i>Equidistant</i>					25.9 (76)
<i>Closer to Inc</i>					36.4 (107)

NOTE: Numbers in cells represent percentages. Numbers in parentheses represent frequencies.

in general and especially with the executive and legislative branches. Despite lower levels of confidence over time, prospective evaluations of incumbents' responsiveness to requests for help from those in the district have remained very high. On the other hand, this does fit well with previous literature that suggests that while citizens have low confidence in government institutions, they seem to have confidence in the abilities of their representative (Fenno, 1975). Obviously, inability to recall something the incumbent member has done for the district is not enough of a reason to question such abilities. Consistently, when one looks across time, well over three-quarters of the voters cannot recall such a service to attribute to the incumbent member.

Looking again at Table 5-2, the data reveal that with respect to "position taking" activities we see that both on the general ideological proximity measure and on all of the specific issues, the majority of the voters felt closer to the incumbent rather than the challenger. This actually is true for every election except the most recent one. If indeed, "position taking" activities are related to candidate evaluations and ultimately to vote choice, in light of the evidence in Table 5-2 it might very well be that in November 1994, incumbent members of Congress lost more votes as a result of making their positions known to the electorate than they gained. Maybe Fenno's advice "Don't mention any issues. The next thing you know they'll want to know how you vote" (Fenno, 1978: 96) could have been sound advice for some of the candidates and it might have saved some from losing office. After all, avoiding issue discussion in the district is typically an easy task for representatives, since they control most of the communication to their districts (Dunn, 1974; Robinson, 1981b; Larson, 1990).

A final interesting point looking at Table 5-2 is with regard to the decrease in the number of people that fall in the middle-of-the road ideologically when compared to the views of both candidates running for office. Whereas in 1978, about half of the voters fell

in the "equidistant" category, by 1994 the number fell below thirty percent. Given that there is hardly much difference in the distribution of liberals, moderates, and conservatives among the electorate during this time period, a logical supposition might be that the decline in the "equidistant" category is due to changes in the degree to which respondents perceive incumbents and challengers as far more extreme on the ideological spectrum than they did a decade ago. As a result, they feel much closer to one of the candidates rather than somewhere in between. After all, in the last congressional election, Republican House candidates especially, went to great lengths to identify their candidacies with an ideologically conservative policy agenda. More than three hundred of them signed a proposal known as "Contract with America" that called for cutting taxes, balancing the budget and increasing spending for the military (Wilcox, 1995). Such explicit stands surely helped voters to place quite a few candidates at the far right end of the ideological spectrum.

Having established that House incumbents enjoy great advantages over challengers with regard to "advertising", "credit claiming", and -with 1994 being the only exception- "position taking" activities, the next logical question is to what extent, if any, are these activities correlated to positive and negative mentions (i.e., likes/dislikes) about the incumbent. In Table 5-3 simple correlations between "advertising", "credit claiming", and "position taking" activities are reported, in addition to the correlation of each of those activities with the respondent's positive and negative mentions offered with regard to the incumbent's candidacy (EVALINC). The two dummy variables that measure the effects of partisanship are also included in the Table (DEMMTCH and REPMTCH).

Contrary to expectations, none of the "advertising" activities seem to correlate highly with the respondent's likes/dislikes about the incumbent. Citizen Initiated Contact (CONTRESP) is the only measure that tapped into this type of activities, for which we

TABLE 5-3: Simple Correlations Between "Reputation" Variables and Incumbent Likes/Dislikes

1978 Congressional Election

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. EVALINC	1.0										
2. DEMMTCH	.11***	1.0									
3. REPMTCH	.13***	-.01	1.0								
4. FAMINC	-.03	.04	.01	1.0							
5. CONTINC	.04	-.03	.02	.51***	1.0						
6. CONTRESP	.09**	.11***	.02	.33***	.34***	1.0					
7. SERVDIST	.14***	.11***	-.00	.31***	.34***	.38***	1.0				
8. CASEWORK	.19***	.05**	.10***	.20***	.21***	.36***	.25***	1.0			
9. XPTHELP	.61***	.07**	.07**	.15***	.20***	.13***	.17***	.21***	1.0		
10. IDEOPROX	.44***	.06	.39***	.06	-.07	.04	.11**	.10**	.17***	1.0	
11. SPECISSUES	.26**	.08	.23***	.09	-.05	.11	-.04	.06	.20**	.50***	1.0

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

1982 Congressional Election

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. EVALINC	1.0										
2. DEMMTCH	.25***	1.0									
3. REPMTCH	.31***	-.01	1.0								
4. FAMINC	-.03	-.01	.01	1.0							
5. CONTINC	-.06	-.01	.04	.57***	1.0						
6. CONTRESP	.03	.10***	.03	.32***	.34***	1.0					
7. SERVDIST	.20***	.11***	.05	.36***	.35***	.35***	1.0				
8. CASEWORK	.24***	.09***	.03	.18***	.21***	.34***	.31***	1.0			
9. XPTHELP	.59***	.08**	.14***	.15***	.16***	.12***	.17***	.14***	1.0		
10. IDEOPROX	.57***	.16**	.42***	.05	.11*	.09	.16**	.23***	.08	1.0	
11. SPECISSUES	.65***	.24***	.43***	.02	.01	.04	.18**	.18**	.28***	.56***	1.0

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 5-3 (continued)

1986 Congressional Election

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. EVALINC	1.0										
2. DEMMTCH	.27***	1.0									
3. REPMTCH	.22***	-.02	1.0								
4. FAMINC	-.03	.04*	.01	1.0							
5. CONTINC	.05	.06**	.02	.57***	1.0						
6. CONTRESP	.17***	.10***	.01	.37***	.38***	1.0					
7. SERVDIST	.15***	.12***	-.00	.35***	.31***	.37***	1.0				
8. CASEWORK	.18***	.05*	.04	.25***	.22***	.39***	.28***	1.0			
9. XPTHELP	.59***	.12***	.07**	.14***	.20***	.15***	.11***	.15***	1.0		
10. IDEOPROX	.44***	.24***	.27	.11*	.05	.15***	.17***	.17***	.18***	1.0	
11. SPECISSUES	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

1990 Congressional Election

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. EVALINC	1.0										
2. DEMMTCH	.32***	1.0									
3. REPMTCH	.23***	.01	1.0								
4. FAMINC	-.01	.09***	-.02	1.0							
5. CONTINC	.05	.10***	-.06**	.48***	1.0						
6. CONTRESP	.06	.06**	-.00	.35***	.35***	1.0					
7. SERVDIST	.11**	.11***	.01	.29***	.30***	.34***	1.0				
8. CASEWORK	.20***	.08***	.03	.24***	.20***	.34***	.23***	1.0			
9. XPTHELP	.51***	.16***	.05	.17***	.15***	.11***	.14***	.19***	1.0		
10. IDEOPROX	.36***	.25***	.42***	-.06	-.03	.04	.11	.15**	.18**	1.0	
11. SPECISSUES	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

TABLE 5-3 (continued)

1994 Congressional Election

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. EVALINC	1.0										
2. DEMMTCH	.24***	1.0									
3. REPMTCH	.36***	.03	1.0								
4. FAMINC	-.00	.02	.01	1.0							
5. CONTINC	.03	.04	-.07**	.51***	1.0						
6. CONTRESP	.18***	.04	.06**	.29***	.32***	1.0					
7. SERVDIST	.21***	.14***	.04	.30***	.29***	.31***	1.0				
8. CASEWORK	.23***	.05*	.14***	.17***	.17***	.32***	.25***	1.0			
9. XPTHELP	.56***	.11***	.12***	.16***	.20***	.13***	.17***	.18***	1.0		
10. IDEOPROX	.46***	.27***	.54***	.00	-.03	.10**	.14***	.15***	.27***	1.0	
11. SPECISSUES	.62***	.28***	.64***	-.06	-.05	.04	.14**	.21***	.25***	.68***	1.0

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

see even a weak correlation (statistical significance is approached only for the 1978 and the 1994 contests). Measures that tap on incumbents' "credit claiming" and "position taking" activities, on the other hand, are all correlated as expected with the likelihood of the respondent to offer a positive rather than a negative remark with regard to the incumbent's candidacy. This is true for every year examined.

Given these preliminary findings a number of decisions had to be made with regard to what variables to include in the multivariate analysis. Measures of reputation activities that were found to be consistently very weakly correlated (below .10) with respondent's likes/dislikes mentioned about the incumbent candidate were excluded. Furthermore, measures that were highly correlated with others were examined and in different designs of the logistic model one *or* the other of two highly correlated variables was included. For example, General Ideology and the Specific Issues Index were never included in the same design since they share a correlation that is well over .50 for every year and logistic regression suffers the same problems of multicollinearity as does OLS regression (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984: 49). In Table 5-4 are displayed the maximum likelihood estimates

TABLE 5-4: Logistic Model of Likes/Dislikes about the Incumbent¹

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
DEMMTCH	.559 (.458) [1.749]	.648 (.585) [1.912]	.912* (.545) [2.489]	2.363*** (.711) [10.626]	.586* (.353) [1.797]
REPMTCH	.455 (.601) [1.576]	.773 (.931) [2.166]	1.668** (.598) [5.303]	.598 (.658) [1.818]	.409 (.353) [1.506]
CONTRESP	-.342 (.406) [.710]	-.360 (.403) [.698]	1.068** (.507) [2.908]	.066 (.333) [1.069]	.499 (.382) [1.646]
SERVDIST	1.563** (.726) [4.772]	.897 (.773) [2.452]	.812 (1.00) [2.252]	.063 (.728) [1.965]	.793* (.474) [2.209]
CASEWORK	1.052 (.744) [2.864]	1.583* (.864) [4.127]	.519 (.964) [1.680]	1.239* (.726) [3.453]	1.208** (.583) [3.346]
XPTHHELP	2.495*** (.851) [12.119]	2.314* (.908) [10.115]	4.255*** (1.232) [70.486]	2.274** (.878) [9.715]	3.401*** (.811) [30.005]
IDEOPROX	1.764*** (.427) [5.834]	2.206*** (.611) [9.082]	.778** (.396) [2.176]	.807** (.399) [2.240]	.750** (.297) [2.118]
INTERCEPT	-1.475* (.796)	-.741 (.867)	-3.007** (1.209)	-1.412* (.788)	-2.902*** (.793)
Model	65.88 / 7	73.14 / 7	86.05 / 7	52.78 / 7	104.13 / 7
Chi-Square / df					
N	141	109	128	92	184
Correct Predict.	85.11%	88.99%	91.41%	85.87%	84.24%
Reduction of Error	39.72%	67.10%	69.27%	54.06%	40.08%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds-ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<0.10

**p<0.05

***p<0.01

(MLEs) of the logistic regression performed after I dealt with such decisions.

In the absence of a generally accepted analog to the R^2 statistic in OLS regression, goodness of fit is measured here in three ways: with the model chi-square, the percentage of correct predictions made by the model, and the percentage reduction in error. "The model chi-square statistic tests the hypothesis that all coefficients in the equation = 0. Significance for this statistic allows the rejection of that hypothesis. The percentage reduction of error statistic (ROE) indicates the extent to which the model's predictions improve on predicting that each will fall into into the modal category of the dependent variable. $\%ROE = 100 \times (\% \text{ correctly classified} - \% \text{ in modal category}) / (100\% - \% \text{ in modal category})$ " (Hagle and Mitchell, 1992: 781). For all five election years, the estimated equation provides a fairly good fit for the data; the chi-square for the log-likelihood ratio remains significant for all five elections, over eighty-five percent of the cases entered for each analysis are correctly predicted, and we see substantial reduction of error on predictions.

Taking a closer look at the effects of individual variables of the estimated equation reveals that Expected Help and General Ideological Proximity are the two measures that remain significant for every congressional election year. Expected Help is a measure that, as mentioned in Chapter IV, is designed to tap on voters' prospective evaluations of incumbents "credit claiming" activities. The positive sign³¹ suggests that those individuals who felt confident that the incumbent member would be able to address adequately a request for help were more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to the incumbent's candidacy than a negative bit. Casework, on the other hand, which is a measure designed to tap on voters' retrospective evaluations of incumbents' "credit

³¹ Coefficients are not directly interpretable in logistic regression. However, the signs of those coefficients do provide evidence about the direction of the examined relationships (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984).

claiming" activities, fails to register significant in two of the five congressional years considered here. Whereas the coefficient suggests a relationship in the expected direction (i.e., those that have gotten help in a personal matter from the office of the incumbent were more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit), the effects of Casework are not as consistent across time as those of Expected Help. Also, looking at the Odds-Ratio values, it becomes evident that compared to Expected Help, the effect of Casework are minimal at best. For instance, in 1978, whereas those who were satisfied with help received in the past from the office of the incumbent were almost three times more likely to mention a positive bit of information about the incumbent rather than a negative bit (odds-ratio value: 2.864), those who felt confident that the incumbent's office could provide them with sufficient help in the future were over twelve times more likely to mention a positive bit of information about the incumbent rather than a negative bit (odds-ratio value: 12.119). Finally, Recall of Service to the District seems to be the measure of "credit claiming" activities that is the least likely to consistently affect respondent positive and negative mentions about the incumbent member. It registers significant only for 1978 and 1994. The positive sign again suggests a relationship in the expected direction.

As expected from looking at the simple correlations in Table 5-3, "advertising activities" are not significant predictors of positive and negative mentions about the incumbent member. Contact Initiated by the Respondent is the only measure that was correlated enough to justify inclusion in the logistic regression equation. Even this measure though attained significance only for 1986, and interestingly enough for some of the years (1978 and 1982) the negative coefficient suggests a relationship in the opposite direction than the one originally hypothesized.

As mentioned earlier, General Ideological Proximity seems to be a highly significant predictor across all congressional years. Voters who fell closer to the incumbent's position on the ideological continuum were more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to his/her candidacy than a negative bit. Judging again by looking at the odds-ratio values, proximity to the incumbent made the respondent at least twice as likely to mention a positive rather than a negative bit of information about the incumbent (odds-ratio value, 1994: 2.118) and sometimes as high as over nine times more likely (odds-ratio value, 1982: 9.082).

Altogether, it seems that some reputation activities have substantial impact upon people's overall evaluations of the incumbent as reflected in the likes and dislikes offered, whereas others do not matter as much. Clearly, "credit claiming" and "position taking" activities seem to have much stronger effects than "advertising" activities. For the most part, in other words, what representative do for the district and the positions they take on policy issue do matter. To use Eulau and Karp's (1977) terminology, members of the district seem to use more heavily, in the formation of their evaluations of the incumbent, perceptions of the degree to which their representative is responsive in terms of policy and the allocation and service components of representation. Symbolic responsiveness, on the other hand, does not seem to play as big a role in such evaluations.

Now that the degree to which reputation activities influence respondents' mentions of likes and dislikes has been demonstrated, I turn to test the proposition that voters are inclined to rely more heavily on negative rather than positive bits of information when forming their vote preference. It is in this next section then, that I seek empirical evidence for the negativity bias in congressional vote choice.

5.2. Test of the Negativity Bias Hypothesis

The major hypothesis of this research predicts that negative evaluations of the incumbent House member have greater weight than positive ones for voters' choices. To test this hypothesis, vote choice was regressed on respondents' likes and dislikes for incumbent and challenger, controlling for the effects of partisanship. The estimated logistic regressions for each of the years included in this study are displayed in Table 5-5. At the following Table (Table 5-6), the estimated probabilities derived from these regressions are presented. These are probabilities of voting for an incumbent with the same partisanship as the respondent given one like and one dislike. These two probabilities (i.e., LI and DI) should be compared with the (average) vote for the incumbent in the absence of any positive or negative evaluation.

As can be seen from Table 5-6, negative information is evidently more harmful for the incumbent's vote choice than positive information is helpful³². Let us begin with the case of Independents in 1978. An Independent, with no likes or dislikes for either the incumbent or the challenger, had a probability of .760 of voting for the incumbent. One like for the incumbent is estimated to boost this probability to .920 (+.160), whereas one dislike for the incumbent would reduce it to about .426 (-.334). Among Independents in 1978, therefore, one dislike would have caused the incumbent a loss over twice as large as the gain from one like. A similar pattern is evident in the 1982, 1986, 1990, and 1994 contests. In 1982, the boost from a like would be +.057 whereas the effect of a dislike would be equal to -.186. That is almost over three times as big an effect stemming from

³² A similar conclusion may be drawn by looking at the odds displayed in Table 5-5. For instance, looking at the data for 1978, one like for the incumbent increases the odds for casting a vote for him/her by approximately three times (odds value: 3.638) whereas one dislike for the incumbent decreases the odds for casting a vote in favor of the incumbent by about four times (odds value: 0.235 $\approx$ 1/4). As Demaris (1992) suggests, under certain circumstances it is more useful to interpret logistic regression results in terms of probabilities rather than odds. For my purposes here, I think probabilities illustrate more clearly the effects of negativity on vote choice, so for the rest of the analysis I focus on the interpretation of those rather than the odds values.

TABLE 5-5: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting in House Elections

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.291*** (.260) [3.638]	1.217*** (.247) [3.376]	1.086*** (.223) [2.962]	1.142*** (.302) [3.132]	1.517*** (.267) [4.556]
DSLKINC	-1.447*** (.299) [.235]	-1.399*** (.383) [.247]	-.892** (.302) [.410]	-.845** (.269) [.430]	-1.500*** (.324) [.223]
LIKCHAL	-1.681*** (.304) [.186]	-1.101*** (.235) [.333]	-1.178*** (.246) [.308]	-2.689*** (.559) [.068]	-1.828*** (.306) [.161]
DSLKCHAL	.707* (.405) [2.029]	1.226** (.384) [3.409]	.362 (.452) [1.437]	1.623** (.733) [5.066]	.554 (.356) [1.740]
REPMTCH	2.374*** (.436) [10.744]	1.451** (.534) [4.267]	1.129*** (.339) [3.093]	1.790*** (.497) [5.990]	1.820*** (.308) [6.171]
DEMMTCH	1.520*** (.358) [4.571]	1.744*** (.373) [5.719]	2.030*** (.394) [7.615]	2.407*** (.556) [11.103]	.787** (.264) [2.197]
INTERCEPT	1.153*** (.267)	.654** (.329)	.973*** (.269)	1.122*** (.331)	.910*** (.240)
Model Chi-Square / df	199.46 / 6	209.00 / 6	192.42 / 6	166.08 / 6	357.97 / 6
N	322	262	292	229	407
Correctly Predicted	88.20%	86.26%	87.33%	89.08%	89.43%
Reduction of Error	44.55%	51.63%	43.94%	46.31%	63.55%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds-ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<0.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-6: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.981	.773	.935	DEM	.974	.731	.917
REP	.992	.889	.971	REP	.965	.669	.891
INDEP	.920	.426	.760	INDEP	.867	.322	.657

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.984	.892	.953	DEM	.991	.936	.972
REP	.960	.770	.891	REP	.984	.888	.984
INDEP	.887	.520	.726	INDEP	.906	.569	.754

<u>1994</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.961	.541	.845
REP	.986	.774	.939
INDEP	.919	.357	.713

the negative mention. In 1986, the boost from a like would be +.031 whereas the effect of a dislike would be equal to -.061. Again, almost twice as big an effect on chance to vote for the incumbent is associated with the negative mention. In 1990, the boost from a like would be +.019 whereas the reduction from a dislike would be -.036. Finally, in 1994, whereas one like for the incumbent boosted the probability of Independent to vote for that candidate by +.206, one dislike reduced the probability to cast a vote for the incumbent by -.356. Thus, a voter with no party attachment clearly does not give equal weighting to positive and negative evaluations. Instead, he/she is far more likely to be influenced by negative affect than by positive affect for the incumbent.

Turning to partisans, the discrepancy between likes and dislikes is smaller than that shown by Independents. Beginning once again with 1978, we see that a Democrat, with no likes or dislikes for either the Democratic incumbent or the Republican challenger, had

a probability of .935 of voting for the incumbent. One like for the Democratic incumbent is estimated to boost this probability to .981 (+.046), while one dislike for the incumbent would reduce it to about .773 (-.162). A Republican, with no likes or dislikes for either the Republican incumbent or the Democratic challenger, had a probability of .971 of voting for the incumbent. One like for the Republican incumbent is estimated to boost this probability to .992 (+.021), while one dislike for the incumbent would reduce it to about .889 (-.082). The same pattern is evident in all the other four of the years examined here. In the most recent election, for instance, a like for a Democratic incumbent boosted a Democrat's probability to vote for the incumbent by +.116, whereas a dislike reduced that probability by -.296. And as for Republicans, whereas a like for a Republican incumbent boosted the likelihood to vote for the incumbent by +.047, a dislike reduced the probability to cast a vote for the incumbent by -.165. These findings clearly indicate that for partisans, also, one dislike is more harmful than one like is beneficial.

The next logical question is whether a similar negativity bias is to be found with respect to challenger evaluations. Is a dislike for the challenger more harmful than the benefit associated with a like? In Table 5-7 the probabilities for voting for the challenger of the rival party as a result of one like and one dislike are displayed. These probabilities are also derived from the logistic regressions displayed in Table 5-5.

As can be seen from Table 5-7, challengers need not worry as much as incumbents about dislikes. Indeed, we observe here that positive information is far more beneficial for the challenger's vote choice than negative information is harmful. In other words, we observe what Sears (1983) calls a "positivity bias". Looking for example at the most recent election, we observe that an Independent, with no likes or dislikes for either the incumbent or the challenger, had a probability of .287 of voting for the challenger. One like for the challenger is estimated to boost this probability to .715 (+.428), while one

dislike for the challenger would reduce it to about .188 (-.099). Among Independents in 1994, therefore, one like would have caused the challenger a gain almost four times as big as the loss sustained by a one dislike. The same pattern is observed in the behavior of partisans. Looking at the same election, a Democrat, with no likes or dislikes for either a Democratic incumbent or the Republican challenger, had a probability of .155 of voting for the challenger. One positive mention about the Republican challenger is estimated to boost this probability to .533 (+.378), while one negative mention about such a challenger would reduce it to about .095 (-.060). Republicans behaved in a similar fashion.

TABLE 5-7: Probability of Voting for Challenger of Rival Party by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	LC	DC	Average		LC	DC	Average
DEM	.271	.033	.065	DEM	.215	.026	.083
REP	.136	.014	.029	REP	.268	.034	.109
INDEP	.629	.135	.240	INDEP	.610	.133	.343

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	LC	DC	Average		LC	DC	Average
DEM	.139	.033	.047	DEM	.301	.006	.028
REP	.284	.078	.109	REP	.444	.011	.016
INDEP	.551	.208	.274	INDEP	.827	.060	.246

	<u>1994</u>		
	LC	DC	Average
DEM	.533	.095	.155
REP	.289	.036	.061
INDEP	.715	.188	.287

The lack of a negativity bias with regard to challenger evaluations is hardly surprising given earlier findings from social psychologists. As mentioned in Chapter II, Markus and Zajonc (1985) have found that negativity is more likely to occur under lesser uncertainty, whereas a positivity bias is more likely to surface in situations where uncertainty runs high. Translating this to the context of voting behavior, it should not be

surprising that we see incumbents (about whom voters usually know a whole lot more and as demonstrated in the previous section enjoy far more visibility) being more likely to be victims of negative voting.

The last question to be addressed in this section is whether this tendency of voters to be more likely to punish incumbents for their faults rather than reward them for their accomplishments is a recent phenomenon. Clearly the data presented here suggests that this is not the case. Across time we see voters more likely to be influenced by negative than positive evaluations about the incumbent. Yet, there has been a lot more attention given to the negativity bias in recent years by journalists and political scientists. Some speculations on why this might be the case are offered in the final Chapter. For now I turn to address the question "What kind of individuals are likely to be influenced most heavily?"

5.3. The Political Characteristics Hypotheses

One of the expectations with respect to getting a better understanding of who are the individuals in the electorate who are even more likely to utilize the negative heuristic relates to government trust³³. For reasons outlined in Chapter III, I expect those who exhibit lower levels of trust toward the federal government to be more likely to emphasize negative information in their evaluations.

³³ Given the findings presented in the previous section, I concentrate here on examining who are those who are more likely to utilize the negative heuristic when they process information relevant to the incumbent candidate. When it comes to evaluations of the challenger voters seem to rely more heavily on positive evaluations rather than negative ones, so speaking about a negative heuristic in the context of challenger evaluations would make little sense.

Tables 5-8 and 5-10 examine the effects of evaluations of the challenger and the incumbent under different levels of trust toward the government. In Table 5-9 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for the incumbent of his/her party as a

TABLE 5-8: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents with Low Levels of Trust in Government

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	.684 (.546) [1.982]	2.754*** (.764) [15.709]	1.051** (.416) [2.861]	.986** (.454) [2.681]	1.137** (.518) [3.117]
DSLKINC	-1.218** (.601) [.296]	-1.977** (.937) [.138]	-.425 (.612) [.654]	-.420 (.557) [.657]	-1.502*** (.564) [.223]
LIKCHAL	-3.295*** (.878) [.037]	-1.307** (.511) [.271]	-1.517** (.652) [.219]	-3.432** (1.257) [.032]	-10.307 (28.871) [.000]
DSLKCHAL	.584 (.821) [1.794]	1.659** (.675) [5.256]	.352 (1.002) [1.422]	2.128 (2.197) [8.402]	7.993 (28.895) [.000]
REPMTCH	3.379*** (.876) [29.336]	-.133** (1.678) [.876]	3.002** (1.076) [20.132]	2.109** (.936) [8.238]	1.671*** (.581) [5.317]
DEMMTCH	.924 (.653) [2.520]	2.936** (.993) [18.838]	2.069** (.768) [7.914]	2.192** (.893) [8.952]	.427 (.504) [1.533]
INTERCEPT	1.946** (.657)	-.677 (.670)	1.138 (.713)	.852 (.547)	1.414*** (.434)
Model Chi-Square / df	78.08 / 6	102.43 / 6	51.12 / 6	64.07 / 6	142.43 / 6
N	101	106	68	82	151
Correctly Predicted	90.10%	91.51%	88.24%	90.24%	92.72%
Reduction of Error	53.52%	70.21%	47.96%	52.16%	74.89%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-9: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those with Low Levels of Trust in Government

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.972	.839	.946	DEM	.993	.570	.905
REP	.997	.984	.995	REP	.874	.058	.308
INDEP	.933	.675	.875	INDEP	.889	.066	.337

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.986	.942	.961	DEM	.983	.932	.955
REP	.995	.976	.984	REP	.981	.927	.951
INDEP	.899	.671	.757	INDEP	.862	.606	.700

<u>1994</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.952	.584	.863
REP	.986	.830	.956
INDEP	.928	.478	.804

result of one like and one dislike for those with low trust in government. These are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-8. In Table 5-11 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for his/her party's incumbent as a result of one like and one dislike for those with high trust in government. These probabilities are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-10.

Comparing between Tables 5-9 and 5-11, looking at the loss incurred by one dislike for the incumbent we notice that, contrary to initial expectations, voters with high trust in government tend to weight negative information slightly more heavily than those with low levels of trust in government. For example, in 1994 an Independent with low trust and no likes and dislikes for the incumbent or the challenger had a probability of .804

TABLE 5-10: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents with High Levels of Trust in Government

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.389*** (.310) [4.009]	.762** (.276) [2.143]	.715* (.411) [2.043]	1.433** (.459) [4.189]	1.633*** (.336) [5.117]
DSLKINC	-1.560*** (.372) [.210]	-1.493** (.489) [.225]	-1.919** (.678) [.147]	-1.178** (.358) [.308]	-1.475*** (.413) [.229]
LIKCHAL	-1.549*** (.352) [.213]	-.993*** (.265) [.370]	-.528 (.421) [.590]	-2.246** (.700) [.106]	-1.650*** (.351) [.192]
DSLKCHAL	.854* (.488) [2.348]	1.263** (.536) [3.537]	.487 (.761) [1.627]	1.264 (.928) [3.539]	.173 (.496) [1.188]
REPMATCH	2.242*** (.535) [9.407]	1.665** (.618) [5.287]	1.012 (.693) [2.750]	1.369** (.608) [3.932]	1.774*** (.385) [5.897]
DEMMATCH	1.835*** (.479) [6.264]	1.550*** (.441) [4.710]	2.350** (.987) [10.484]	2.718*** (.785) [15.157]	.965** (.322) [2.624]
INTERCEPT	1.081*** (.317)	1.262** (.451)	1.479** (.627)	1.256** (.441)	.679** (.302)
Model Chi-Square / df	130.40 / 6	118.46 / 6	49.89 / 6	105.89 / 6	224.77 / 6
N	221	156	73	145	253
Correctly Predicted	88.69%	85.20%	87.67%	88.28%	90.51%
Reduction of Error	46.90%	48.28%	45.44%	42.55%	67.27%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-11: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those with High Levels of Trust in Government

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.987	.795	.949	DEM	.973	.789	.943
REP	.991	.854	.965	REP	.976	.808	.949
INDEP	.922	.383	.747	INDEP	.883	.443	.779

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.899	.871	.979	DEM	.995	.942	.981
REP	.961	.639	.923	REP	.983	.809	.932
INDEP	.899	.392	.814	INDEP	.936	.519	.778

	<u>1994</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.964	.542	.838
REP	.983	.727	.921
INDEP	.910	.311	.664

for voting for the incumbent. Having one dislike for the incumbent reduced that probability to .478 (-.327). An Independent with high trust and no likes and dislikes for the incumbent or the challenger had a probability of .664 for voting for the incumbent. Having one dislike for the incumbent reduced that probability to .311 (-.353). Clearly, Independents who felt more trustful of government weighted dislikes more heavily than those who were less trustful. The same pattern holds true, though not as strongly, for partisans (there is an exception here in the 1982 contest, when partisans with low trust in government weighted negative evaluations about the incumbent more heavily than partisans with high trust in government).

These findings are even more puzzling given earlier literature that focuses on the linkage between disaffection with government and the phenomenon of negative voting at

the presidential level. For instance, Richardson and Gant (1995) explored the connection between negative support for major party presidential candidates and systemic disaffection over the 1964-1992 time period. Systemic disaffection was operationalized in terms of political distrust, perceptions that the government is run for the benefit of a few big interests, perceptions that the government is wasting a lot of tax dollars, and political independence. Political distrust and independence proved to be highly consistent factors in explaining negative voter support.

Maybe part of the reason for the different findings stems from the fact that Richardson and Gant (1995) looked at negative voter support (i.e., citizens who express support for the least disliked candidate) whereas here I focus on the tendency to use the negative heuristic (i.e., citizens tendency to attach heavier weight upon negative bits of information about the incumbent than upon positive bits of information). A second possibility for the discrepancy might be the difference in the operationalization of disaffection with government. Richardson and Gant (1995) utilize as independent measures of systemic disaffection the survey items that tap on political distrust, perceptions that the government is run only for the benefit of a few big interests, and perceptions of government wasting tax dollars. Here on the other hand, for reasons explained in Chapter IV, I opted to build an index of disaffection by using all four items - the three previously mentioned ones and the item measuring peoples' perceptions that government is run mostly by crooks-. Finally, the discrepancy could be explained away by looking at the different electoral settings that the two studies utilize. Richardson and Gant (1995) focus upon presidential candidates. Here, I examine House candidates. It might very well be that peoples' disaffection with the federal government does color evaluations of presidential candidates since the occupant of the White House is more likely to be held responsible for the performance of government in Washington in general, but such

disaffection with the big picture does not necessarily make people more critical of their House representative.

Next, I turn to test the proposition that respondents who are less approving of Congress as an institution are more likely, than the rest of the electorate, to utilize the negative heuristic in evaluations of the incumbent member. Tables 5-12 and 5-14 examine the effects of evaluations of challenger and incumbent for those who disapprove and those who approve of the way Congress handles its job as an institution, respectively. In Table 5-13 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for the incumbent of his/her party as a result of one like and one dislike for those who disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job as an institution. These are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-12. In Table 5-15 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for the incumbent of his/her party as a result of one like and one dislike for those who approve of the way Congress is handling its job as an institution. These probabilities are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-14.

Comparing between Tables 5-13 and 5-15, looking at the loss incurred by one dislike for the incumbent we notice that, once again contrary to initial expectations, those voters who are more approving of Congress as a collectivity and the way it is handling its job tend to weight negative information slightly more heavily than those who disapprove of Congress. For example, in 1994 an Independent who disapproved of Congress and had no likes and dislikes for the incumbent or the challenger had a probability of .702 for voting for the incumbent. Having one dislike for the incumbent reduced that probability to .358 (-.344). An Independent who approved of Congress as a collectivity and had no likes and dislikes for the incumbent or the challenger had a probability of .726 for voting for the incumbent. Having one dislike for the incumbent reduced that probability to .170 (-.557). Among Independents, therefore, one dislike seems to have caused the incumbent almost

TABLE 5-12: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents who Disapprove of Congress as an Institution

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	NA	1.349*** (.350) [3.853]	.900** (.291) [2.460]	1.286*** (.380) [3.617]	1.522*** (.365) [4.581]
DSLKINC	NA	-.885* (.516) [.413]	-.579 (.390) [.561]	-.664** (.317) [.515]	-1.440*** (.402) [.237]
LIKCHAL	NA	-1.121*** (.330) [.326]	-.922** (.293) [.398]	-2.749*** (.798) [.064]	-2.602*** (.531) [.074]
DSLKCHAL	NA	1.026** (.467) [2.789]	.057 (.529) [1.059]	1.264 (.798) [3.540]	.700 (.454) [2.014]
REPMATCH	NA	1.439* (.781) [4.216]	1.109** (.504) [3.032]	1.592** (.636) [4.913]	2.008*** (.406) [7.446]
DEMMATCH	NA	1.955*** (.528) [7.060]	1.415** (.515) [4.118]	2.804*** (.804) [16.513]	1.067** (.365) [2.907]
INTERCEPT	NA	-.192 (.448)	.677* (.397)	.673 (.427)	.857 (.333)
Model Chi-Square / df	--	110.72 / 6	71.51 / 6	110.96 / 6	286.16 / 6
N	--	135	124	140	288
Correctly Predicted	--	88.15%	84.68%	87.86%	91.67%
Reduction of Error	--	58.42%	32.21%	40.49%	71.27%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-13: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those who Disapprove of Congress as an Institution

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	--	--	--	DEM	.957	.706	.854
REP	--	--	--	REP	.931	.590	.777
INDEP	--	--	--	INDEP	.761	.254	.452

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.952	.820	.890	DEM	.992	.943	.970
REP	.936	.770	.856	REP	.972	.832	.906
INDEP	.829	.525	.663	INDEP	.876	.502	.662

	<u>1994</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.969	.619	.873
REP	.988	.806	.946
INDEP	.915	.358	.702

twice as big of a loss among those who approve of Congress than the loss incurred among those who disapprove of Congress. The same pattern holds true for partisans fairly consistently across elections, though again not as strongly as it does for Independents.

The observation that citizens who disapprove of Congress are not any more likely to use the negative heuristic indeed fits well with Fenno's claim "that we love our congressmen so much more than our Congress" (Fenno, 1975: 277). In his effort to collect the data for *Homestyle: U. S. Members in their Districts* (1978), Fenno accompanied ten members of the House of Representatives as they traveled around in their home districts. In every one of those districts he heard a common theme. "Invariably, the representative I was with -young or old, liberal or conservative, Northerner, Southerner, Easterner, Westerner, Democrat or Republican- was described as 'the best congressman in the United States' " (Fenno, 1975: 277). Fenno also talks about polls from the same time

TABLE 5-14: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents who Approve of Congress as an Institution

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	NA	2.352** (.853) [10.508]	1.469*** (.418) [4.345]	.828 (.560) [2.289]	1.700** (.537) [5.477]
DSLKINC	NA	-2.089** (.795) [.124]	-1.410** (.502) [.244]	-1.375** (.647) [.253]	-2.563** (.911) [.077]
LIKCHAL	NA	-2.660** (.989) [.070]	-1.753*** (.501) [.173]	-2.774** (.916) [.062]	-.806 (.508) [.447]
DSLKCHAL	NA	2.824** (1.110) [16.837]	1.373 (.838) [3.945]	2.434* (1.476) [11.400]	1.324* (.768) [3.760]
REPMTC	NA	1.725* (1.035) [5.613]	1.250** (.570) [3.490]	2.036** (.871) [7.657]	1.525** (.555) [4.593]
DEMMTC	NA	1.285* (.695) [3.614]	3.599*** (.867) [36.572]	2.058** (.932) [7.828]	.687 (.451) [1.988]
INTERCEPT	NA	.963 (.646)	1.689*** (.503)	1.741** (.606)	.976** (.390)
Model Chi-Square / df	--	100.85 / 6	121.24 / 6	49.99 / 6	67.36 / 6
N	--	105	153	82	108
Correctly Predicted	--	90.48%	91.50%	87.80%	86.11%
Reduction of Error	--	66.59%	62.38%	40.19%	52.10%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-15: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those who Approve of Congress as an Institution

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	LI	DI	Average		LI	DI	Average
DEM	--	--	--	DEM	.990	.540	.904
REP	--	--	--	REP	.994	.645	.936
INDEP	--	--	--	INDEP	.965	.245	.724

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	LI	DI	Average		LI	DI	Average
DEM	.999	.980	.995	DEM	.990	.919	.978
REP	.988	.822	.950	REP	.990	.917	.978
INDEP	.959	.569	.844	INDEP	.929	.590	.851

	<u>1994</u>		
	LI	DI	Average
DEM	.967	.289	.841
REP	.985	.484	.924
INDEP	.936	.170	.726

period that show that only one-quarter of the electorate gave Congress a positive rating on its job performance, while nearly two-thirds expressed themselves negatively on the subject. Fenno calls this a puzzle and goes on to offer a number of possible explanations.

One of these explanations is that we apply different standards of judgment; more specifically, those that we apply to the individual are less demanding than those we apply to the institution. As a result, our perception of Congress doing a poor job does not necessarily make us feel an urge to punish the incumbent member. Furthermore, members of the House, for their own reasons, spend a good deal more of their time and energy polishing and worrying about their individual performance than they do working at the institution's performance. And sometimes in their effort to be reelected they run against the institution by attacking the collective reputation of the representative body. So

citizens distinguish between the two -incumbent and institution- on Election Day because members of the House cultivate that distinction in their districts in their communication with the constituency. In light of this, though it is the individuals that make up the institution and logically we would expect to see citizens who disapprove of the institution to be more likely to use the negative heuristic in an effort to punish the member, the trend that emerges from the comparison of Tables 5-13 and 5-15 becomes plausible.

Next I turn to look for empirical evidence for the proposition that those with higher levels of internal political efficacy are more likely to utilize the negative heuristic. Tables 5-16 and 5-18 examine the effects of evaluations of challenger and incumbent for those with low levels and high levels of internal political efficacy, respectively. In Table 5-17 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for his/her party's incumbent as a result of one like and one dislike for those with low internal efficacy. These are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-16. In Table 5-19 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for his/her party's incumbent as a result of one like and one dislike for those who exhibit high levels of internal political efficacy. These probabilities are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-18.

Comparing between Tables 5-17 and 5-19, looking at the loss incurred by one dislike for the incumbent we notice that, as hypothesized, those voters who exhibit higher levels of internal political efficacy tend to weight negative information far more heavily than those with low levels of internal efficacy. Looking again at evidence from the most recent congressional election, an Independent with low levels of internal efficacy and no likes and dislikes for the incumbent or the challenger had a probability of .743 for voting for the incumbent. Having one dislike for the incumbent reduced that probability to .478 (-.265). An Independent with high feelings of internal efficacy and no likes and dislikes

TABLE 5-16: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents with Low Levels of Internal Political Efficacy

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.098*** (.494) [2.997]	.907** (.343) [2.476]	NA	1.046** (.377) [2.845]	1.056** (.340) [2.874]
DSLKINC	-1.038*** (.418) [.354]	-1.222** (.541) [.295]	NA	-.431 (.393) [.650]	-1.152** (.401) [.316]
LIKCHAL	-3.532*** (.880) [.029]	-1.490** (.474) [.226]	NA	-2.241*** (.604) [.106]	-1.764*** (.474) [.171]
DSLKCHAL	.323 (1.007) [1.381]	1.238** (.589) [3.449]	NA	.813 (.882) [2.255]	.531 (.468) [1.701]
REPMTC	3.095*** (.804) [22.079]	2.210* (1.226) [9.118]	NA	1.980** (.723) [7.245]	2.052*** (.472) [7.785]
DEMMTC	.982 (.628) [2.670]	1.408** (.523) [4.088]	NA	2.197*** (.640) [8.997]	.786** (.368) [2.195]
INTERCEPT	1.782*** (.529)	.796 (.531)	NA	.820* (.433)	1.064** (.361)
Model Chi-Square / df	79.93 / 6	73.46 / 6	--	79.29 / 6	154.73 / 6
N	110	97	--	114	182
Correctly Predicted	89.09%	85.57%	--	86.84%	89.56%
Reduction of Error	48.78%	49.37%		35.49%	64.00%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-17: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those with Low Level of Internal Political Efficacy

<u>1978</u>			<u>1982</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	.979	.849	.940	DEM	.957
REP	.997	.979	.992	REP	.980
INDEP	.946	.678	.856	INDEP	.846
<u>1986</u>			<u>1990</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	--	--	--	DEM	.983
REP	--	--	--	REP	.979
INDEP	--	--	--	INDEP	.865
<u>1994</u>					
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	.948	.668	.864		
REP	.985	.877	.958		
INDEP	.893	.478	.743		

for the incumbent or the challenger had a probability of .654 for voting for the incumbent. Having one dislike for the incumbent dropped dramatically that probability to merely .076 (-.577). Among Independents, therefore, one dislike seems to have caused the incumbent more than double the loss among those who believe that they can understand politics and government and that they can influence by their actions political events than those who believe that their actions are irrelevant to political outcomes.

The same pattern holds true for partisans fairly consistently across all five elections. Looking again at 1994, we see that a Democrat with low internal efficacy and no likes and dislikes for a Democratic incumbent or the Republican challenger had a probability of .864 for voting for the incumbent. One dislike for such an incumbent dropped that probability to .668 (-.196). A Democrat with high internal efficacy and no

TABLE 5-18: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents with High Level of Internal Political Efficacy

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.179*** (.323) [3.250]	1.851*** (.481) [6.365]	NA	1.756** (.801) [5.787]	2.307*** (.534) [10.045]
DSLKINC	-2.282*** (.601) [.102]	-1.730** (.607) [.177]	NA	-1.760** (.594) [.172]	-3.128*** (.808) [.044]
LIKCHAL	-1.417*** (.352) [.242]	-1.179*** (.337) [.308]	NA	-2.623** (1.096) [.073]	-1.307** (.505) [.271]
DSLKCHAL	1.022** (.485) [2.779]	1.436** (.590) [4.205]	NA	.823 (1.285) [2.277]	1.062 (.859) [2.890]
REPMTCH	2.276*** (.535) [9.738]	1.312** (.624) [3.715]	NA	3.250** (1.165) [25.797]	2.354*** (.622) [10.524]
DEMMTCH	1.937*** (.535) [6.935]	2.837*** (.760) [17.067]	NA	1.827 (1.214) [6.218]	1.057** (.444) [4.295]
INTERCEPT	1.167** (.359)	.627 (.453)	NA	2.165** (.823)	.636 (.391)
Model Chi-Square / df	128.60 / 6	139.42 / 6	--	72.68 / 6	185.07 / 6
N	207	163	--	89	186
Correctly Predicted	90.34%	90.80%	--	96.63%	92.47%
Reduction of Error	54.65%	67.72%		83.48%	74.03%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-19: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those with High Level of Internal Political Efficacy

<u>1978</u>			<u>1982</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	.986	.694	.957	DEM	.995
REP	.990	.761	.969	REP	.978
INDEP	.912	.246	.762	INDEP	.923
<u>1986</u>			<u>1990</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	--	--	--	DEM	.997
REP	--	--	--	REP	.999
INDEP	--	--	--	INDEP	.981
<u>1994</u>					
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	.982	.192	.845		
REP	.995	.465	.952		
INDEP	.950	.076	.654		

likes and dislikes for a Democratic incumbent or the Republican challenger had a probability of .845 for voting for the incumbent. One dislike for such an incumbent dropped that probability dramatically, to a mere .192 (-.652). Taking a look at Republicans we see a very similar picture. Clearly, those who believe that they can influence government with their actions are more willing than the rest of the electorate to utilize their vote as a means to show their disaffection.

Does the belief that public officials are responsive to the interests of individuals like oneself also make a citizen more likely to utilize the negative heuristic? Empirical evidence for the effects of external political efficacy is displayed in Tables 5-20 through 5-23. In Table 5-21 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for the incumbent of his/her party as a result of one like and one dislike for those with low

TABLE 5-20: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents with Low Levels of External Political Efficacy

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.248** (.443) [3.484]	1.530*** (.459) [4.617]	1.145** (.465) [3.141]	.950** (.351) [2.586]	1.248*** (.288) [3.482]
DSLKINC	-1.787*** (.504) [.167]	-.805 (.733) [.447]	-1.112 (.698) [.329]	-.988** (.370) [.372]	-1.213*** (.342) [.297]
LIKCHAL	-2.095** (.732) [.123]	-2.062** (.715) [.127]	-1.335** (.577) [.263]	-2.570*** (.657) [.077]	-1.599*** (.362) [.202]
DSLKCHAL	.273 (.565) [1.313]	2.263** (.792) [9.611]	1.129 (1.069) [3.093]	1.874* (1.080) [6.517]	.389 (.403) [1.476]
REPMTCH	2.631*** (.676) [13.892]	1.725* (.955) [5.610]	.741 (.750) [2.098]	2.105** (.654) [8.208]	2.021*** (.380) [7.546]
DEMMTCH	1.871** (.627) [6.494]	2.344*** (.715) [10.418]	1.832** (.723) [6.249]	2.497*** (.695) [12.143]	.655** (.311) [1.924]
INTERCEPT	1.609** (.510)	-.041 (.638)	.740 (.548)	1.340** (.450)	.724** (.286)
Model Chi-Square / df	94.39 / 6	93.87 / 6	43.24 / 6	97.59 / 6	215.86 / 6
N	139	101	63	141	254
Correctly Predicted	89.21%	90.10%	82.54 %	87.94%	89.37%
Reduction of Error	49.34%	65.26%	22.74%	40.88%	63.34%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-21: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those with Low Level of External Political Efficacy

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.991	.845	.970	DEM	.979	.817	.909
REP	.996	.921	.986	REP	.961	.706	.843
INDEP	.946	.456	.833	INDEP	.816	.300	.490

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.976	.812	.929	DEM	.992	.945	.979
REP	.933	.591	.815	REP	.988	.921	.969
INDEP	.868	.408	.677	INDEP	.908	.587	.793

<u>1994</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.933	.542	.799
REP	.982	.822	.940
INDEP	.878	.380	.674

external efficacy. These are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-20. In Table 5-23 are displayed the probabilities of the respondent voting for the incumbent of his/her party as a result of one like and one dislike for those who exhibit high levels of external political efficacy. These probabilities are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-22.

Comparing between Tables 5-21 and 5-23, looking at the loss incurred by one dislike for the incumbent we notice that there is mixed evidence with respect to the effects of external political efficacy on the likelihood of using the negative heuristic in evaluations of the incumbent member. More specifically, we see partisans and Independents with high levels of external efficacy indeed more likely to weigh negative information more heavily

TABLE 5-22: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents with High Level of External Political Efficacy

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.118*** (.335) [3.059]	1.212*** (.334) [3.361]	.579 (.360) [1.784]	1.329** (.585) [3.778]	2.261** (.823) [9.595]
DSLKINC	-1.141** (.411) [.319]	-1.630** (.503) [.196]	-1.587** (.628) [.205]	-.837* (.465) [.433]	-2.189** (1.109) [.112]
LIKCHAL	-1.556*** (.372) [.2111]	-.969*** (.263) [.380]	-.538 (.352) [.584]	-2.673** (1.092) [.069]	-2.028** (.843) [.132]
DSLKCHAL	1.298** (.633) [3.660]	.944* (.494) [2.570]	.106 (.694) [1.112]	1.013 (1.077) [2.755]	2.561 (2.484) [12.954]
REPMATCH	2.450*** (.671) [11.585]	1.635** (.709) [5.129]	2.325** (.903) [10.229]	1.427 (.953) [4.164]	1.033 (.756) [2.810]
DEMMATCH	1.003** (.474) [2.727]	1.477** (.461) [4.381]	2.420** (.909) [11.248]	1.833* (1.024) [6.253]	1.044 (.636) [2.841]
INTERCEPT	.981** (.361)	1.067** (.441)	1.839** (.801)	1.077* (.637)	.739 (.550)
Model Chi-Square / df	100.32 / 6	118.35 / 6	51.75 / 6	52.13 / 6	98.13 / 6
N	173	156	73	69	102
Correctly Predicted	86.71%	83.97%	83.56 / 6	89.86%	93.14%
Reduction of Error	37.60%	43.75%	27.25%	50.29%	76.34%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-23: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those with High Level of External Political Efficacy

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.957	.699	.879	DEM	.977	.714	.927
REP	.989	.908	.969	REP	.980	.745	.937
INDEP	.891	.459	.727	INDEP	.907	.363	.744

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.992	.935	.986	DEM	.993	.941	.973
REP	.991	.929	.985	REP	.989	.913	.961
INDEP	.918	.563	.863	INDEP	.957	.717	.854

	<u>1994</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.983	.400	.856
REP	.983	.397	.855
INDEP	.953	.190	.677

than those with lower levels of efficacy in 1982 and 1994, but the pattern does not hold for 1978, 1986, and 1990.

Finally, I turn to testing the hypothesis with regard to the effects of citizens' perceptions of trust in political leaders on the likelihood of utilizing the negative heuristic. It is reasonable to expect that disapproval of the way the incumbent member is handling his/her job to have an impact on the likelihood that those in the district will seek to punish the incumbent on Election Day by weighing negative evaluations more heavily than positive evaluations. Unfortunately, a direct comparison between those who approve and those who disapprove of the way their representative has been handling his/her job is not possible given that in their vast majority voters are happy with the way their own

Congressman is handling his/her job. The disparity in the approve/disapprove categories is so great as to make any attempt for multivariate analysis impossible.

I turn, then, to perceptions of another political figure, the president, in order to test the hypothesis with regard to the effects of trust in government leaders on the likelihood to use the negative heuristic. This is particularly useful because if, indeed, there is evidence that those who disapprove of the president are more likely -than those who approve of the way he is handling his job- to attach a greater weight on negative evaluations of the incumbent member of the House, this would support earlier literature on congressional elections that portrayed such contests as referenda on presidential performance.

Tables 5-24 and 5-26 examine the effects of evaluations of challenger and incumbent for those who disapprove and those who approve of the way the incumbent president is handling his job, respectively. In Table 5-25 are displayed the probabilities of a respondent voting for his/her party's incumbent as a result of one like and one dislike for those who are critical of the performance of the White House. These are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-24. In Table 5-27 are displayed the probabilities of a respondent voting for his/her party's incumbent as a result of one like and one dislike for those who feel that the president has been handling his job adequately. These probabilities are derived from the logistic regressions presented in Table 5-26.

Comparing between Tables 5-25 and 5-27, looking at the loss incurred by one dislike for the incumbent we notice that there is hardly any evidence for "spilling" effects from the White House. With some minor exceptions, those who disapprove of the incumbent president are no more likely, than those who approve, to attach greater weight to negative evaluations of their districts' representative in the off-year election. Taking a closer look at each of the five years examined here, we see that in 1978 only Independents

TABLE 5-24: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents who Disapprove of the President's Performance

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.844** (.756) [6.325]	1.143*** (.325) [3.136]	1.478** (.464) [4.470]	1.232** (.532) [3.429]	1.815*** (.421) [6.140]
DSLKINC	-2.712*** (.807) [.066]	-1.257** (.514) [.285]	-.859 (.586) [.423]	-.752 (.469) [.472]	-2.142*** (.604) [.117]
LIKCHAL	-3.247** (1.149) [.039]	-1.129*** (.328) [.323]	-1.198** (.460) [.302]	-3.052** (1.152) [.047]	-1.356** (.484) [.258]
DSLKCHAL	.281 (.838) [1.325]	.716 (.512) [2.045]	.509 (.831) [1.664]	2.909 (2.214) [18.339]	.246 (.580) [1.279]
REPMTCH	3.428*** (.909) [30.814]	-.737 (1.420) [.478]	-.412 (.831) [.662]	1.387 (1.322) [4.001]	2.167*** (.425) [8.734]
DEMMTCH	2.733* (1.473) [15.384]	2.140*** (.505) [8.500]	2.373*** (.654) [10.733]	2.075** (.663) [7.961]	1.251** (.632) [3.392]
INTERCEPT	2.144** (.766)	.425 (.560)	.903* (.495)	.976 (.628)	.905** (.397)
Model Chi-Square / df	95.59 / 6	105.65 / 6	96.27 / 6	60.32 / 6	229.68 / 6
N	110	121	119	84	224
Correctly Predicted	92.73%	85.95%	93.28%	91.67%	92.41%
Reduction of Error	65.86%	50.70%	70.26%	59.16%	73.82%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-25: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those who Disapprove of the President's Performance

<u>1978</u>			<u>1982</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	.999	.897	.992	DEM	.976
REP	.999	.946	.996	REP	.696
INDEP	.982	.362	.895	INDEP	.827
<u>1986</u>			<u>1990</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	.992	.918	.964	DEM	.986
REP	.880	.409	.620	REP	.973
INDEP	.917	.511	.712	INDEP	.901
<u>1994</u>					
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		
DEM	.981	.503	.896		
REP	.993	.717	.956		
INDEP	.938	.225	.712		

who disapproved of President Carter's performance were somewhat more likely than the rest of the electorate to utilize the negative heuristic. No difference is observed in the case of partisans. In 1982 and 1986, again the effects from the Reagan White House appear to be at best minimal. If anything voters of the same party as the incumbent president (i.e., Republicans) who disapproved of the way Ronald Reagan was handling his job were only slightly more likely to use the negative heuristic more heavily during the midterm contests. Democrats, regardless of level of approval of the White House, used the negative heuristic to the same degree. Finally, in 1990 and 1994, again we see very weak effects from the White House. It is interesting though that in 1994, similar to 1982 and 1986, voters who were from the same party as the incumbent president and disapproved of the way he had been handling his job were the ones who were slightly more likely to attach the greatest

TABLE 5-26: Estimated Model of Incumbency Voting for Respondents who Approve of the President's Performance

	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
LIKINC	1.569*** (.371) [4.803]	1.595** (.494) [4.928]	.943*** (.269) [2.567]	1.088** (.404) [2.967]	1.230*** (.374) [3.420]
DSLKINC	-.782** (.372) [.458]	-.984* (.571) [.374]	-.838** (.373) [.433]	-.931** (.349) [.394]	-1.226*** (.440) [.293]
LIKCHAL	-1.783*** (.390) [.168]	-1.196** (.425) [.302]	-1.246*** (.319) [.288]	-2.914*** (.770) [.054]	-1.776*** (.394) [.169]
DSLKCHAL	1.373** (.590) [3.948]	1.685** (.728) [5.391]	.145 (.554) [1.157]	1.768** (.875) [5.856]	.691 (.637) [1.996]
REPMTCH	1.968** (.680) [7.155]	2.012** (.686) [7.474]	1.414*** (.388) [4.113]	1.930*** (.580) [6.891]	1.269** (.560) [3.558]
DEMMTCH	1.568*** (.400) [4.797]	1.231* (.741) [3.426]	2.106*** (.601) [8.218]	3.480** (1.226) [32.448]	.715** (.304) [2.045]
INTERCEPT	.610* (.313)	.642 (.496)	1.156** (.356)	1.330** (.431)	.928*** (.327)
Model Chi-Square / df	106.11 / 6	103.16 / 6	97.41 / 6	106.71 / 6	111.16 / 6
N	193	134	167	142	171
Correctly Predicted	87.05%	89.55%	83.83%	89.44%	87.13%
Reduction of Error	39.20%	63.33%	28.45%	48.23%	55.62%

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses represent standard errors.

Numbers in brackets represent odds ratio values.

Model Chi-Square values are significant at .01 level for all years.

*p<.10

**p<.05

***p<.01

TABLE 5-27: Probability of Voting for Incumbent with the Same Partisanship as the Respondent by Party Identification and Candidate Evaluation for those who Approve of the President's Performance

<u>1978</u>				<u>1982</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.977	.802	.898	DEM	.970	.709	.867
REP	.984	.858	.929	REP	.986	.841	.934
INDEP	.898	.457	.648	INDEP	.903	.415	.655

<u>1986</u>				<u>1990</u>			
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.985	.919	.963	DEM	.997	.980	.992
REP	.971	.850	.929	REP	.987	.911	.963
INDEP	.891	.579	.761	INDEP	.918	.598	.791

	<u>1994</u>		
	<u>LI</u>	<u>DI</u>	<u>Average</u>
DEM	.946	.603	.838
REP	.969	.725	.900
INDEP	.896	.426	.717

weight to negative evaluations of their representative. More specifically, whereas a Democrat who approved of Clinton's job performance and had no likes and dislikes for the Democratic incumbent or the Republican challenger had a probability of .838 to vote for the incumbent. Just one dislike dropped that probability to .603 (-.235). A Democrat who disapproved of Clinton's performance and had no likes and dislikes for the Democratic incumbent or the Republican challenger had a probability of .896 of voting for the incumbent. That probability dropped to .503 (-.393) with one dislike for the incumbent. But again, the differences between those who approve and those who disapprove of the incumbent president seem to be only minimal.

5.4. Summary of Findings

The data presented in this chapter provide substantial statistical support for two of the three sets of hypotheses proposed. First of all, incumbents' reputations clearly seem to matter for citizens' evaluations of their representative. More specifically, "credit claiming" and "position taking" activities were found to be significant predictors for incumbent evaluations as measured by likes and dislikes. Recalling something that the incumbent member has done for the district, feeling satisfied with the way a request for help was handled by the office of the incumbent, and expectation that the office would be of help in a future request for help make a citizen much more likely to offer a positive mention with regard to the incumbent's candidacy rather than a negative mention. Similarly, those who agree with the incumbent ideologically are also more likely to mention a positive bit of information with regard to the incumbent rather than a negative bit.

For those members of the House who do not attend to the needs of their constituency, citizens are more likely to mention dislikes and, more important for the purpose of this study, these dislikes are weighted more heavily on Election Day when compared to the likes. Altogether, the findings reported above point to negativity as a powerful decision tool. An incumbent is much more seriously damaged by unfavorable evaluations than he/she is aided by favorable evaluations. Empirical evidence suggests also that this is not the case for challengers. Challengers need not worry as much as incumbents about negative evaluations since it is positive ones that are weighted more heavily on Election Day. This suggests that whereas it might pay off for a challenger to point out to incumbent's shortcomings during a campaign, the pay off may not necessarily be the same for an incumbent who points out faults of the challenger.

The final set of hypotheses dealt with sorting out the kind of individuals who would use the negative heuristic to a greater extent. Contrary to initial expectations, it

was found that trust in the federal government, approval of Congress as a collectivity, and external political efficacy make little difference to the degree to which individuals use the heuristic. Those with higher levels of internal political efficacy, on the other hand, were indeed found to be more willing to attach greater weights to negative evaluations of the incumbent member of the House, compared to those with lower internal efficacy. Finally, those who disapprove of the incumbent president and the way he has been handling his job were found no more likely, than those who were approving, to punish the incumbent House member by weighing negative evaluations more heavily.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this study was to test for a negativity bias in off-year congressional elections. While there has been ample evidence from experiments in social psychology and economics that negative information is more heavily weighted than comparable positive information in a wide variety of information-processing tasks, those who study voting behavior have given relatively little attention to this phenomenon. Furthermore, those few scholars who have sought evidence for negativity in the political setting have focused their attention almost exclusively on presidential contests. The present study sought to overcome this shortcoming by focusing on off-year congressional contests.

A second shortcoming in the voting behavior literature that I have tried to address was to offer an alternative explanation for the phenomenon of negativity. Previous works in the field of political science have relied exclusively on the so-called "figure-ground" hypothesis and the "cost-orientation" hypothesis. The first views negativity as a perceptual phenomenon. According to this hypothesis, negative information is more heavily weighted than comparable positive information because it contrasts with the basic positive world we live in, and in that positive world negative information is more salient or more visible. Although, social psychologists have demonstrated in numerous studies that, indeed, evaluations in a positive context are much more negative than those predicted by a simple averaging model, there is little reason to deem such a proposition as plausible when one looks for an explanation for negativity in the political realm. The "figure-ground" hypothesis is based on the assumption that the actor is in possession of predominantly

positive bits of information with regard to the object under evaluation. Given that in the past couple of decades we have witnessed the spread of public cynicism concerning established political institutions and numerous studies have produced empirical evidence that suggests that citizens are frustrated with the inability of government to perform (i.e., the context or ground has been increasingly negative), it is hard to accept the "figure-ground" hypothesis as a satisfying explanation for negativity in the context of electoral politics.

The second explanation found in the field for the negativity bias views negativity as a motivational phenomenon. According to the "cost-orientation" hypothesis, people are motivated to avoid costs more than they are motivated to seek gains. From a theoretical standpoint, though, this explanation seems less than satisfying since it does not suggest *why* this is the case. Furthermore, from a practical standpoint, it also leaves much to be desired since it is of little help to a political candidate to know that voters are more concerned with what "they would lose" if X was voted into office rather than with what "they would gain" under such circumstances. Information that would be considerably more helpful to a candidate would shed light on the circumstances under which voters are more or less likely to utilize the negative heuristic.

I began this dissertation, then, with the hope of finding empirical evidence for the existence of negativity in the setting of mid-term congressional contests but, more importantly, I was also interested in developing an explanation for such a phenomenon that would be more satisfying -from both a theoretical and a practical perspective- than the two explanations that have been offered before.

The research relied heavily on the meaning of the concept of "representation" in order to fulfill this objective. Representation describes a relationship between legislators and their constituencies. At the heart of representation is the notion of "responsiveness".

In line with a steady stream of literature of revisionist work, which has developed the argument that modern representation involves a great deal more than simply voting in a manner consistent with one's constituents' desires, one of the assumptions made here is that policy preferences are not the only basis for a representational relationship. As such, responsiveness is seen as a conscious and deliberate effort by the representative i) to match his/her decisions on matters of public policy to the constituency's policy preferences (policy responsiveness); ii) to provide services for the individual member of his/her constituency (service responsiveness); iii) to secure public goods for the constituency as a collectivity (allocation responsiveness); and, iv) to engage in symbolic actions that will allow the representative to maintain continuing support from those in the district (symbolic responsiveness).

David Mayhew has convincingly argued that congressmen engage in three general categories of activities in order to make themselves less susceptible to defeat. They *advertise*, building name familiarity and a favorable image through newsletters, newspaper, radio, and televised reports, and huge volumes of mail to the district. They *claim credit*, performing hundreds of favors for constituents, facilitating their dealings with government agencies, and publicizing their role in securing projects and the allocation of funds for the district. Finally, they *take positions*, making speeches, introducing bills, and publicizing their roll call votes. These activities, in essence, are undertaken by legislators in an effort to build an image in their district that portrays them as someone who cares for the well-being of those back home and someone who is responsive to the needs and desires of those who he/she is supposed to represent.

It was hypothesized, then, that citizens would be more likely to express "dislikes", rather than "likes", for those members of the House who are not successfully engaging in such activities. More specifically, since the voting behavior literature assigns to candidate

evaluations a prime role in the calculus of voting, I expected those evaluations to be composed of more positive bits of information (likes), rather than negative ones (dislikes), in those cases where a legislator was perceived to be responsive to the needs and desires of his/her constituency.

Contrary to expectations, only two of the three types of activities discussed by Mayhew seem to have an impact on respondents' likelihood to express positive rather than negative bits of information with regard to an incumbent's candidacy. More specifically, position taking and, especially, credit claiming activities were found to be important determinants of candidate evaluations as measured by the likes and dislikes. Advertising activities, on the other hand seem to matter very little, if at all. Measures of Familiarity, Incumbent Initiated Contact with the voter, and Citizen Initiated Contact with the incumbent were all found to be very weakly related to mentions of likes and dislikes for the incumbent. To an extent, these findings suggest that citizens are concerned primarily with constituency service, resource allocation, and policy congruence. In other words, service responsiveness, allocation responsiveness, and policy responsiveness are seen by those in the district as more important cues for candidate evaluations than symbolic responsiveness. This seems to imply that citizens are more concerned, indeed, with the deeds of their representative rather than his/her words.

After examining the impact of incumbents' reputations upon candidate evaluations (likes and dislikes), I then examined the effects of these evaluations upon vote choice. More specifically, I hypothesized that negative bits of information (dislikes) are likely to be weighted more heavily in the voting calculus than positive bits of information (likes). Indeed, I found negativity to be a powerful decision tool in the case of the incumbent. For those members of the House who do not attend to the needs of their constituency, citizens are more likely to mention dislikes but, more importantly, these dislikes were found to be

weighted more heavily on Election Day than likes. In other words, those who do not fulfill their representative duties in the manner expected by their constituency are more likely to be victims of negative voting than those who perform such duties in a satisfactory manner. This finding suggests that candidates' reputations play an important role in influencing candidate evaluations and in determining whether it is the incumbent or the challenger who is preferred.

It is also worth noting that the findings reported here confirm the strong influence of the incumbency advantage (Cover, 1977; Hinckley, 1980a; Cover and Mayhew, 1981; Jacobson, 1981; Gelman and King, 1990). In itself, this fact may not come as a great surprise considering that, traditionally, over 90 percent of congressional members who run for reelection are successful. What *is* significant is that, despite their formidable assets, incumbents must cope with possible liabilities that result primarily from negative recognition. This research clearly demonstrates that an incumbent is vulnerable to the disproportionate weight of unfavorable perceptions.

Thus, the findings reported in this study offer support for the perspective that incumbency is a resource to be exploited, not an automatic advantage (Mann, 1978). There seems to be little justification to regard the electorate as being uninformed about congressional candidates. On the contrary, as Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina (1987: 166) assert, American politicians do not dance before the proverbial blind audience. What citizens like and dislike about their representatives depends significantly on the decisions those representatives make and the manner in which they behave. This fact was underscored by the wide range of responses relating to candidates' responsiveness, experience, ability, leadership, and other personal qualities that form the basis of voter likes and dislikes for House contestants.

The findings also support Abramowitz's (1975) argument that "visibility does not insure popularity". And if candidate visibility carries a significant electoral advantage -as conventional wisdom about congressional elections indicates- it is only because of its potential for creating positive images and emphasizing personal success in terms of the representative's ability to portray himself/herself as responsive to the needs and the desires of his/her constituency. Incumbents who enjoy a widespread but unfavorable image, or who fail to present themselves in a favorable light to their constituents, can scarcely hope to sustain the electoral advantage their public office confers. As this study indicates, the threat of a challenger becoming known and liked is not improbable or farfetched.

Furthermore, I found that challengers are not nearly as susceptible to negative bits of information as incumbents are³⁴. Indeed, what I found to be operating in the case of challenger evaluations is *not* a negativity bias -like I found in the case of incumbent evaluations- but, instead, a positivity bias. Likes for the challenger are weighted far more heavily on Election Day when compared to dislikes. This seems to be the reverse scenario than the one seen in the case of the incumbent (i.e, dislikes for the incumbent are weighted far more heavily when compared to likes.) I think that this finding has important practical implications for candidates' campaign strategies. More specifically, it suggests that challengers are not nearly as vulnerable to negative advertising as incumbents are.

With the increasing dependence of congressional campaigns on pollsters and media consultants, as well as the decreasing influence of local party organizations (Scarrow, 1994), negative commercials, which "mix style with substance and imagery with reality" (Sabato, 1981: 94), are likely to become more alluring. It has been said that politicians fear the effects of negative advertising (Sabato, 1981; Berkman and Kitch, 1986). The

³⁴ Gant and Davis (1984), examining for negativity effects at the presidential level and using a somewhat different definition of negative voting than the one used here, also found that incumbent presidents are more likely to be victims of negative voting than their opponents.

findings presented here suggest that incumbents have a good deal more of a reason to be afraid of such campaign tactics than challengers do. Not only are incumbents more likely to be hurt by a negative commercial prepared by the challenger's campaign team, but also the incumbent's attempt to retaliate by bringing forth negative information about the challenger is not likely to have much of an effect since dislikes are assigned very low weights in challenger evaluations when compared to likes.

The final set of hypotheses tested in the present study dealt with sorting out the kind of individuals who would be likely to utilize the negative heuristic to a greater extent. I found no support for the hypothesis with regard to trust in the federal government. More specifically, I found that those with low levels of trust in the federal government were no more likely to use the heuristic than those with higher levels of trust. I also found disaffection with Congress as a collectivity to be a poor predictor of the likelihood to utilize the negative heuristic in their evaluations of their incumbent member.

These findings support previous literature that notes that when constituents' attitudes toward political institutions are compared to their attitudes toward individual elected representatives, the evaluations of the former are generally much less positive than assessments of the latter (Fenno, 1975; Cook, 1979; Ripley, Patterson, Maurer, and Quinlan, 1992). According to this stream of literature, which bears in its titles phrases such as "the two arenas of Congress" or "legislature vs. legislator", "incumbents ... have become virtual masters of their own fate, insulated from generally adverse public perceptions of Congress's internal procedures, policy-making, and ethical standards" (Born, 1990: 1223-1224).

Fenno (1975) convincingly argues that constituents appraise the performance of Congress mainly on the basis of their perceptions of the institution's ability to solve national problems, work harmoniously with the president, and maintain a steady pace of

legislative productivity. Evaluations of constituents' own representatives, on the other hand, hinge mainly on how attentive members are to constituency needs and desires. Highly attentive congressmen, perceived to be effective at providing personal services to their constituents, tend to be reelected. As a result, it should come as no surprise - although it remains a paradox, since individual representatives make up the collectivity - that citizens who disapprove of Congress as an institution are no more likely than the rest of the electorate to utilize the negative heuristic in their evaluations of the incumbent member.

As Born points out, the public's tendency to use different standards to evaluate Congress and its members leads to serious problems. First of all, there is little incentive for members to draft good U.S. policy or oversee existing laws, given that effective solutions to national problems may rebound to the institution's advantage, but not the members' own advantage. "Instead, approaches to legislating emphasize symbolic 'position-taking' before home audiences and distributing particularized benefits to key constituent groups" (Mayhew, 1974: 52-73). Second, political responsibility suffers, in that citizens at election time find it difficult to assign individual blame or credit for the perceived performance of the legislative body. Third, there are very few rewards for congressmen to educate constituents about the strengths of Congress as an institution; hence, public support for it typically remains at depressed levels (Born, 1990).

External political efficacy was also found to be a poor indicator of the likelihood to utilize the negative heuristic. Contrary to expectation, those with high external efficacy were found to be no more likely to use the heuristic than the rest of the electorate. Those with high levels of internal efficacy, on the other hand, were found -as expected- to be somewhat more likely to use the negative heuristic, whereas for those with low efficacy levels it seems that it makes little sense to attach different weights to information in order

to send a message to the incumbent since they feel that government actors are not listening to citizens anyway.

Finally, those who disapprove of the incumbent president and the way he has been handling his job were found no more likely than those who were approving to punish the incumbent House members by weighing negative evaluations more heavily. Such a finding is consistent with the view that off-year congressional races do *not* constitute mere presidential referenda.

Kernell (1977) in his seminal work on negativity in congressional races, sets forth the logic for the referendum explanation. "Given the public's low levels of interest in and knowledge about politics, what better criterion exists for voting one's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with current government programs and performance than by voting for or against the President's party?" (Kernell, 1977: 49). Yet, as mentioned earlier, there has been ample evidence in the two decades that followed Kernell's work that congressional representatives do not, indeed, dance in front of a blind audience nor an audience that pays no attention to the members' activities. Those in the district might not be aware of how their representative voted on every single bill that was considered in Washington, nor might they be aware of all of the representative's activities while he/she is away from home. Yet, most citizens seem to have a general perception with regard to the degree to which the incumbent is performing his/her duties. It is this perception of the incumbent's responsiveness that seems to play an important role in citizens' likelihood to utilize the negative heuristic. Unfortunately, there is no room for such an element in the citizens' voting calculus in the referendum literature.

The present study has only scratched the surface of the negativity phenomenon. First, it is hard to understand the non-existent -or at best minimal- relationship between members' "advertising" activities and candidate evaluations as captured by the like/dislike

survey items. Previous literature has suggested a huge advantage enjoyed by incumbent members, compared to challengers, due to greater name recognition and resources available to them for getting in touch with their constituency (e.g., more media coverage, franking privileges, office staff, etc.). Yet, in the context of the five most recent off-year congressional elections we see that the availability of such resources -and, more specifically, the "advertising" activities that such resources allow the incumbent to engage in- seem to be hardly correlated with the number of likes mentioned with regard to the incumbent member's candidacy.

Second, it seems puzzling that prospective evaluations that relate to the incumbents' services in the district (i.e., Expected Helpfulness) are stronger predictors for positive information mentioned with regard to the incumbent than retrospective evaluations (i.e., Casework; Recall Service to District). Actions should be weighted more heavily in candidate evaluations than an aura of helpfulness; yet, it seems that this is not the case.

Furthermore, since constituents appear to attach such great importance to what Heinz Eulau and Paul Karps (1977) term "service responsiveness" and "allocation responsiveness" in their candidate evaluations, members' "credit claiming" activities deserve more scholarly attention than the little they have received in the past. Even a brief look at the literature on congressional representation is sufficient to see that until recently academics have been almost solely preoccupied by "policy responsiveness" or "congruence" at the expense of other types of responsiveness. Certainly, policy congruence is an important matter, and the findings here suggest that citizens' perceptions of such congruence constitutes an important component of candidate evaluations, but "exclusive emphasis on the policy aspects of responsiveness may give a one-sided view" (Eulau and Karps, 1977: 252).

Another vital question that remains to be addressed concerns the so-called "positivity bias" that was found to be operating in the case of challenger evaluations. Is uncertainty that stems from lack of information about the challenger, as Markus and Zajonc (1986) would suggest, the source of this bias? According to the literature on congressional elections, challengers in recent years have been increasingly successful in raising money, though they still trail incumbents. If larger financial resources allow them to gain more visibility (i.e., decrease uncertainty with regard to their candidacy) then we should be seeing less of that "positivity bias" operating in recent contests. However, this does not seem to be the case. Looking across time, one sees a consistent advantage that challengers enjoy in that citizens are far more likely to reward them than punish them (i.e., they weigh likes more heavily than dislikes).

In order to further examine the proposition that uncertainty is what drives the "positivity bias", it would be useful also to take a closer look at voting decisions within the context of local elections. Given the findings of previous literature that suggest that candidates running for local offices enjoy lower levels of visibility than those running for national offices, one could infer that the processing of the information relating to voting decisions at that level is constrained by additional uncertainty. If the hypothesized connection between uncertainty and positivity is correct, we should find very little evidence for negativity in local contests.

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that the impact of paid and free media in shaping voters' perceptions of candidates needs to be further studied. In their majority, studies that look upon the effects of negative advertising focus on one specific electoral race (e.g., Brooks, 1995; Kern, 1995). Further research will have to explore the effects of negative advertising across different settings and whether congressional voters

are "capable of weeding out garbage commercials" and whether practitioners of negative advertising insult voters' intelligence.

Finally, there is still a lot to be desired with respect to identifying those citizens who are more likely to use the negative heuristic in the voting booth. While from a rational perspective it makes sense for all voters to utilize such a heuristic given cognitive limitations, time limitations, and the enormous amount of information made available during the course of the campaign, the argument has been made here that there is good reason to expect some individuals to be more prone to weigh negative bits of information more heavily in the calculation of their vote preference. While a few possibilities with respect to identifying these individuals were explored here, there is still more to be done. For instance, literature from social psychology suggests that time constraints might play a major role on the likelihood to use the negative heuristic. Applying this to the electoral setting, it would be interesting to examine possible differences with respect to negativity between early deciders and those who reach a vote decision late in the campaign. Another possibility worth exploring is with respect to differences in information levels. If negativity bias is a heuristic that is used as a short-cut to process political information, then those with higher levels of political knowledge should be more likely to utilize it³⁵.

³⁵ This expectation with regard to the effects of political information on the likelihood to utilize the negative heuristic was actually explored in the context of the 1994 election. The findings were in the expected direction -i.e., those who knew more about politics were somewhat more likely to use the negative heuristic than those with low information levels. Political knowledge was operationalized in two different ways. The first was a scale based on whether the respondent could correctly identify the office held by i) Al Gore, ii) William Rehnquist, iii) Boris Yeltsin, and iv) Thomas Foley at the time of the interview. The resulting variable was called FIGINFO. The second measure related to knowledge of facts about the political system. The scale was called FACTINFO and it was based on the number of correct answers the respondent could offer to the following items: i) Who has the final responsibility to decide if a law is constitutional or not ... is it the President, the Congress, the Supreme Court, or don't you know? ii) And whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the Federal Court ... the President, the Congress, the Supreme Court, or don't you know? iii) Do you happen to know which party had the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington before the election (this/last) month? iv) Do you happen to know which party had the most members in the U.S. Senate before the election (this/last) month? For all items relating to political information, incorrect answers were coded as '0' and correct answers were coded as "1". Responses were then added to form the respective scales. The effects of political information on likelihood to use the negative heuristic were found to be similar for the two constructs of information

Unfortunately, these possibilities can not be explored at present because of lack of appropriate data.

The implications of the negativity bias for democratic theory are significant. This analysis casts serious doubt on the validity of the findings of those studies which portray midterm congressional elections as mere referenda on the incumbent president and citizens' perceptions of his job performance. On the contrary, the negativity bias seems to be strongly related to citizens' perceptions of the incumbent's ability to be responsive to the needs and the desires of those he/she is supposed to represent. The findings of the present analysis, then, suggest that the phenomenon of negativity in midterm congressional races centers around the accountability of representatives to the citizens they represent.

In light of this, the anti-incumbent sentiment of recent elections should not be treated as an indication of an uninformed, disinterested, or naive electorate that is incapable of rewarding an incumbent who has been fulfilling his/her duties. Citizens' responses on Election Day are a function of several stimuli, and clearly one of those stimuli is the behavior of representatives. The anti-incumbent sentiment that we witness, then, should be interpreted -at least partially- as evidence of citizens feeling frustrated with the lack of responsiveness exhibited by their representatives. Incumbents *can* and *do* influence their electoral fortunes with *their* actions. Unfortunately, in recent years citizens have been increasingly unhappy with these actions and they show their disaffection by voting incumbents out of office. Members who have been able to build a sound reputation, on the other hand, and are perceived as responsive by their constituents seem to be shielded from such anti-incumbent sentiments.

built. Unfortunately, comparable information on political knowledge was not available for the rest of the years included in the analysis, so the hypothesis with regard to the role of political information could not be explored further.

Besides the electoral consequences though, negativity has serious consequences for governance. Though unsubstantiated, the assumption that politicians are aware of voters' negativity bias is highly plausible. Weaver (1986) argues that, because of voters' negativity bias, policymakers are unable to pursue the policy alternative that maximizes net constituency benefits. Instead, politicians have become more motivated to avoid blame for unpopular actions than to claim credit for popular ones. This strategy apparently explains the increased inability of modern government to deal with controversial policy initiatives. In an article devoted entirely to this type of government paralysis, for instance, McGraw (1990) questioned "whether the Government -from Congress to the White House ... can govern at all anymore" (McGraw, 1990: 9). His work highlighted the massive federal deficit as an example of major problems that neither political party is willing to confront. Unlike credit claiming activities, politicians' avoidance of controversies and strong policy stands may not be good news for the practice of democratic principles. Particularly where constituencies are divided, fear of the negativity bias may even candidates to be vague in their issue positions, thus denying voters full information on which to make their choices.

A final concern with the implications of negative voting for democratic governance hinges on the meaning of the vote itself. In a representative democracy, elections are supposed to carry messages about problems, policies, and programs. Furthermore, these messages are supposed to be treated as authoritative commands issued by the electorate (Kelley, 1983). However, if citizens' vote preferences are increasingly guided by a negativity bias that operates against the incumbent rather than a preference for the challenger and his/her policy stands, it becomes hard to accept such an interpretation of electoral outcomes as plausible. For instance, in the most recent off-year congressional election several Democratic incumbents were voted out of office. Republicans who filled those vacancies were quick to point out at the aftermath of the election that their victory was to be seen as a message from citizens that said that they endorsed a Republican

agenda. Polls though just before and shortly after the election found that voters were largely unaware of the "Contract with America", a proposal for policy initiatives signed by more than 300 Republican candidates (Wilcox, 1995).

To date, only a limited number of studies have directed their attention to the empirical scrutiny of political negativity, particularly as expressed through negative voting. Furthermore, borrowing heavily from social psychologists and economists has hindered our efforts to develop an understanding of how the negative heuristic operates within the context of politics. By choosing to adopt a perspective that is more appropriate for politics, I attempted to raise this point more forcefully by showing how complex a concept negativity can be, particularly due to its interaction with other powerful phenomena in the setting of the congressional electoral arena. And, although understanding the role of candidates' reputations seems to shed new light on the proper meaning and interpretation of political negativity, extensive research still needs to be done in order to grasp the phenomenon.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SELECTED VARIABLE FREQUENCIES

TABLE AI-1: Frequencies for Number of Likes for the Incumbent offered
by the Respondent, 1978-1994

Number of Incumbent Likes	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
0 mentions	502	299	497	568	566
1 mention	336	163	228	154	181
2 mentions	249	143	194	159	169
3 mentions	92	70	101	87	85
4 mentions	37	45	82	32	55
5 mentions	N/A	N/A	N/A	25	30

TABLE AI-2: Frequencies for Number of Likes for the Challenger offered
by the Respondent, 1978-1994

Number of Challenger Likes	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
0 mentions	528	285	457	474	544
1 mention	79	77	65	40	66
2 mentions	34	48	40	25	47
3 mentions	12	20	13	7	26
4 mentions	5	15	11	2	9
5 mentions	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	9

TABLE AI-3: Frequencies for Number of Dislikes for the Incumbent offered by the Respondent, 1978-1994

Number of Incumbent Dislikes	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
0 mentions	1041	565	936	876	835
1 mention	146	111	121	95	149
2 mentions	39	37	51	42	80
3 mentions	13	12	20	20	21
4 mentions	4	5	4	6	11
5 mentions	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	5

TABLE AI-4: Frequencies for Number of Dislikes for the Challenger offered by the Respondent, 1978-1994

Number of Challenger Dislikes	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994
0 mentions	560	355	505	494	593
1 mention	93	65	64	36	71
2 mentions	25	27	16	20	31
3 mentions	4	15	4	3	14
4 mentions	0	6	5	3	3
5 mentions	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	3

APPENDIX II

SELECTED VARIABLE QUESTIONS

A. Advertising Activities

Measure of Recall

Do you happen to remember the names of the candidates for Congress--that is, for the House of Representatives in Washington--who ran in this district this November?

Who were they?

Measure of Recognition

The following question was asked with regard to both the Democratic House candidate and the Republican House candidate.

I have here a card on which there is something that looks like a thermometer. We call it a "feeling thermometer" because it measures your feelings toward these people ... Here's how it works. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward a person, then you should place him in the middle of the thermometer, at the 50 degree mark. If you have a warm feeling toward a person, or feel favorably toward him, you would give him a score somewhere between 50 degrees and 100 degrees, depending on how warm your feeling is toward that person. On the other hand, if you don't feel very favorably toward a person--that is, if you don't care too much for him--then you would place him somewhere between 0 degrees and 50 degrees. Of course, if you don't know too much about a person, just tell me and we'll go on the next name.

Measure of Constituent Initiated Contact

There are many ways in which Congressional candidates can have contact with the people from their districts. On this page are some of these ways. Think of (name of Democratic House candidate / name of Republican House candidate) who ran for the U.S. House of Representatives from this district in the last election. Have you come into contact with or learned anything about (him/her) through any of these ways?

Met him/her personally?

Attended a meeting or gathering where he/she spoke?

Talked to a member of his/her staff or someone in his/her office?

Measure of Candidate Initiated Contact

Received something in the mail from him/her?

Read about him/her in a newspaper or magazine?

Heard him/her on the radio?

Saw him/her on TV?

B. Credit Claiming Activities

Measure of Casework

Have you (or anyone in your family living here) ever contacted Representative (name of the incumbent) or anyone in (his/her) office?

How satisfied were you with the response: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

Measure of Expected Helpfulness

If you had (another /a) problem that Representative (name of the incumbent) could do something about, do you think (he/she) would be very helpful, somewhat helpful, or not very helpful to you?

Measure of Recall Service to the District

Do you happen to remember anything special that Representative (name of the incumbent) has done for the people in (his/her) district while (he/she) has been in Congress?

C. Position Taking Activities

Measure of General Ideological Proximity

All respondents were asked the following question three times: once with reference to the Republican House candidate, once with reference to the Democratic House candidate, once with reference to themselves.

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.

Where would you place yourself (the Democratic House candidate / the Republican House candidate) on this scale?

- 1 -Extremely liberal
- 2 -Liberal
- 3 -Slightly liberal
- 4 -Moderate; middle of the road
- 5 -Slightly conservative
- 6 -Conservative
- 7 -Extremely conservative

Measure of Respondent agreement/disagreement with the candidates' position on Specific Policy Issues

All respondents were asked the following questions three times: once with reference to the Republican House candidate, once with reference to the Democratic House candidate, and once with reference to their personal opinion.

1. (Asked only in 1994) Some people think the government should provide fewer services, even in areas such as health and education in order to reduce spending. Suppose these people are at one end of the scale at point 1. Other people feel it is important for the government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending. Suppose these people are the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Where would you place yourself (the Democratic House candidate / the Republican House candidate) on this scale?

- 1 -Government provide fewer services; reduce spending a lot
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 -Government provide many more services; increase spending a lot

2. (Asked in 1978, 1982, and 1994) Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks. Suppose these people are at one end of the scale, at point 1. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves. Suppose that these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Where would you place yourself (the Democratic House candidate / the Republican House candidate) on this scale?

- 1 -Government should help blacks
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 -Blacks should help themselves

3. (Asked in 1978, 1982, and 1994) Some people feel the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living. Others think the government should just let each person get ahead on their own.

Where would you place yourself (the Democratic House candidate / the Republican House candidate) on this scale?

- 1 -Government see to job and good standard of living
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 -Government let each person get ahead.

4. (Asked in 1978 and 1982) Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government. Suppose these are people at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that a woman's place is in the home. Suppose these are people at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Where would you place yourself (the Democratic House candidate / the Republican House candidate) on this scale?

- 1 -Women and men should have an equal role
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 -A woman's place is in the home

5. (Asked in 1994 only) There is much concern about the rapid rise in medical and hospital costs. Some people feel that there should be a government insurance plan which would cover all medical expenses for everyone. Suppose that these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others feel that all medical expenses should be paid by individuals, and through private insurance plans like Blue Cross or other company paid plans. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And, of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6.

Where would you place yourself (the Democratic House candidate / the Republican House candidate) on this scale?

- 1 -Government insurance plan
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 -Private insurance plan

VITA

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