

The Myth of Issue Visibility

Chapter 2 in a book project.

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Comments appreciated.

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Candidates that hold positions opposed by a majority of voters frequently triumph in American politics. Such outcomes challenge the premise underlying what Doug Arnold (1990) calls the most fundamental question facing students of political science: To what degree can citizens in a democracy control their government? Outcomes in which minorities triumph over majorities lead us to question whether citizens can control their government at all. This book develops a general theory of representation that explains why and how candidates take the positions they do. It is among the first to apply behavioral insights from psychology to Congress and theories of representation. It holds that candidates appeal to groups rather than to individuals to overcome the apathy and ignorance that limits the degree to which most individuals participate. The theory reconciles a series of puzzling findings in the representation literature including: the lack of policy congruence between legislators and constituents; the inadequacy of issue visibility as a mechanism for influencing responsiveness; and the perplexing finding that representation differs according to state diversity.

This chapter tests the implications of the Issue Visibility Thesis—which holds that responsiveness increases with issue visibility because legislators fear that citizens are more likely to notice their misdeeds—currently the dominant explanation for how and when legislators respond to constituents. To do so, I examine the individual level implications of both the Issue Visibility Thesis and the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation. Finding no support for a central implication of the Issue Visibility Thesis, I then examine its aggregate level implications by investigating whether legislator responsiveness is greater on more visible issues. The results are inconsistent with the Issue Visibility Thesis but strongly support the SCP.

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“If I were to cast just a representative vote based on those who have voiced their opinions with my office—and with no other factors—I would have to vote against this resolution.”¹

Senator Diane Feinstein D-CA explaining her support for the resolution giving President Bush authority to attack Iraq unilaterally.

“I believe the people of my state expect me, on their behalf, to get my questions and their questions answered, not to engage in guesswork and above all not to abdicate my responsibility to the executive branch. If our founders wanted the President, any President to have the power to go to war, they would have said so.”²

Senator Barbara Boxer D-CA explaining her opposition to the same resolution.

The Myth of Issue Visibility

The first chapter described the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation (SCP) which holds that politicians appeal to groups on issues citizens care about most strongly. Active and latent groups can vary by issue both across and within states or districts. The degree to which politicians either respond to, or attempt to activate, latent groups—that is the degree to which they represent particular subgroups of citizens depends on the configuration of groups in a state or district. Consequently, SCP provides a direct challenge to conventional representation theories which hold that issue visibility acts to condition political responsiveness (e.g., Hill and Hurley 2003, 305). This chapter examines the Issue Visibility Thesis (IVT) by explicitly testing both its aggregate and individual level implications. The results support the SCP and are inconsistent with the

¹ U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein “The Right Course on Iraq: Prepared Floor Statement.” 10/10/2002. <http://www.senate.gov/~feinstein/releases02/r-iraq10p.htm>.

² “Boxer Backs Resolution Authorizing Multilateral Efforts to Force Iraq to Disarm Weapons of Mass Destruction: Opposes blank check for unilateral war.” 10/3/2002. http://boxer.senate.gov/newsroom/20021020021003_frelat_html.

IVT and, consequently, with the Demand Input Model (DIM) as commonly operationalized.³

The term salience is most synonymous with prominence or visibility, but often conflated with the concepts of importance and intensity (which are themselves frequently conflated). However, these latter terms do not share the important function that visibility does in the democratic process. The distinction is crucial because as Arnold (1990) shows, skilled politicians manipulate the degree to which issues may be traceable or visible through procedural tactics in order to either enhance or obscure the degree to which they may get credit or blame for a bill.⁴ The IVT refers to the hypothesis that policy responsiveness increases with issue visibility.

Citizens are thought to be best able to hold the elected responsible when the issues under consideration are most visible (e.g., Arnold 1990). Since not all bills are especially visible to the public, responsiveness is often thought to vary with the degree to which they are visible (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963). Hence, visibility is central to the openness that defines pluralist explanations of how legislative representation works. The IVT addresses two problems facing representation scholars.

First, the results of policy responsiveness studies are inconsistent with the expectations of the DIM. For decades scholars have tried to explain why studies of legislator behavior reach conflicting results about whether legislators respond to constituent preferences (e.g., Miller and Stokes 1963, Shannon 1968, Krehbiel 1999,

³ Recall in Chapter 1 we defined the Demand Input Model as the conventional view of representation in which the public demands policy from a legislature that responds (Wahlke 1967). Members of this legislature are motivated by their proximate goal, which is re-election, thereby providing an imperative to reflect the preferences of the citizenry.

⁴ The distinction is also important because all bills are inherently important to someone, else their sponsors would not go through the considerable effort required to shepherd the bill through the legislative process.

Uslaner 1999, Bishin 2000). The Issue Visibility Thesis explains the conflicting results by suggesting that responsiveness varies according to the ease with which the people can hold their representatives accountable on specific issues. As legislator behavior becomes increasingly visible, citizens are better able to compare their legislator's behavior to their own personal preferences.

Second, numerous studies find that citizens lack the level of knowledge needed to hold politicians accountable, a prerequisite for responsiveness according to the DIM. The IVT also provides an explanation for the observation that citizens lack the knowledge needed to hold their legislators accountable (e.g., Converse 1964, Delli Karpini and Keeter 1994). Research on media politics suggests that only on the most important and visible issues is news coverage of legislator behavior sufficient for either informing the citizenry about the complexity of the issues, or for determining how the legislator behaves on the issue (Hutchings 2003). Moreover, representatives receive much less coverage than do senators (Hutchings 2003, Arnold 2004).⁵

The IVT solves this dilemma. As visibility increases, so too do information levels about issues, as well as the visibility of legislators' stands on them. Increased visibility gives citizens the opportunity to become knowledgeable on an issue. Moreover, on visible issues legislators must account for the increased probability that citizens may become activated and interested even if citizens do not become knowledgeable on the issue.

Indeed, the logic underlying the Issue Visibility Thesis is straightforward. Congress faces thousands of issues each year, far more than the average citizen (or

Member of Congress!) can keep up with. The IVT holds that citizens are more likely to become informed about and notice legislator behavior as visibility increases. Legislators, fearing the possibility of citizen action should they misstep, respond to constituents' preferences on visible issues because the probability of retribution is high relative to non-visible issues.⁶ As Hill and Hurley (2003, 305) note, the thesis holds that "...increased salience leads to increased demands, which lead to good representation....".

The Issue Visibility Thesis is plausible, intuitively appealing and, seems to explain conflicting results in the roll call voting literature. Politicians respond to constituents because voters are more likely to notice, become knowledgeable, and hence punish, their behavior on visible issues. The results of Congressional responsiveness studies vary across issues because visibility varies across issues. Indeed, since scholars first observed this role for visibility, it has become increasingly central to theories of representation. However, it has yet to be tested.

The IVT also provides an alternative mechanism for explaining representation that is inconsistent with the SCP. This distinction has important implications for representation and democracy. Specifically, if legislators respond to constituents as the IVT suggests, then inconsistent findings as to the congruence between legislator and constituents' positions (e.g., Francis 1967, Fiorina 1974, Krehbiel 1993, and Bishin 2000 for reviews) imply that representation does not occur on the vast majority of issues

⁵ This fact is ironic in two ways. First, visibility is arguably more important in the House than the Senate because the House rules make it easier to obscure the tracibility of legislation. Second, the House was designed to be most responsive to the people, but the lack of coverage may help make it less so.

⁶ The logic of anticipated reaction is the mechanism through which legislators are held accountable according to Arnold's Alternative Control Model (1993). However, it is important to emphasize that Arnold does not require a role for issue visibility issue, but rather holds that legislators are held accountable by the possibility that interest groups or other interested parties (such as potential challengers) may publicize legislator's missteps.

because they are not visible. Indeed, Bernstein (1989) argues that because citizens are unknowledgeable about the vast majority of issues, representation cannot occur.

In contrast, the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation holds that politicians appeal to groups of constituents on those issues about which they are most intense. In this case, representation occurs on every issue that affects groups in the state or district. Here, representation occurs in three ways. First, organized groups may monitor legislator behavior and inform their members, and those who identify with them, if legislators misbehave. Alternatively, (unorganized) group members are likely to notice even less visible issues because they are more sensitive to them. Third, legislators themselves take positions designed to activate and thereby represent groups in the state or district. In effect, the visibility of an issue in a district may vary across groups. However, even if groups fail to notice these issues, the legislator may anticipate that a challenger or some other instigator would point out such missteps at election time (Arnold 1993). Representational slippage occurs only when a politician must choose between the intense preferences of two opposing groups.⁷

This chapter examines these competing representation theories by testing the influence of visibility on legislative responsiveness. I proceed in the following manner. I begin by reviewing research on the role of visibility and representation and show that most evidence supporting the Issue Visibility Thesis is anecdotal. To evaluate the IVT more directly, I perform three tests that examine the implications of the IVT for the individual voter and for aggregate legislative responsiveness, respectively. First, I identify and test the implications of the SCP and the IVT for individual citizens' levels of

⁷ The other common case where representation can not occur is when citizens in a district (and groups that consist of them) lack meaningful preferences on an issue.

issue knowledge. Second, I examine aggregate legislative responsiveness by performing a meta-analysis using articles on American legislative representation published in major journals to examine whether responsiveness is associated with the visibility of the bills they study. Third, I identify measures of responsiveness and visibility and directly test this relationship on a large number of issues. These tests support the implications of the SCP and are inconsistent with the Issue Visibility Thesis.

The Literature: Does Visibility enhance Responsiveness?

Since Miller and Stokes' (1963) seminal study, issue visibility has become central to explanations of how the representation process works (e.g. Froman 1963, Kingdon 1971, Page and Shapiro 1993, Jones 1994 *as cited in* Burstein 2003, Bianco 1994, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Hutchings 1998, 2001, Hutchings and McLerking 2004). Miller and Stokes (1963) noted that the degree to which legislators' views of issues were congruent seemed to vary by issue depending on their visibility. About the same time, Lewis Froman (1963) observed that the influences on legislators seemed to vary depending on the visibility and importance of the issue. Kingdon (1971) in one of the few attempts to examine the impact of intensity on specific bills uses visibility as a proxy for constituent intensity and argues that constituency should matter most "...on the most visible issues".⁸ Bianco (1994) extends Kingdon's argument to aver the role of trust, especially on less visible votes.

⁸ His results (seen in Table 2-1, p. 43) show that constituency was only "a minor influence" on legislator decisions on about half (47%) of the issues examined. Moreover, it should be noted that his measure of salience is far from objective: "So as a rough coding, I made a judgement about how much attention the issue appeared to have received in the press, among congressmen, and among other participants in the legislative system" (See Appendix D, p. 314). One problem with such a method is that issues invisible to the public but important to Members of Congress might appear quite visible using such a methodology.

While claims supporting a role for visibility are extensive, they are also largely anecdotal. Miller and Stokes' observation was based on their perception of the relative visibility of civil rights, social welfare and foreign policy issues. Kingdon's (1971) more direct examination was based primarily on his own observation—influenced by conversations with legislators—of the visibility of the issues he had already begun examining. Bartels (1991) study of defense spending was chosen precisely because it was visible. Hutchings (1998) shows that legislator responsiveness to Black constituents is greater on the visible Civil Rights Act of 1990 than on the important but less visible Michel-LaFalce Amendment to the same bill.

While the view that visibility conditions responsiveness is widely held, a growing literature produces evidence inconsistent with the implications of the IVT. Increasingly, studies show constituency effects on issues that are not visible. Foreign policy issues have been the crucible for representation scholars even before Miller and Stokes' findings (e.g., Almond 1950, Dahl 1954). However, research on foreign policy issues increasingly finds legislator responsiveness (e.g. Overby 1991, Bailey and Brady 1998, Bailey 2001, Bishin 2003). Moreover, others find that many legislators, like Dianne Feinstein in the case above, are not responsive on visible foreign policy votes (e.g., Gleek 1947). Jones (1973) finds that Texas legislators are least responsive on the highly visible sales tax issue. Eric Uslaner finds consistent responsiveness on foreign policy issues but observes that the role of ideology appears to be greater on foreign policy votes since “Such issues are of lesser concern to voters than are domestic concerns.” (1999, 46). Consequently, Lindsay and Ripley's (1992) assertion that “...the relationship between public opinion and Congressional behavior is not simple, at least not on foreign policy issues...” seems

apt. This conflict is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the statements of California's two Democratic senators, and their explanations for their conflicting votes on the authorization of the use of force in Iraq—an extremely visible issue.

Studies of issues other than foreign policy also raise questions about the role of visibility. For instance, while Kingdon (1971) found a large role for constituency on highly visible votes, he also found that constituents are a major influence on 25% of low visibility issues. Other studies examining a wide variety of bills that seem to vary substantially in their level of visibility find strong support for constituent influence (e.g. Uslander 1999, Bishin 2000). In sum, the body of scholarly knowledge finds constituency responsiveness occurs on both visible and non-visible bills.

The failure to rigorously and directly examine the relationship between visibility and responsiveness means that the finding for visibility may result from other factors. It seems likely that visible bills are more likely to be studied in part because interest in them may be high (hence their visibility). Such bills are also likely easiest for scholars to study. For instance, the data necessary for such studies, such as those pertaining to public opinion, are more likely to be available. Data availability is especially important because a major impediment to the study of legislative representation is the unavailability of appropriate measures of legislators' and citizens' preferences (e.g., Truman 1951, MacRae 1958, Shannon 1968, Fiorina 1974, Jackson and Kingdon 1991, Krehbiel 1993, Uslander 1999).⁹

Perhaps the clarion example of the importance of measurement differences is observed in Uslander's extension of Kalt and Zupan's (1984) work on strip mining

⁹ Evidence suggests that scholars' choices about how to measure various aspects of roll call representation clearly affect their results (e.g., Jackson and Kingdon 1991, Uslander 1999, Bishin 2000).

legislation. Kalt and Zupan examine legislators' behavior on an index of 27 strip mining bills in the 90th Senate. Where Kalt and Zupan found ideology to dominate legislators' decisions on these bills, Uslaner uses measures of opinion rather than constituents' economic interest, and finds significant levels of responsiveness to the re-election constituency, and decreased influence for legislator ideology.

The problem of measurement affects our ability to draw inference about the role of visibility in the following way. Since the findings of many studies may turn on the availability of appropriate measures, or the manner in which they are applied, the existence of different measures for different types of bills may impact the findings for visibility in representation research. To the extent it exists, the anecdotal evidence for visibility may be a product of the availability of better measures for highly visible bills. Indeed, as Burstein (2003) points out, there has not yet been a study that samples the universe of bills to determine the degree to which visibility conditions representation. The remainder of this chapter attempts to assess whether visibility enhances responsiveness.

Individual Level Implications of the Issue Visibility Thesis

The Issue Visibility Thesis holds that responsiveness increases with issue visibility. In contrast, the SCP suggests that members of an activated group are more sensitive to information, and thus more knowledgeable, about issues pertaining to the activated social identity. While candidates will appeal to latent groups, the benefits of doing so occur once the identity becomes active. The mechanisms underlying these competing explanations of how issue visibility affects representation lead to testable implications about individual behavior.

In the case of the Issue Visibility Thesis, issue awareness and knowledge increase with visibility. Legislators either anticipate or respond directly to the preferences of these aware citizens. However, the ease with which a citizen becomes aware likely depends on one's exposure to the media. Those who regularly read papers and watch television are more likely to become knowledgeable on an issue. The hermit who totally ignores the media seems unlikely to become knowledgeable about an issue simply because it is better covered. Consequently, the IVT implies that people exposed to high levels of media exposure will know more at any level of issue visibility.

The SCP suggests that once a particular social identity is activated, an individual will be more knowledgeable on issues relating to it.¹⁰ Visibility is not directly relevant. Group members are more sensitive and thus likely to be more knowledgeable even on low profile issues. Consequently, activated groups should show high levels of knowledge on relevant issues and lower levels of knowledge on issues that are not relevant to their activated identity.

I evaluate the individual level implications of the competing theories in the following way. First, I attempt to identify social groups whose identities were activated on an issue by examining the political context of the issues. Then, I develop a measure of news exposure to examine how visibility affects levels of political knowledge. Third, I examine whether members of activated groups are more knowledgeable on issues

¹⁰ In a sense the argument can be seen as a more general version of Hutchings' argument about selective attentiveness which holds that context interacts with visibility to make group members aware about relevant issues.

relevant to the group identity.¹¹ Finally, I directly compare the degree to which visibility and group identity explain issue knowledge.

Defining Groups

One potential criticism of the SCP is that the manner in which groups are defined and identified is *ad hoc*. With no limitation on the number of potential groups, one is likely to find some configuration of citizens that share common characteristics and fit the data by mining public opinion polls for compatible results after an issue has been resolved. To overcome this potential problem, the tests that follow rely only on groups that previous research has identified, defined and described. In particular, I rely on the taxonomy of (largely informal) groups identified by Stanley Greenberg in his book *The Two Americas*. This book defines numerous groups and their characteristics, thereby allowing us to tie groups to issues likely to resonate with them. Secondly, as I discuss below, I develop a three step test for identifying whether these group identities are activated on the issue. Clearly, however, the social identities that are activated depend on the issue being examined.

Clarence Thomas and Saddam Hussein

Two issues for which data are available to evaluate the competing implications of these rival theories are the Senate vote on the Clarence Thomas nomination and the 1991 resolution to use force against Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf. While both bills

¹¹ The work in this section takes Hutchings (2003) important work on salience and context as a point of departure. Indeed, the tests performed here are similar in that they focus on the same two highly visible issues for which opinion data are available about their senators' voting behavior. He also shows that the context conditions citizen awareness of legislator behavior, although those results are weaker than those found here. This could be due to the fact that there is no underlying explanation for group interest in an issue. As such these results can be seen as further supporting his claims. However, an evaluation of the correspondence between Hutchings's model and the SCP lies beyond the scope of this paper.

were extremely visible, the politics surrounding these issues were very different, allowing us to examine the degree to which knowledge varies across groups.

Clarence Thomas was nominated by George H.W. Bush to replace Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American to serve on the Supreme Court. To take his seat Bush's nominee needed approval from the Democratically controlled senate. While Thomas shared Marshall's skin color, their political and judicial philosophy could not have been more different. As a consequence, Thomas' nomination provided something of a wedge issue among Democrats who liked the idea of supporting an African-American but opposed the confirmation of a conservative (CQ, 1991). Indeed, while the average African-American supported Thomas, Black elites were divided in their support for him (Alston, 1991). Further charging the atmosphere, numerous lurid accusations were made against Thomas during his confirmation hearings. The most strident of these was the charge of sexual harassment by law Professor Anita Hill. The fantastic nature of the hearings led to full television coverage of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Ultimately, the Committee voted to report Thomas's confirmation to the floor, and the senate confirmed him 52-48 on October 16, 1991.

The politics underlying Thomas's confirmation suggests several groups that may have become activated. African-Americans were clearly energized and strongly supported his confirmation. In addition, women might have been activated since the sexual harassment charges and Thomas' conservative judicial philosophy would seem to activate this identity. In particular, Greenberg's concept of Super-Educated Women consists of college-educated women who tend to be more progressive and feel especially strongly about social issues like abortion. Consequently, they may have been more likely

to have been activated by both Thomas' conservatism and Anita Hill's harassment allegations. In contrast, the combination of Thomas' conservative views and his standing up to charges of sexual harassment may have served to activate less well-educated white men, a group that generally corresponds with what Greenberg calls the F-You Boys (2004).

Following its invasion of Kuwait, there was little disagreement that Iraq was a security threat. Many representatives favored economic sanctions rather than invasion. However, President Bush was adamant that Iraq should not benefit from its invasion of Kuwait, and should instead be removed from its oil-rich neighbor by force (Idelson, 1991). The public and the international community rallied around the American President. On January 12, 1991, the Senate authorized the president to use force in Iraq by a 52-47 vote. As air strikes bombarded Iraq, a patriotic fervor took hold. Yellow ribbons and messages of support became ubiquitous in small-towns and neighborhoods and President Bush's approval ratings soared to record levels.

While the Gulf War was popular, the events surrounding it offer hazier clues as to activated groups. In general women tend to oppose war at greater rates than do men (Conover and Sapiro 1993), but no single event occurred to galvanize such opposition among women. Similarly, the F-You Boys may have been activated as they tend to be especially patriotic and supportive of military action (Greenberg 2004, 110). It also seems possible that the Faithful—white Protestants who attend church weekly—might have been activated to support the concept of a “just” war (Stepp, 1991, Rosenthal, 1991). These citizens tend to be fiercely patriotic and supportive of the president.

However, it is not clear from news accounts whether any of these identities were activated on the issue.

Identifying Groups

In order to test these hypotheses I employ the American National Election Study: Pooled Senate Election Study 1988-1992 (PSES), and the American National Election Study: 1990-1991 Panel Study of the Political Consequences of War/ 1991 Pilot Study (PCW) which surveyed citizens about their senators' positions on two visible issues in the November of 1992 and 1991, respectively. In combination, these two issues allow for the examination and comparison of the efficacy of the Issue Visibility Thesis and the SCP. The first step is to identify the active groups on these issues.¹²

The Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation defines groups as people with shared experiences that lead to similar attitudes and opinions. One implication is that activated groups should exhibit less opinion diversity than the public as a whole. However, while increased opinion homogeneity is a necessary trait for identifying active groups, it is insufficient for defining them since random collections of individuals or latent homogenous groups could exhibit similar opinion homogeneity.

Identifying members of active groups can be difficult because surveys seldom ask questions designed to illicit information about a social identification. Consequently, researchers are forced to infer which people are likely to have particular identities activated on an issue. Specifically, one might expect active groups to: have an identity

¹² While these data allow for the examination of levels of political knowledge, the opinion characteristics of relevant groups, and media exposure, they are probably biased against the SCP. The group identity that is active at the time of a confirmation hearing or a war may not be active several months later when opinion polls examine the subject. For instance, the PCW was administered about 11 months after the Gulf War vote. This problem is likely to be particularly acute for the Thomas vote because the political campaigns of

that relates to the issue; have opinion preferences on the issue that are more homogeneous than those of the general public; and exhibit greater knowledge than non-group members on the issue in question. Groups that meet these three criteria are most likely to be activated.

We can examine whether attitudes and opinions are more homogeneous within the relevant groups by examining measures of dispersion such as the standard deviation which should be smaller than for the public as a whole.¹³ Table 1 shows the standard deviation of public opinion on the confirmation of Clarence Thomas and the Gulf War resolution.¹⁴

Table 1. Standard Deviation of Thomas Nomination and Gulf War Resolution Opinion.

Group	Thomas Nomination	Gulf War Resolution
African-Americans	.47 (167)	.50 (87)
Super-Educated Women	.50 (419)	.50 (124)
Faithful	n.a.	.40 (139)
F-You Boys (YDWM)	.48 (452)	.37 (213)
Overall	.49 (2270)	.45 (1848)

Data needed to calculate the *Faithful* were not available in the PSES. Number of cases in parentheses.

The results in Table 1 provide insight to the nature of activated groups on the two issues. On the Thomas Nomination, we see that opinion among African-Americans and

1992 intervened in the year between the 1991 confirmation and the election. Since it is possible that some active identities receded with time, these results likely understate the impact of group identity.

¹³ Of course, this measure becomes less efficient as the size of the activated group increases. For instance if all Americans share a social identity on an issue, such as the response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or to Pearl Harbor, we could have a group that has a variance identical to that of the American population.

F-You Boys is more homogeneous than is opinion among the rest of society. The smaller standard deviation is especially impressive because this statistic decreases as sample size increases, and there are relatively few African-Americans in the sample. These results are consistent with the idea that African-Americans and F-You Boys were activated on the Thomas Nomination. In contrast, the variance of Super-Educated Women's opinion is slightly larger than that of men, suggesting that this identity was not active.

The results for the Gulf War vote are similar. The standard deviation of African-Americans and Super-Educated Women are larger than the public as a whole, suggesting these social identities were not activated on these issues. However, the F-You Boys and the Faithful were much more homogeneous in their views. These empirical results imply the existence of two groups on each issue. Group identities need not exist nor be active simply because group members happen to agree. If groups exist and are active, then their members should also be more knowledgeable about issues relevant to the group identity.

A test of political knowledge provides an especially high bar for the SCP because two of the groups that were active on the Thomas Nomination and the Gulf War vote, African-Americans and F-You Boys, have lower levels of socio-economic status than do most other members of society.¹⁵ Absent an activated group identity, we would expect these groups to have much lower levels of knowledge on any issue. However, if these groups were activated then we would expect them to have higher levels of knowledge than does the population as a whole.

¹⁴ These standard deviations are calculated for responses to the questions pertaining to whether or not respondents agreed with the use of force and the confirmation of Clarence Thomas at the time of the vote.

¹⁵ African Americans and F You Boys score 3.14 and 2.63 respectively as compared with the average respondent who scores 3.59 on our 7 point education scale. Category 3 corresponds to a college degree.

In order to examine the degree to which members are knowledgeable about politics pertaining to a relevant issue I examine the proportion of various groups that were able to correctly identify the way that their senators voted on the Clarence Thomas nomination and the Persian Gulf War resolution. These measures are relevant indicators of knowledge because they require the ability to tie a specific position to a specific legislator. While the standard is high given citizens lack of knowledge about their legislators (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1994), it is consistent with a standard we might view as necessary to force legislators to consider constituents' views when deciding how to vote on a bill.

To investigate these questions, I examine the degree to which African-Americans, F-You Boys and the Faithful correctly identified their senators' votes. In order to examine the implication of the Issue Visibility Thesis, I also examine the knowledge of the people getting the most exposure—those who score above the median (6 or more) in number of days per week watching TV and reading the newspaper. We can directly evaluate the SCP's explanation for increased knowledge (activated identity) with that of the IVT (exposure) by using these measures.

The results seen in Table 2 support the idea that African Americans and F-You Boys were activated on the Thomas Nomination as both groups were better able to identify their senators' votes than was the public as a whole.¹⁶ On the Gulf War resolution, however, the Faithful had substantially higher knowledge than the public, but the F-You Boys were below the average. This suggests that the Faithful were activated

¹⁶ All results presented that pertain to the Thomas vote are weighted, excepting standard deviations for which no weighting systems exist. The PSES attempted to draw random samples from each state. However, because some sub-groups, such as African Americans are geographically concentrated, they are

while the F-You Boys were not. Interestingly, on both votes, those exposed to the highest levels of media are slightly less well able to recount their senators' votes—a result inconsistent with the Issue Visibility Thesis.

Table 2. Proportion of All Respondents Who Correctly Identified Both Senators' Vote.

	Thomas Nomination (weighted)	Persian Gulf War
African Americans	38.2%	12.5%
Faithful	n.a.	30.8%
F-You Boys	36.6%	19.4%
High Exposure	27.9%	23.4%
Sample	28.4%	25.1%

Church attendance data is unavailable in the PSES and thus it is not possible to calculate knowledge levels for the Faithful.

Comparing knowledge levels across columns we see large differences in knowledge across issues when groups are activated despite the very high levels of visibility on both votes. In particular, the 25.7 point difference in African American knowledge on the two votes is especially stunning. Moreover, these differences are not likely attributable to levels of political knowledge.

Comparing general knowledge levels versus knowledge on specific issues allows for a preliminary test of the Issue Visibility Thesis and the SCP. Specifically, knowledge levels of active groups should be higher on relevant issues than on irrelevant ones. Moreover, the increase in knowledge across issues should be higher for activated groups than for the public as a whole. Similarly, those most exposed to media should exhibit higher levels of knowledge than the public as a whole.

dramatically under-represented in the sample. The PSES contains about 7.5% African Americans while the U.S. population is about 12.5% African American. The PCW is about 12.7% African-American.

One way to examine whether these effects are driven by political knowledge is by comparing the ability of group members to recall senators' votes with members' general levels of political knowledge, thus forming a baseline against which shifts in specific issue knowledge can be compared. The political knowledge baseline reflects the proportion of respondents in each category who were able to correctly name the positions held by two of four famous political figures. If the SCP is supported, then activated groups should exhibit increased levels of political knowledge on relevant issues relative to the knowledge baseline.

Table 3. Differences between Baseline Knowledge Levels and Issue Knowledge Levels.

	Knowledge Baseline	Thomas Nomination	Gulf War
African Americans	11.7%	26.50%	0.80%
Faithful	21%		9.80%
F-You Boys	10.7	15.60%	-1.60%
High Exposure	20.9%	7.00%	2.50%
Sample	19%	9.40%	6.10%

The Knowledge baseline is the proportion of each group correctly identifying 2 or more of the following famous political figures: Dan Quayle, William Rehnquist, Tom Foley and George Mitchell.

Indeed, as indicated by the bold figures this is precisely what we see in Table 3. For each of the three active groups, issue knowledge was greater on the relevant issue. Moreover, while the knowledge level of the population as a whole suggests that it was slightly easier to name their senators' votes on these two bills, in all three cases, the increase in knowledge was greater than the increase observed for the population. More specifically, even the case with the smallest difference, which is seen in the increased knowledge exhibited by the faithful on the Gulf War vote, the magnitude of the increase is over 50% greater for the activated groups than for the public as a whole (i.e., 9.8>6.1).

We also see that those who are most exposed do not seem to exhibit the same degree of increased knowledge across issues as does the population as a whole.

Taken together, these results provide strong support for the SCP and are inconsistent with the Issue Visibility Thesis. For each of the three active groups not only was knowledge higher on the issue related to group identity but the increase in knowledge on the issue relevant to the group identity was greater than the knowledge increase observed for the population as a whole (i.e., the baseline) on each issue. Additionally, the increase in knowledge across issues of the most exposed group was lower than for the public as a whole. However, we can directly test the competing theses while controlling for alternative explanations using a regression framework to identify influences on knowledge of legislator behavior on these key issues. In particular, we can examine whether activated group identity, as implied by the SCP, or media exposure, as implied by the IVT, better explains political knowledge on relevant issues.¹⁷

The dependent variables in these analyses are a scale of the number of legislators whose votes citizens could correctly identify. Higher scores correspond to more knowledge. In the case of the Thomas confirmation the scale ranges from 0 to 2, if they correctly described how both of their senators voted. However, because the Gulf War resolution was considered by both the House and Senate, the dependent variable ranges

¹⁷ A careful reader might be concerned that average group knowledge is used to identify active groups which are then used to explain variation in levels of individual knowledge, thus making the results endogenous. Variation in an individual's level of knowledge bears no theoretical relation to the absolute level of knowledge exhibited by a group on an issue. Thus, it is appropriate for absolute knowledge levels to be used help identify activated groups while membership in active groups is used to explain an individual's level of knowledge.

from 0 to 3, the latter of which was achieved in cases where citizens correctly recounted their Representative's position as well as those of both senators.¹⁸

The independent variables are binary and are scored '1' if the respondent is a group member and '0' otherwise. The *F-You Boys* are white males under 50 years old who lack a college degree. *African Americans* are respondents who identify themselves as African American or Black. The *Faithful* are White Protestants respondents who attend church about once a week. Each of these variables should be positively signed.

The central implication of the Issue Visibility Thesis is that knowledge should be positively associated with exposure. *Exposure* is a sum of the number of days in the last week that the respondent watched television or read the newspaper. The scale ranges from 0 to 14. This variable should be positively signed.

Three control variables are included in the model to account for background effects. First, people who are interested in politics should know more about how their legislators voted. A variable called *Interest* accounts for this by summing up correct responses to questions that ask them to identify famous political figures. For the Gulf War vote respondents were asked to identify the offices held by Dan Quayle, William Rehnquist, Tom Foley and George Mitchell. For the Thomas vote, Al Gore was substituted for Mitchell since no question asking about the Senate Majority Leader was available in the PSES. In both cases, scores ranged from 0 to 4 and should be positively signed. Knowledge of a legislator's vote should also be positively related to both levels of *Income* and *Education*, both of which are scored using seven categories.

¹⁸ I observe substantively similar results using a scale that excludes knowledge of a Representative's vote on the Gulf War resolution.

Ordered probit is used to estimate the model since the dependent variables are categorical. Additionally, because African-Americans are underrepresented in the PSES, the survey weighted estimator is used for both models to enhance comparability.¹⁹

Table 4. Ordered Probit Regressions of Knowledge on Exposure and Activated Groups.

	Thomas Nomination	Gulf War Resolution
Interest	.033 (.049)	.310** (.048)
Exposure	.010 (.023)	-.001 (.008)
Education	.004 (.036)	.061** (.024)
Income	.017 (.028)	.012* (.006)
F-You Boys	.234** (.101)	
African-American	.328* (.169)	
Faithful		.356** (.077)
Cut 1	-.187 (.176)	.431 (.113)
Cut 2	.788 (.177)	.904 (.115)
Cut 3		1.73 (.121)
N	1336	1219

*p<.05, **p<.01 One-tailed tests. Standard errors in parentheses.

The results in Table 4 provide powerful support both for the SCP, and against the Issue Visibility Thesis. On both issues the relevant active group identities are associated with higher levels of knowledge controlling for levels of political interest, education and income. On the Thomas vote, both *African American* and *F-You Boys* are statistically significant and signed correctly. On the Gulf War resolution, the coefficient for the

¹⁹ While this distinction makes no difference for the Gulf War model, the results of Thomas Nomination model are much stronger when weighted, though the estimates of the key groups are still positive and reasonably large (though African American is no longer statistically significant).

Faithful is large, statistically significant and signed correctly. Moreover, contrary to the IVT, in neither model does *Exposure* approach statistical significance.

Taken together these results call in to question the mechanism underlying the Issue Visibility Thesis. Issue visibility is thought to enhance legislative responsiveness by increasing the likelihood that citizens will notice their legislators' misdeeds. However, exposure to the media is unrelated to knowledge, suggesting either that this link does not exist, or that legislators are mistaken in their understanding of how citizens obtain information.²⁰

Equally importantly, these results provide strong support for the mechanism underlying the Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation. Membership in activated groups is associated with higher levels of knowledge on issues that are relevant to the group identity. Most strikingly, this occurs even when political knowledge, education and income levels are low, as is the case with African-Americans on the Clarence Thomas confirmation.

Finally, these results are likely attenuated due in part to the time lag between the events about which respondents were questioned and the date the survey was implemented. To the extent that the active identities receded and were replaced by others, the political knowledge relevant to the identity likely became less relevant. Presumably recall would suffer under such circumstances.

In combination, these individual level analyses strongly support the SCP and provide evidence against the Issue Visibility Thesis. However, they do not speak, nor are they necessarily incompatible with, the aggregate level finding that has become

²⁰ Similar results are obtained when the number of days a newspaper was read is substituted for exposure.

conventional wisdom—that legislators are more responsive on more visible issues. Indeed, it could be that legislators mistakenly perceive that citizens are more likely to notice their behavior on more visible issues and behave more responsively in anticipation of citizen recognition. If true, then legislators should be more responsive as issue visibility increases. It is to this question that we now turn.

Aggregate Analyses: Are legislators more responsive on visible issues?

In order to investigate this question, we investigate the conventional wisdom in two ways. First, we can examine whether past studies of representation that find for responsiveness are highly visible. Such studies are the basis for the claim that visibility conditions responsiveness and, if true, then such a relationship should be visible. A second method for testing the thesis is by comparing the aggregate level of legislator responsiveness with issue visibility across a wide range of roll call votes. If visibility conditions responsiveness, then these variables should be positively associated.

Meta-analysis: Do studies that find that legislators are responsive focus on visible bills?

One logical implication of the Issue Visibility Thesis is that studies of visible bills should be more likely to find that legislators are responsive to constituents than are studies of non-visible bills. This implication can be evaluated by investigating whether variation in the findings of past studies is associated with issue visibility. Since the conventional wisdom has evolved as a product of past work, such an investigation allows for the systematic evaluation of these findings.

Such an analysis has several strengths. First, and perhaps most importantly it allows for the evaluation of the representation articles that are the basis for the conventional wisdom. Second, examining bills used in past studies presents a broad

picture of the relationship between visibility and representation because the bills examined in these studies cover a wide range of subjects over a fairly wide time period.

Perhaps the biggest weakness of this approach is that the bills studied in the published articles are not a random sample of bills. Consequently, if we find a relationship between visibility and responsiveness it will not be definitive since we can not know how it applies to bills that haven't been studied because scholars tend to be interested in more visible issues. Failure to examine the range of variation on our independent variables risks biasing our results. Under such conditions, a finding against visibility is very strong evidence; a finding in its favor is insufficient for concluding that visibility is the key mechanism driving responsiveness.

The test is performed in three steps. First, I identified all bills used as dependent variables in studies of legislative responsiveness that appeared in the APSR, AJPS, JOP, BJPS, PRQ and LSQ between 1990 and 1999.²¹ This time period was selected for its wide scope, relative recency, and the electronic availability of journals. Second, I coded the findings of the research according to whether or not the author found that Congress was responsive (yes, no, sometimes). Then I attempted to determine how visible the issue was by doing a key word search using the *Lexis Nexis* general news data base for the year preceding the vote on the bill. Finally, I examined whether the visibility of the bill was associated with responsiveness.

Between 1990 and 1999, 19 relevant articles were published in these top six journals.²² However, because seven of the articles examined interest group ratings rather than individual bills they are excluded since vote aggregation may introduce error (Bishin

²¹ Many studies of representation do not explicitly explain roll call votes. I omit these from the analysis, since the bill visibility is unobtainable.

and Dennis 2002), citizens lack preferences about interest group ratings, and it is exceptionally resource intensive to disaggregate these bills and examine their visibility.²³ In addition, six studies are based on bills that were considered in a time period that predates the coverage of the *Lexis Nexis* database. In total, 16 bills derived from six articles were used as dependent variables in these studies.²⁴ A summary of these bills is depicted in Table 5, below.

—Table 5 about Here—

Assessing the visibility of a bill is problematic. The U.S. Congress votes on numerous bills that are similar in nature (e.g., as when amendments are proposed) that make adjustments to legislation. Most bills receive little attention even when the issues that motivate or underlie the bills are the subject of a great deal of attention.

News coverage has long been recognized as an appropriate proxy for visibility across a variety of fields. In studies of judicial politics, for instance, various aspects of news coverage have long been used as a proxy for visibility (see Epstein and Segal 2000 for an extensive review).²⁵ The examination of news coverage is not uncommon in studies of legislative politics either. Kingdon's (1971) measure was based partly on his perception of newspaper coverage. Mayhew (1991) relies on front page news coverage to identify important bills. More recently, scholars have begun using increased computing power to harness news sources as a foundation for measuring visibility. Perhaps most directly, Hutchings (1998) examines the incidence of news stories written

²² However, none appeared in the BJPS so in effect there were only 5 journals that had qualifying articles.

²³ On average each of these ratings combine about 15-20 roll call votes. Additionally they are created to form a measure of legislator ideology on an issue rather than to simply reflect behavior on a particular bill.

²⁴ I also omit studies of policy representation. Additionally, NAFTA was included in two studies but is examined only once.

²⁵ However, in these cases visibility has been defined to mean importance rather than visibility.

in major southern newspapers to demonstrate the relative visibility of two civil rights bills. This idea provides the basis for estimating issue visibility.

It is important to go beyond the visibility measures used by Mayhew (1991) and Hutchings (1998) in order to assess national visibility of the issues that come before Congress since many issues are regional in scope. Bills such as the California Desert Protection Act may provide targeted geographic benefits and thus be visible only to small areas of the country. Such bills may receive heavy coverage in local papers without registering at all in national ones. The *Lexis-Nexis* guided news search of U.S. news is used to search for regional sources on each topic.²⁶

In order to estimate the visibility of an issue, a search of newspaper stories pertaining to the general subject rather than the explicit bill title is performed for the year preceding the vote. To do otherwise is to overlook the visibility of the issue to the public.²⁷ An example of this can be seen in the coverage of the MX Missile debate. A search of news stories for the year before the vote on the resolution approving funds for the MX Missile development finds no news articles on that bill. However, the MX Missile was relatively visible in the news being mentioned in 216 stories during that same period. Moreover, a challenger need only publicize a legislator's "wrong" vote on the issue to tie opinion on the MX to the vote.

--Table 6 about Here--

Table 6 summarizes the bills under study and compares their findings with a general estimate of the visibility of these bills. Data on the visibility of the bills was

²⁶ In the few cases where the search request returned over 1000 results, the search was further performed by state so that a the precise number of articles on the topic could be determined.

²⁷ This is also consistent with Arnold's (1990) observation that citizens frequently have outcome, but not policy preferences.

calculated using the method described above. The specific key words used can be seen in Appendix A. With only one exception, each of the topics studied in these articles were of reasonably high visibility. Unfortunately, while we have some modest variation in the findings of these studies, we have very little variation in the degree of visibility in the issues examined in these studies. All but one were relatively visible. Given the small number of studies, we cannot make strong claims about the relationship between visibility and responsiveness based on these articles.

However, two implications do follow from these results. First, the two articles that find that legislators are not responsive deal with high visibility issues. While far from conclusive, these data are not consistent with what we would expect if visibility conditions responsiveness. Second, these data suggest that scholars tend to study visible issues. Consequently, anecdotal evaluations of the findings of representation studies are inappropriate for evaluating whether a relationship between visibility and responsiveness exists since they disproportionately seem to examine visible issues. Clearly, however, a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between visibility and responsiveness is needed.

Visibility and Responsiveness: Much Ado about Nothing?

Given the inconclusive anecdotal evidence, a more direct test of the impact of visibility on responsiveness is needed. In practice, however, the Issue Visibility Thesis is difficult to test because fully testing the thesis requires estimates of state or district level visibility in order to account for the fact that both responsiveness and visibility may vary across constituencies. Compounding matters, in order to test the IVT we need good

measures of responsiveness and visibility for the same period. Fortunately, such measures can be created.

While the ideal test of the Issue Visibility Thesis requires constituency level measures of visibility and responsiveness, these are unavailable. However, data are available to test an important implication of the IVT. Responsiveness should increase with the overall level of issue visibility. The data needed to examine this question are available from 1987 through 1992 using the *American National Election Study: Pooled Senate Election Study (PSES)*. Unlike most opinion polls the PSES is unique in that it provides estimates of constituent preferences for respondents from each of the 50 states. This data set allows for a straightforward examination of responsiveness. Importantly, it is also possible to estimate issue visibility during the same time period.

To test the IVT, we need to create a sample of issues considered during the period covered by the Pooled Senate Study on which responsiveness and visibility can be estimated. Senate “key” votes as identified by *Congressional Quarterly* are selected to provide an objective sample. For each year, about 20 noteworthy votes are selected by *Congressional Quarterly*. These need not be visible. Indeed, many of these votes are on obscure amendments that have implications for the nature of the legislation that is ultimately passed or defeated.

Responsiveness reflects the degree to which legislators respond to the preferences of constituents. By applying roll call voting data to the constituency data available in the PSES, responsiveness can easily be assessed. Responsiveness estimates are generated by taking the absolute value of the Z scores on the constituency variable from a simple probit regressing each “key” vote on constituents’ ideological self-placement as measured

by the ANES. These Z scores reflect a standardized estimate of the confidence we have of the impact of constituency on legislator behavior. Scores increase as we become more certain that constituents are influencing legislators. The statistical model used to generate Z scores takes the following form:

$$Vote = a + b_1 * \textit{Constituent Ideology} + e$$

Where *Vote* is scored '1' if the senator voted for the bill and 0 if they voted against.

Constituent Ideology is the mean constituency response to the ideological self-placement battery in the ANES. The Z scores described above, which are used for the second stage of the analysis, are obtained by simply dividing the slope coefficients by their standard error.

However, it is possible that large Z scores, instead of reflecting high levels of responsiveness, instead reflect great certainty about low responsiveness levels. I account for this possibility by estimating the substantive impact of constituent ideology on each roll call vote. This is performed by calculating the probability of the vote for a bill with constituent ideology set to the value of its first quartile and subtracting that value from the probability of a vote when ideology is set at the third quartile. The difference that results from the shift in the independent variable across the inter-quartile range, which roughly corresponds to a shift from moderately liberal to moderately conservative, produces a second measure of responsiveness.²⁸

One potential problem with these measures may result from the manner in which constituent ideology is measured. Several scholars demonstrate that findings for responsiveness may depend critically on how scholars conceptualize constituent

²⁸ The two measures correlate at .96.

preferences (e.g., Wright 1989, Uslander 1999, Bishin 2000). Substantively, this issue is central to the argument set forth in the first chapter that politicians appeal to subconstituencies rather than the entire Geographic Constituency. Nonetheless, most scholars treat constituencies as monolithic blocks, as if everyone in the district has the mean opinion on an issue. Consequently, to evaluate responsiveness in a manner consistent with the conclusions drawn from past studies, it is important to measure the preferences of the Geographic Constituency. However, to ensure that the results of our evaluation of the IVT do not turn on the manner in which constituency is conceptualized, I also test for responsiveness using the Partisan Constituency (e.g., Wright 1989) and the Prospective Constituency (Bishin 2000).

The independent variable, *Visibility*, needs to account for the visibility each issue receives. Visibility is important because the IVT suggests that an increase in the visibility of an issue increases the chance that constituents notice legislators' misdeeds. Increased coverage makes constituents more likely to notice misbehavior at the time it occurs, and makes it more likely that a potential instigator will mobilize on the issue during the election cycle. To the extent that an issue is visible, a legislator should be more responsive to constituent desires. Once again, news coverage is the obvious proxy for visibility.

To gauge issue visibility, several combinations of key words substantively relevant to the bill are examined for their visibility. In every case the key words with the most hits is used in the analysis.²⁹ The precise terms used for each of the key votes from

²⁹ The Issue Visibility Thesis suggests that increased visibility makes citizens more likely to notice legislators' misbehavior. However, this does not mean that citizens will notice the behavior at the time of the vote. As Arnold (1990, 1993) points out, the legislator's misbehavior may not be publicized until the following campaign when it is brought up by an opponent or an interest group (e.g., Fenno 1978, Arnold

1987-1992, a period corresponding to the availability of state level opinion data, are depicted in Appendix B.³⁰

The Issue Visibility Thesis holds that visibility is positively associated with responsiveness. The following statistical model operationalizes this relationship:

$$\text{Responsiveness} = a + b_1 * \text{Visibility} + e$$

Where *Responsiveness* is measured using the Z scores as described above, and *Visibility* is measured using the total number of hits generated for the *Lexis-Nexis* news search.³¹

The hypothesis predicts that the coefficient on *Visibility* should be significant and large.

The results, depicted in Table 7, are estimated using OLS regression since the dependent variable is continuous.

TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

The results from the first three columns of Table 3 depict the impact of responsiveness, operationalized according to three distinct measures of constituency, the Geographic, Prospective and Party constituencies, on visibility. In every case the coefficients are statistically indistinguishable from zero and thus, insignificant.

Moreover, the explained variation is exceptionally low, never exceeding 2%. In column 4 we see the results of the model which operationalizes visibility according to the

1990). Zaller's (1992) work on considerations provides an alternative mechanism—it's possible that visible issues may be easier for citizens to recall from among considerations presented by candidates and thus play a larger role in the voting decision. Certainly non-visible issues will not be among the considerations used to make political decisions. Investigation of this mechanism is beyond the scope of this work.

³⁰ The weakness of the current method is that it does not allow for statewide variation in visibility that would account for the regional issues described above. An alternative is to count articles by state on each issue. However, the number of news sources included in Lexis -Nexis Universe also varies substantially across states in a manner that is unrelated to population. Some states have no unique statewide sources in the database. For instance, Montana news is covered only by the AP State and Local Wire, which provides news on all 50 states.

³¹ To aid interpretation, the number of articles is multiplied by 1000.

substantive impact constituents have. Not surprisingly, the results are similar. In no case do we find any evidence for a relationship between visibility and responsiveness.

Perhaps equally important, the constant is statistically significant and large in every model. This is perhaps stronger evidence against the Issue Visibility Thesis than is the lack of a finding for visibility, since it is not possible to statistically demonstrate that a relationship is precisely zero and hence does not exist. However, the significance of the constant is consistent with the proposition that visibility is irrelevant, demonstrating that some base level of responsiveness occurs even when there are no stories on an issue. These statistical results in combination with the uninformative results of anecdotal research seen in Table 6 provide very strong evidence that visibility does not explain variation in legislator responsiveness to constituent preferences.³²

Beyond Visibility

The principal argument of this book is that politicians cater to the intense on the issues about which they feel deeply. As such it provides an alternative to the conventional wisdom that political responsiveness is conditioned by issue visibility. The Subconstituency Politics Theory of Representation holds that visibility has no direct effect on responsiveness because those who care deeply about an issue are likely to become informed about it regardless of the amount of coverage the issue receives in the press. Instead, relatively little coverage of an issue relevant to them is likely to be

³² Two alternative explanations were also investigated. First, the responsiveness measure is biased against a finding of responsiveness since alternative influences on legislator behavior are omitted. As a result, the Z scores may be inflated. To account for this possibility, I re-estimated the Z scores after including an additional control for legislator ideology. On average this substantially reduces the size of the Z scores. However, the results are substantively unchanged when these Z scores are included in the model estimated in Column 1 of Table 1. Second, it is possible that there is a threshold effect for visibility as suggested by Hill and Hurley (2003). To examine this possibility, I re-estimated the data by creating dummy variables that broke the votes into visible '1' and non-visible '0' at several different levels of visibility (the 1%, 5%, 10% and 25% most visible votes). The results are similar to those reported in Table 1.

enough to notice it and once the identity is activated, increased coverage seems unlikely to make them feel more strongly about the issue. Moreover, it is important to consider the evolution of the Issue Visibility Thesis. Visibility is only important for theories of representation and responsiveness that presume that politicians appeal to the entirety of their constituents. From this perspective its importance lies in its attempt to reconcile the predictions of the Demand Input Model with the conflicting results of roll call voting studies.

The Issue Visibility Thesis developed as an attempt to explain why responsiveness to the citizenry seems to vary across issues. The hypothesis suggests that without knowledge, citizens' ability to constrain their elected officials is limited to those issues about which they are knowledgeable. The implicit prescription for enhancing democracy under such a scenario is to increase the knowledge of the citizenry on the wide range of issues that legislators consider. Increased visibility is an important precondition for knowledge.

The results presented herein call this received wisdom into question. No matter how responsiveness is defined or measured, the tests performed herein depict no role for visibility. First, individual level tests strongly support the implications of the SCP. Membership in each of the three active groups we identified were significant predictors of increased issue knowledge. Further, contrary to the implications of the IVT, we observe no effect of news exposure on issue knowledge. Second, aggregate level tests of responsiveness on visibility find no significant relationship between the two.

Table 5. Summary of findings on articles on American Legislative Representation in 5 Journals from 1990-1999.

Journal	Year	Article Title	Authors	Excluded?	Is Congress Responsive?
APSR	1992	Representative Democracy and State Building in the Progressive Era	McDonagh, Eileen	Age	Yes
AJPS	1991	Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policymaking	Bartels, Larry M.		Yes
	1998	Heterogeneity and Representation: The Senate and Free Trade	Bailey, et al.		Sometimes
	1996	The Electoral Connection in the Early Congress	Bianco, T., et al.	Age	Yes
	1995	Latinos and Substantive Representation in the U.S. House of Representatives:	Hero, E., et al.	Index	Sometimes
LSQ	1990	Parochialism, Policy, and Constituency Constraints	Lindsay, James M.		No
	1998	Issue Saliency and Support for Civil Rights Legislation Among Southern Democrats	Hutchings, Vincent L.	Index*	Yes
	1997	Constituency Opinion, Ross Perot, and Roll-Call Behavior in the U.S. House: the Case of the NAFTA	Holian, et al.		Yes
	1995	House Members Who Become Senators	Grofman, et al.	Index	No
	1990	Roll Calls, Reputations, and Representation in the U.S. Senate	Erikson, Robert S.	Index	Yes
PRQ	1990	Re-election and Representation in Conflict	Wilkerson, John D.		No
	1999	The Congressional Black Caucus and Vote Cohesion	Pinney, et al.	Index	Sometimes
	1996	Dispositions, Constituencies and Cross-Pressures	Wink, A., et al.		Sometimes
JOP	1991	The U.S. Senate and Civil Rights Roll-Call Votes	Nye, Mary Alice	Age	Sometimes
	1998	The Dynamics of Senatorial Representation: 1952-1991	Wood, et al.	Age	Yes
	1996	Unintended Consequences? Racial Redistricting and the Representation of Minority Interests	Overby, et al.	Index	Yes
	1994	The Dynamics of Issue Expansion	Sharp, Elaine B.		Sometimes
	1993	Explaining the Change in Roll-Call Voting Behavior of Southern Democrats	Fleisher, Richard	Index	Yes
	1991	A Longitudinal Analysis of Competing Explanations for the Transformation of Southern Congressional Politics.	Whitby, et al.	Index	Yes

* This study used an index as well as two individual bills. I include the two bills in my analysis.

Table 6. Visibility and findings of Articles on American Legislative Representation in 5 Journals from 1990-1999.

Journal	Year	Article Title	Authors	Are the Issues Visible?	Is Congress Responsive?
APSR	1991	Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policymaking	Bartels, Larry M.	Yes	Yes
AJPS	1998	Heterogeneity and Representation: The Senate and Free Trade	Bailey, et al.	Yes	Sometimes
LSQ	1990	Parochialism, Policy, and Constituency Constraints	Lindsay, James M.	Yes	No
	1997	Constituency Opinion, Ross Perot, and Roll-Call Behavior in the U.S. House: the Case of the NAFTA	Holian, et al.	Yes	Yes
PRQ	1990	Re-election and Representation in Conflict	Wilkerson, John D.	Yes	No
	1996	Dispositions, Constituencies and Cross-Pressures	Wink, A., et al.	Yes	Sometimes
JOP	1994	The Dynamics of Issue Expansion	Sharp, Elaine B.	No	Sometimes

Table 7. OLS Regression of Responsiveness on Visibility.

	GC	PSC	PC	FD
Intercept	1408.42*** (.121)	2108.41*** (135.85)	2658.47*** (152.28)	88.58*** (9.003)
Visibility	-.101 (.073)	-.016 (.082)	.0113 (.0917)	-.0005 (.0005)
R2	.02	.00	.00	.01
N	93	93	93	93

*** p<.001

** p<.01

* p<.10

Standard errors in parentheses.

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Appendix A. Search Terms for the Meta Analysis.

Bill	Title	Keyword	Hits
H.R. 3450	Bill to Implement NAFTA	Free Trade	> 3871 ³³
H.R. 5110	Uruguay Round Agreements Act Retirement Protection Act	Tariffs AND Treaties	2286
H.R. 6674	Department of Defense Appropriations Authorization Act	Defense Spending	101 ³⁴
H.Con.Res 113	Resolution Approving Funds for MX Missile Development	MX Missile	424 ³⁵
H.R. 4428	1987 Armed Forces Appropriations Bill	Defense Spending	1734
H.R. 4000	Civil Rights Act of 1990	Civil Rights	> 3049 ¹
H.Amdt. 702 to H.R. 4000	Michel-LaFalce Amendment	Employment Discrimination	729
H.R. 2273	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990	Handicapped	1647
H.R. 8070	Rehabilitation Act of 1973	Rehabilitation	300 ¹
H.R. 7724	Biomedical Research Fellowship, Traineeship, and Training Act	Public Health	109 ¹
H.AMDT.410 to H.R. 4995	Two Percent Reduction in Defense Appropriations	Defense Appropriations	8 ¹
H.R.4995	1982 Department of Defense Appropriations Act	Defense Budget	66 ¹

³³ LexisNexis can only return results less than 1,000. For this search, more than 1,000 articles were written in a single region for the relevant time period.

³⁴ LexisNexis only archives Northeastern news sources for this time period.

³⁵ LexisNexis only archives Northeastern and Southeastern news sources for this time period.

Appendix B. Search Terms Used in Statistical Analyses and Results 1987-1992.

Key Vote	Bill	Title	Keywords	Hits
1987-01	H.R. 1	Clean Water Act Reauthorization	Water Pollution	883
1987-02	H.R. 2	Omnibus Highway Reauthorization	Highway AND Federal	1965
1987-03	H.R. 1157	Farm Disaster Assistance	Farm AND Aid	945
1987-04	H.Con.Res. 93	Fiscal Budget 1988 Resolution	Federal AND Budget	6380
1987-05	H.R. 3	Omnibus Trade Bill	Tariffs	600
1987-06	H.J.Res. 324	Temporary Debt-Limit Increase/Deficit Targets	Federal AND Debt	2263
1987-07	S. 2	Senate Campaign Finance	Campaign Finance	1640
1987-08	S. 1174	Fiscal '88-'89 Defense Authorization/Missile System Testing Limits	ABM	334
1987-09	S. 1174	Fiscal '88-'89 Defense Authorization/Nuclear Testing	Nuclear Testing	169
1987-10	S. 1174	Fiscal '88-'89 Defense Authorization/SALT II Limits	SALT II	120
1987-11	S.J.Res. 194	War Powers Compliance	War Powers	86
1987-12		Bork Nomination	Bork	1209
1987-13	H.R. 2700	Energy and Water Appropriations/Nuclear Waste Repository	Nuclear AND Waste	381
1987-14	S. 825	Housing and Community Development/Budget Waiver	Housing AND Federal	761
1988-01	S. 2	Campaign Finance/Cloture	Campaign Finance	1712
1988-02	S. 1721	Intelligence Oversight/Passage	Intelligence AND Foreign	479
1988-03	H.R. 1414	Price-Anderson Amendments	Federal Contractors AND Negligence OR Misconduct	3
1988-04	S. 557	Civil Rights Restoration Act/Veto Override	Government AND Discrimination	670
1988-05	S. 1220	AIDS Research and Education/Restrictions on Information Activities	AIDS AND Research OR Education	2603
1988-06	S. 2355	Fiscal '89 Defense Authorization/SDI Funding and NASA	Strategic Defense Initiative OR SDI	432

1988-07	S. 2355	Fiscal '89 Defense Authorization/SALT II Limits	SALT II	33
1988-08	TreatyDoc. 100-11	INF Treaty/Ground Launched Cruise Missile Definition	INF Treaty	298
1988-09	TreatyDoc. 100-11	INF Treaty Interpretation	INF Treaty	306
1988-10	H.R. 3	Omnibus Trade Bill/Veto Override	Trade Bill	614
1988-11	H.R. 2470	Catastrophic Health Insurance/Conference Report	Health Insurance AND Congress	304
1988-12	S. 2455	Death Penalty for Drug-Related Killings/Passage	Death Penalty AND Drug AND Killings	14
1988-13	S. 1511	Welfare Reform/"Workfare" Amendment	Welfare AND Work	289
1988-14	H.R. 4800	Fiscal 1989 HUD Appropriations/NASA and UDAG Program	Housing AND Urban Development	501
1988-15	H.R. 4781	Fiscal '89 Defense Appropriations/Contra Aid	Contras AND Aid	1469
1988-16	S.837	Minimum Wage Restoration/Cloture	Minimum Wage	427
1989-01		Tower Nomination	Tower AND Senate	448
1989-02	H.R. 1750	Contra Aid/Passage (Non-Military)	Contras AND Aid	726
1989-03	S.J.Res. 113	FS-X Plane Development/Disapproval	Japan AND Military	566
1989-04	H.R. 2072	Fiscal 1989 Supplemental Appropriation/Budget Act Waiver	Budget AND Congress OR Senate	2522
1989-05	S.5	Child Care/Dole Substitute	Child Care AND Congress	164
1989-06	S. 1160	Fiscal '90 State Dept. Authorization/Prohibited Activities	Foreign Aid	660
1989-07	S. 1352	Fiscal '90-91 Defense Department Authorization/SDI Funding	Strategic Defense Initiative OR SDI	288
1989-08	H.R. 1278	Savings and Loan Restructuring/Budget Act Waiver	Saving and Loan AND Congress	699
1989-09	H.R. 3015	Fiscal 1990 Transportation Appropriations/Cloture	Smoking Ban	74
1989-10	H.R. 3072	Fiscal 1990 Defense Appropriations/B-2 Funding	B-2 Bomber	68
1989-11	H.R. 3072	Fiscal 1990 Defense Appropriations/National Endowment for the Arts Obscenity	Obscenity AND Congress	75

1989-12	S. 1762	Catastrophic Revision/Durenberger Substitute	Medicare AND Catastrophic Coverage	114
1989-13	H.R. 3299	Fiscal 1990 Budget Reconciliation/Passage	Budget AND Federal	2506
1989-14	S.J.Res 180	Anti-Flag Desecration/Passage	Flag Desecration	103
1989-15	H.R. 3628	Capital Gains Tax Cut/Cloture	Capital Gains Tax	1563
1989-16	H.R. 3660	Government Pay-and-Ethics Package/Pay Raise	Honoraria AND Senators	29
1990-01	H.R. 2712	Chinese Students/Veto Override	Chinese Students	550
1990-02	S. 695	Education Programs/National Standards	Education AND Congress	918
1990-03	S. 1630	Clean Air Act Reauthorization/Motor Vehicles	Emissions AND Standards OR Reductions	321
1990-04	S.1630	Clean Air Act Reauthorization/Coal Miner Benefits	Coal Miner AND Acid Raid	14
1990-05	S. 1970	Omnibus Crime Package/Assault-Style Weapons	Assault Weapons	276
1990-06	S.J.Res. 332	Constitutional Amendment on the Flag/Passage	Flag Desecration	205
1990-07	S. 933	Americans with Disabilities Act/Conference Report	Disabled OR Disabilities AND Employment	390
1990-08	S. 2830	Farm Programs Reauthorization/Sugar Price Supports	Sugar AND Congress	46
1990-09	S. 137	Campaign Finance Overhaul/Taxpayer Funding	Campaign Finance	4338
1990-10	H.R. 5257	Fiscal 1991 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations/Abortions	Abortion AND Congress	400
1990-11	S. 3189	Fiscal '91 Defense Appropriations/Troop Cuts	United States AND NATO	639
1990-12	S. 3189	Fiscal 1991 Defense Appropriations/B-2 Bomber	B-2 Bomber	105
1990-13	S. 3209	Fiscal 1991 Budget Reconciliation Act/Passage	Federal Budget AND Spending OR Revenues	350
1990-14	H.R. 5114	Fiscal '91 Foreign Operations Appropriations/El Salvador	United States AND Aid AND El Salvador	195
1990-15	H.R. 5114	Fiscal '91 Foreign Operations/ Egyptian Debt	Egypt AND Debt	87
1990-16	S. 2104	Civil Rights Act of 1990/Veto Override	Civil Rights	1090

			AND Congress OR Bush	
1991-01	S.J.Res.2	Use of Force against Iraq/Passage	Iraq AND Military	7600
1991-02	S. 1204	Surface Transportation Reauthorization/Interstate Maintenance		
1991-03	S. 1241	Crime Bill/Handgun Waiting Period	Crime AND Congress	1526
1991-04	H.R. 2427	Fiscal 1992 Energy and Water Appropriations/Superconducting Super Collider	Congress AND Energy	893
1991-05	H.R. 2506	Fiscal 1992 Legislative Branch Appropriations/Pay Raise	Honoraria AND Senate OR Senator	98
1991-06	H.R. 2212	Conditional MFN for China in 1992	China AND Trade AND U.S.	628
1991-07	H.R. 1507	Fiscal 1992-93 Defense Authorization/Women in Combat Pilot Positions	Women AND Combat	417
1991-08	S. 1507	Fiscal '92-93 Defense Authorization/Strategic Stability	U.S. AND Soviet Union AND Defense	493
1991-09	H.R. 2707	Fiscal 1992 Labor, HHS, and Education Appropriations/ Budget Waiver	Budget AND Defense	1992
1991-10	S. 1722	Unemployment Benefits Extension/Conference Report	Unemployment AND Congress	263
1991-11	S. 5	Family and Medical Leave Act Substitute	Family and Medical Leave Act	151
1991-12		Thomas Nomination	Clarence Thomas	3444
1991-13	S. 1745	Civil Rights Act of 1991/Passage	Civil Rights AND Discrimination	1591
1991-14	S. 1220	National Energy Policy/ Cloture	Arctic AND Oil	163
1991-15		Gates Nomination	Gates AND Senate	555
1991-16	H.R. 3807	CFE Treaty Implementation/Dismantlement of Soviet Weapons	Soviet Union AND Arms Control	411
1992-01	S. 2	Elementary and Secondary Education/School Choice	School Choice	237
1992-02	S. 2166	National Energy Policy/NRC Hearings	Nuclear Regulatory Commission	590
1992-03	S. 2399	Eliminate Budget Fire Walls/Cloture	Budget AND Defense AND Domestic	227

1992-04	H.R. 2507	National Institutes of Health Reauthorization/Fetal Tissue Research	Fetal Tissue AND Research	69
1992-05	S. 3	Campaign Finance/Veto Override	Campaign Finance	6526
1992-06	S. 2532	Aid for Former Soviet Republics/Russian Troops in Baltic States	U.S. AND Aid AND Former Soviet Union	159
1992-07	H.R. 5260	Extended Unemployment Benefits/Conference Report	Unemployment AND Benefit AND Extension	389
1992-08	S. 3114	Fiscal '93 Defense Authorization/SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative or SDI	290
1992-09	S. 3114	Fiscal '93 Defense Authorization/Nuclear Testing Moratorium	Nuclear Testing	127
1992-10	S.5	Family and Medical Leave Act/Veto Override	Family and Medical Leave	389
1992-11	H.R. 11	Tax Bill/Enterprise Zones	Individual Retirement Accounts	867
1992-12	S. 323	Family Planning Amendments	Abortion OR Family Planning AND Bush	2048
1992-13	H.R. 5368	Fiscal '93 Foreign Operations Appropriations/Passage	Foreign aid AND United States	1022
1992-14	S. 12	Cable Television Reregulation/Veto Override	Cable Television AND Regulation	425
1992-15	H.R. 429	Western Water Bill/Conference Report	Central Utah Project OR Central Valley Project	75

NOTE: For each bill several search terms were used to produce results. In each case, the term used in the analysis is the one that produced the most hits.

The Myth of Issue Visibility Chapter 2 in a book project. Louise Davidson Schmich, O. Smirnov, D. Feinstein. 2005. Candidates that hold positions opposed by a majority of voters frequently triumph in American politics. Such outcomes challenge the premise underlying what Doug Arnold (1990) calls the mostâ€¦ Expand. Save. In meteorology, visibility is a measure of the distance at which an object or light can be clearly discerned. It depends only on the transparency of the surrounding air; as such, it is unchanging no matter the ambient light level or time of day. It is reported within surface weather observations and METAR code either in meters or statute miles, depending upon the country. Visibility affects all forms of traffic: roads, sailing and aviation. visibility style is hidden; element has a width or height that is equal zero. The visibilityCheck option works with the same logic.Â Do you have any update in this issue? I'm using TestCafe and having an issue - I'm getting visibility true even when the element not present in the screen. And its blocking as my rest script is dependent on the visibility of the element. need-response-app bot added the STATE: Need response label Jun 7, 2019. helen-dikareva self-assigned this Jun 7, 2019. helen-dikareva added this to the Visibility Checking Improvements milestone Jun 7, 2019. Copy link. Collaborator. helen-dikareva commented Jun 7, 2019. @manikuntalab Thank you for your interest in TestCafe. We have different plans ab Or maybe the pursuit of realism is a myth, and the community needs simplifications and compromises, and not a ultimate-realistic simulation of the combat work of a WWII pilot? At the same time, two points should be stated. First, when we introduced 150km visibility in the spring of 2018, haze on the landscape was significantly reduced. In this matter, we met the requirements so that the visibility of the landscape details in the distance should be as good as possible.Â But nevertheless, without denying the two points sounded above, I consider it necessary to clarify the main issue on the visibility of aircraft. We, the gaming community "IL-2 Sturmovik", inside of which I count myself on an equal footing with you, strive for the maximum possible realism in the simulation of air combat in all its aspects? In an op-ed at the New York Times, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's Manil Suri discusses the lack of visibility of the LGBT STEM workforce.Â An Issue of Visibility. Sep 08, 2015. Lesbians and gays working in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields are often invisible, writes the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's Manil Suri in a New York Times op-ed. To read the full story. Email: ...and receive Daily News bulletins.