

Does Polarization Imply Poor Representation? A New Perspective on the “Disconnect” Between Politicians and Voters*

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Abstract

Many argue that elite polarization implies a “disconnect” between the policy preferences of politicians and citizens which the election of more moderate politicians would resolve. We critique two common versions of this claim, showing that they rely on the faulty assumption that citizens’ policy preferences are ideologically rooted. First, with unique revealed preference experiments, we show that citizens are more concerned with seeing politicians represent their personal pattern of issue views than a moderate ideology. As a result, citizens may not see ideologically moderate politicians as superior to their existing polarized representatives. Second, some claim that citizen’ ideological moderation implies citizens’ views on individual issues are more moderate than politicians’. We show this is not the case. Rather, the “disconnect” appears more nuanced than a simple undersupply of moderate politicians: the range of policy alternatives elites debate often appears systematically to the left or right of the range of policies popular among the public.

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Elite political polarization is one of the most significant developments in contemporary American politics (Lee 2009; Noel 2014). Almost universally, scholars argue that its consequences for representation are dour. Perhaps the most lamented consequence of elite polarization is the chasm it is said to imply between the policy positions of American political elites, which are described as increasingly extreme, and the policy preferences American voters, which are characterized as reliably moderate. Fiorina and Levendusky (2006) define this perceived “disconnect” ably: “The political class is increasingly polarized” but “the majority of Americans remain largely centrist. ... The result is a disconnect between the American people and those who purport to represent them.”

This dominant perspective on the consequences of polarization implies that voters would overwhelmingly feel better represented if politicians were to take more moderate positions. This notion of how to improve representation appears throughout contemporary research on representation, institutions, and behavior in American politics. For example, Bafumi and Herron’s (2010) influential analysis suggested that over 90% of voters would like their Members of Congress to take more moderate positions. Consistent with this view, many scholars operationalize “responsiveness to constituents” as the degree to which legislators’ positions are moderate (e.g., Hall 2014; Snyder and Strömberg 2010). And a cottage industry has evaluated political reforms on the basis of whether politicians’ positions become more moderate, taking for granted that this would improve representation in voters’ eyes (e.g., Ahler, Citrin and Lenz N.d.; Brownstein 2007; Bullock and Clinton 2011; Gerber and Morton 1998; Mann and Ornstein 2013).

The claim that voters would feel better represented if politicians were to take moderate positions commonly appears in two forms. In this paper, we show how both rely on assumptions about the ideological content of citizens’ policy preferences that data do not support. We illustrate these assumptions with care theoretically, then show that they do not hold empirically.

First, many characterize citizens as disconnected from polarized elites on an *ideological* basis and suggest citizens would welcome the election of politicians with a moderate ideological makeup. Most citizens are characterized as ideological moderates because they are not ideologi-

cally consistent in their expressed preferences; citizens tend to support a mix of liberal and conservative policies. By contrast, the essence of elite polarization is that few Members of Congress take an ideologically mixed pattern of positions; rather, nearly all politicians consistently support liberal or conservative policies across nearly every policy area. The lack of ‘ideologically mixed’ politicians who support each ideological side at least some of the time is the first main component of the “disconnect” between politicians and voters that scholars have noted (e.g., Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder 2006; Bafumi and Herron 2010; Fowler and Hall 2013). For example, based on this pattern, Barber (2014) concludes that “legislators pay little attention to the preferences of constituents altogether.”

We show that this popular line of reasoning connecting polarization to an ideological disconnect relies on an assumption that citizens have ideologically-rooted policy preferences. The importance of this assumption is not widely acknowledged, but we will argue it is crucial. Moreover, we will cast doubt on it, arguing that citizens are better conceptualized as having personal patterns of issue views that they want represented, and not as ideologues. In other words, citizens want to see politicians represent *their* personal mix of policy preferences, not just *a* mix. This distinction has important implications for understanding polarization’s ills: because the ostensibly monolithically moderate American public is internally divided on many issues, politicians cannot simply take a ‘less polarized’ set of stances and automatically please most voters.

This leads us to our critique of the second common articulation of the “disconnect” polarization is said to have caused. Citizens’ views on *individual issues* are often characterized as reliably moderate, while elites are thought to have comparatively extreme positions on individual issues (e.g., Fiorina and Abrams 2009). The implication of this idea is that most citizens would feel best represented by politicians who support policies somewhere between than the two parties’ positions on each of many individual policies. For example, if Democrats in Congress support raising taxes by 5% and Republicans support lowering them by 5%, this view would lead us to expect that nearly all citizens would like their representatives to support a tax rate somewhere in the middle of these

extremes.

Surprisingly little data exists on the moderation or extremity of citizens' views within policy areas; most existing research simply assumes that Americans are more moderate than politicians on individual issues because they are not as polarized as politicians across issues. But, building on our previous critique, we show theoretically that citizens' ideological predispositions imply surprisingly little about their views on individual issues when citizens' policy views are not ideologically rooted. And indeed, when we empirically investigate citizens' policy views in a more nuanced manner, we find that they are often not moderate. For example, many citizens' ideal Social Security policy appears to the left of most Democratic politicians' positions, while many citizens' ideal immigration policy appears to the right of most Republican politicians'. Moreover, we show that such views are widespread and guide citizens' choices.

The evidence for both these critiques is drawn from a novel series of survey items and experiments we delivered to voters in a two-wave panel. For reasons that we elaborate in greater detail below, many of our studies allow us to evade the potential for measurement error that has bedeviled previous work.

These findings paint a more nuanced portrait of the 'disconnect' between politicians and voters that prevails when elites are polarized, as well as a more complicated picture of citizens' views. When citizens are seen as monolithically moderate, it may seem obvious how politicians can change their behavior to improve representation: be moderates, too. However, a closer look reveals that ostensibly moderate citizens are incredibly diverse in their issue views, meaning that no one politician—moderate or otherwise—can easily satisfy them all at once.

Our results suggest two correctives to dominant trends in research on polarization. First, our findings reveal a more nuanced "disconnect" between politicians and voters than a simple undersupply of moderates: on many issues, the range of policy alternatives on the elite agenda is systematically to the left or right of the range of policies popular among the public. Second, our results suggest that concerns over polarization should focus to a greater extent on effects beyonds

its consequences for dyadic representation. There are many ills polarization may exacerbate, such as gridlock, incivility, and more. We would welcome more evidence considering whether or how polarization exacerbates these phenomenon (e.g., Krehbiel 1998; Lee 2009). However, polarization does not appear to imply a disconnect in dyadic representation to the extent many assume.

Does Elite Ideological Polarization Imply Poor Representation?

“Pick a dozen issues. If you agree with me on eight out of twelve, you should vote for me.

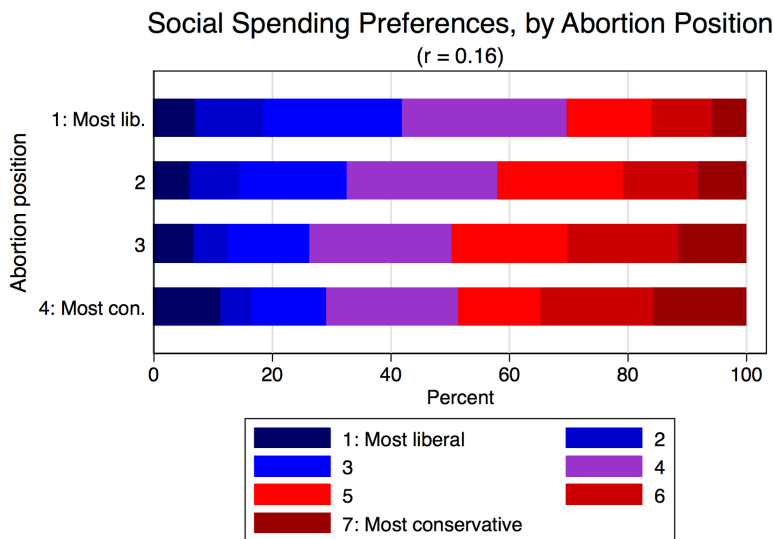
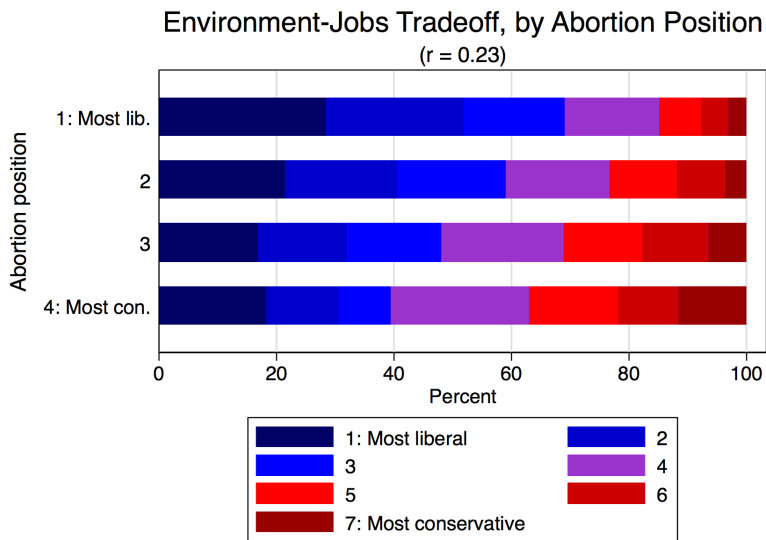
If you agree with me on twelve out of twelve, you should see a psychiatrist.”

– Attributed to New York Mayor Ed Koch

The essence of elite polarization is the increasing ideological orthodoxy of contemporary American politicians: Republican politicians nearly always vote on the conservative side of roll call votes, while Democratic politicians nearly always vote on the liberal side. Of course, American voters look quite different. Most Americans are ideologically mixed, supporting a mix of liberal and conservative policies (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Broockman 2015). For example, as Figure 1 shows, correlations between 2012 American National Election Study respondents’ reported preferences on abortion, environmentalism, and social spending are quite weak; most citizens express conservative views on some issues and liberal views on others.

Many argue that this contrast between polarized elites and mixed voters implies voters are poorly represented and would be better represented by politicians who also have a mix of positions (e.g., Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder 2006; Bafumi and Herron 2010; Fiorina and Levendusky 2006; Fiorina and Abrams 2009; Mann and Ornstein 2013). However, making inferences about policy representation based on this ideological contrast is not as straightforward as it may seem. Rather, this reasoning depends on the extent to which voters’ positions on individual issues should be thought of as rooted in their moderate ideology. An extended example will illustrate why.

Figure 1: 2012 ANES Scale Responses Across Policy Areas Correlate Only Weakly



A Tale of Two Legislators: How Unresolved Debates About Public Opinion Affect Interpretations of Elite Polarization

Consider the hypothetical voter in Table 1. A survey has been administered to this voter and she claims to have liberal views on two of four issues that will come up for a vote in Congress and conservative views on the other two issues. Similar to many citizens, this voter thus claims to

support a mix of liberal and conservative policies and is thus considered an ideological moderate.

Table 1: Which Legislator is a Better Representative?

	Voter Liberal Survey Response?	Legislator A Liberal Vote?	Legislator B Liberal Vote?
Issue 1	1	1	0
Issue 2	0	1	1
Issue 3	1	1	0
Issue 4	0	1	1
'Ideology'	0.5	1	0.5

Notes: 0 denotes a conservative survey response or position, and 1 denotes a liberal survey response or position.

Now consider two potential legislators who might represent this voter. Most existing Legislators look like Legislator A: consistently loyal to one side and polarized. But would encouraging a less polarized, more ‘ideologically moderate’ legislator to represent this voter necessarily improve representation in her eyes? Consider the case of electing Legislator B to represent this voter instead. Legislator B has positions that sit at odds with the voter’s survey responses on every issue; but, from an ideological perspective, Legislator B satisfies the criteria of being not polarized.

Many voices in the debate over the consequences of elite polarization would indeed find it obvious that Legislator B provides better representation for this voter. From this perspective, the evidence is clear: the voter is not polarized but Legislator A is; meanwhile, Legislator B is a perfect ideological match. The trouble is that many other scholars find it similarly obvious that Legislator A’s representation is superior.

Why would scholars disagree about how to judge which legislator provides superior representation, and which group is correct? The answer touches on an unresolved debate concerning the nature of public opinion and how it is measured. The relevance of this debate for understanding the consequences of polarization are not widely appreciated, but we will argue is crucial.

The Argument for Legislator B: Citizens' Policy Views Are Ideologically Rooted, And Political Surveys Are Like Math Tests

The underlying premise animating the idea that Legislator B is a superior representative for this voter is the notion that voters' issue preferences are ideologically rooted. For those who do not share this perspective, a metaphor may help communicate it.

The methods used to model elites' and voters' ideologies are usually drawn from the literature on educational testing (Bafumi and Herron 2010; Barber 2014; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014). Consider the application of such an approach in the context where it was developed, on the example mathematics test shown in Table 2a. In this example, Students 1 and 2 each correctly answered half the questions correctly, but the questions they answered correctly and incorrectly were exactly opposite each other. Nevertheless, we still might characterize these students as having similar mathematical ability; the individual items are merely windows into these students' overall mathematical abilities, with random error determining which questions are answered correctly and incorrectly.¹ Importantly, in this application, few would disagree that Students 1 and 2 are almost certainly more similar to each other than either one is to a students who answered all questions correctly ('whiz') or all questions incorrectly ('dunce').

Scholars increasingly conceptualize voters' responses to issue questions in exactly the same manner: citizens' responses to issue questions are thought of as merely windows into their underlying ideology, not reflecting significant patterns specific to those issues (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder 2006; Clinton 2006; Jessee 2009; Shor 2013). For example, in their prominent study of representation, Bafumi and Herron (2010) write that "if we conceptualize legislators as having ideal points that drive their roll call voting choices, then we should think similarly about voters" and their views on issues (p. 521).

The upshot of this conceptualization of citizens' responses to issue questions is similar to the

¹One might imagine, for instance, that Students 1 and 2 have a 0.5 chance of committing an arithmetic error on any question.

Table 2: Are Political Surveys Like Math Tests?

(a) Math Test: Average Score Taps Underlying Ability

	Correct Answer?			
	Student 1	Student 2	Whiz	Dunce
Question 1	1	0	1	0
Question 2	0	1	1	0
Question 3	1	0	1	0
Question 4	0	1	1	0
Score	0.5	0.5	1	0

(b) Political Survey: Does Average Score Tap Underlying Ideology?

	Liberal Position?			
	Voter A	Voter B	Democrat	Republican
Lower Taxes	1	0	1	0
Restrict Immigration	0	1	1	0
Restrict Abortion	1	0	1	0
Shrink Medicare	0	1	1	0
'Ideology'	0.5	0.5	1	0

upshot of scoring math tests: it allows us to calculate overall summary statistics for individual citizens that “can be compared in a proximate sense” (Bafumi and Herron 2010). Just like calculating an overall score allows us to capture the clear commonalities between Students 1 and 2 on the math test in Table 2a, so too is it thought that an ideological ‘ideal point’ can capture commonality between the political views of Voters A and B in Table 2b. Under this view, Voters A and B can thus be considered quite similar, as their ideal points are as “proximate” as can be, and certainly are more alike to each other than to Democrats or Republicans.

Returning to Table 1, the argument for Legislator B is now clear: when we compute ideal points for all these actors and compare them in a proximate sense, the voter and Legislator B look similar, just like the two voters in Table 2b.

The Argument for Legislator A: Ideological Innocence

We will argue that the growing conceptualization of political surveys like educational tests is in error. Rather, we suspect Voters 1 and 2 will see each other as quite different than each other, and that the voter in Table 1 would see little to like about Legislator B.

Our conviction is rooted in an alternative conception of public opinion, one that sees citizens as having genuine views particular to individual policies that are not rooted in any overall ideology. The idea that citizens are ‘ideologically innocent’ is, no doubt, an old idea (e.g., Converse 1964; Kinder and Sears 1985). But despite the rich intellectual history of this perspective, its importance for understanding the implications of polarization is underappreciated: as Table 2b showed, implied ideological similarities and differences may say little about citizens’ and politicians’ similarities and differences on actual issues. For example, the two ‘moderate’ citizens in Table 2b may both view Democrats *and* Republicans as better representatives of their views than each other!

In summary, assuming that polarization implies an ideological disconnect that can be resolved by electing ideological moderates assumes that voters look to their underlying ideological orientation—moderate, liberal, conservative, etc.—as they evaluate issues and politicians, just as students’ answers to math tests are primarily a function of their underlying ability. Many scholars implicitly and explicitly hold this view. But, if citizens instead evaluate politicians on the basis of issues, ideological moderates may not be superior to polarized representatives, even if citizens are not themselves polarized. Indeed, a polarized set of positions may reflect a legislator doing their best to respect majority will across a series of issues, like Legislator A. To understand whether resolving elite ideological polarization would improve representation in and of itself, it is thus important to understand to what extent citizens evaluate politicians through an ideological lens.

Evidentiary Ambiguity

Why is it necessary to examine whether citizens prioritize issue or ideological representation? Many scholars find the answer to this question obvious; the problem is that they find different answers to it to be obvious. Unfortunately, existing empirical evidence has important ambiguities that also leave this question difficult to resolve.

On the one hand, the data that most strongly supports the idea that citizens are ideologically innocent is the empirical finding that citizens' issue views do not correlate strongly. If citizens tended to evaluate the political world in ideological terms, we should tend to see citizens' issue views correlate strongly, as under this theory they are all reflections of the same underlying concept. However, we do not observe such correlations empirically (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008; Broockman 2015; Converse 1964; Kinder and Sears 1985).

This evidence is not dispositive, however. Those who hold the ideological view argue that these correlations are artificially attenuated because of the tremendous measurement error in survey responses. Indeed, it is often argued that *precisely because* citizens primarily evaluate politics through an ideological lens, it should be no surprise that there is so much measurement error in their responses to individual policy questions (e.g., Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder 2008; Jessee 2009). The classic evidence for ideological innocence thus has not managed to convince the many scholars who assume citizens evaluate political stimuli through an ideological lens.

On the other hand, proponents of the ideological conception of public opinion have shown that citizens whose scores on an ideological index are more similar to a candidate's are more likely to vote for that candidate (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder 2008; Enelow and Hinich 1984; Jessee 2009; Joesten and Stone 2014; Shor and Rogowski 2013). This evidence seems to support the view that citizens evaluate the representation politicians provide them on an ideological basis ("ideological proximity") (e.g., Boudreau, Elmendorf and MacKenzie 2013; Stone and Simas 2010).

However, this evidence is more limited than at first glance, because the 'ideological innocence

perspective’ would also predict that many citizens who appear closer to politicians on an ideological scale would be more likely to vote for them. In particular, when polarized politicians sit at the extreme of ideological scales, where an “ideologically innocent’ citizen scores on the scale may reflect the share of policies on which they agree with each party and not an ideological position per se. We would expect both “more liberal” citizens and “citizens who support a greater number of liberal policies than conservative policies” to be more likely to vote for Democrats. Both perspectives thus predict that citizens who answer more questions on a policy battery in a liberal manner will be more likely to prefer to be represented by Democratic politicians.

This limitation of existing research reflects the fact that, in a polarized era, we rarely get to observe voters making choices between politicians like Legislator A and Legislator B – nearly all politicians consistently support one side and so we learn little about whether voters would prefer ideological or issue representation; few Legislators of type B exist. Significantly, this lack of data is not guaranteed to hold if reformers succeed in electing more ideological moderates to office. Although it is assumed that citizens would prefer this state of affairs, examining to what extent citizens would indeed prefer Legislator B’s ideological representation thus has immediate practical relevance as well. Our first set of studies is inspired by this exact ambiguity.

Study 1: Do Citizens Prefer Issue Representation or Ideological Representation?

Are citizens’ responses to issue questions merely windows into their underlying ideology or do they reflect genuine convictions specific to those issues? We consider this question in Study 1 by giving citizens a choice² between two potential legislators with four issue positions. These issue

²Although we are not principally concerned with explaining electoral choice per se, we thought a mock election would be a naturalistic way to capture citizens’ demand for ideological or issue representation, as it most closely approximates a common choice environment for citizens. (An alternative would have been to have citizens rate how well one politician represents them on a feeling thermometer, for example, but one might worry that results from such a comparison would reflect measurement idiosyncrasies. As such, we preferred a revealed preference approach.)

items were themselves drawn from prominent works that have used these items to calculate an ideological index for the purpose of studying representation. Unlike in these studies, however, we construct politicians who do not take a consistent set of liberal and conservative responses across questions. The presence of ideologically diverse candidates that provide different degrees of issue and ideological representation allows us to drive a wedge between the observationally equivalent real-world predictions of the ideological and ideological innocence perspectives and appraise to what extent citizens might welcome ideological congruence in and of itself.

Table 3 shows an example of how ideological and issue similarity can diverge in the context of our studies. A voter provides responses to a variety of issue questions in a first survey, shown in the first column. Then, in a second survey months later, we ask a voter to choose between two politicians with the positions shown in the remaining columns.

Which would this voter see as a better representative? As a reminder, this voter might see Politician A as a better fit if the ideological perspective is correct because, according to the ideological perspective, there is nothing special about the particular issues on which the voter claims to have had liberal and conservative views on the baseline survey, just like there is nothing special about the questions students get right and wrong on math tests. What matters and persists is a voter's underlying score.

On the other hand, if there voters have meaningful views particular to issues that arise independently of their ideology, we would expect the voter to select Politician B. From the ideological perspective such a choice would be surprising, as a mostly-liberal voter would be selecting a consistent, polarized conservative. But if ideological polarization does not imply poor representation, the voter may see Politician B as a good fit.

(Voters were not shown a Table like this; an example matchup is shown in Figure 2.)

Table 3: A Hypothetical Matchup Between Two Politicians to Gauge how Citizens Evaluate Representation

Issue	Voter Survey Response in Baseline Survey	Positions Shown in Second Survey	
		<i>Politician A</i>	<i>Politician B</i>
1	L	-	-
2	L	-	-
3	L	-	-
4	L	-	-
5	L	-	-
6	L	-	-
7	L	-	-
8	L	-	-
9	L	-	-
10	L	-	-
11	L	-	-
12	L	C	-
13	C	L	C
14	C	L	C
15	C	L	C
16	C	-	C
Implied Ideology	75% Liberal	75% Liberal	100% Conservative
	Ideological Agreement with Voter	Perfect	Divergent
	Issue Agreement with Voter	Divergent	Perfect

Data

Most of our studies rely on a two-wave panel survey conducted in January and March of 2014. In the first wave, we recruited 1,240 survey respondents from the United States through Survey Sampling International, which recruits samples that compare favorably to Census benchmarks. The sample matches the population reasonably well on key demographic variables, although African-Americans were intentionally oversampled for another project (see subsection A.1 of the Online Appendix [OA]). We use survey weights to account for this oversampling and to improve the correspondence between the sample and the population on observable covariates more generally.

In the first survey wave, we asked respondents 27 binary choice issue questions to which they indicated agreement or disagreement with the statement given (e.g., “Same-sex couples should

Figure 2: An Example Matchup from Study 1, As Shown to Respondents

Imagine choosing between the two candidates for US Congress described below:

Candidate A	Candidate B
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the death penalty in this state.• Allow illegal immigrants brought to the US as children to apply for citizenship.• Legalize the purchase and possession of small amounts of marijuana.• Increase taxes for those making over \$250,000 per year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not allow illegal immigrants brought to the US as children to apply for citizenship.• Do not increase taxes for those making over \$250,000 per year.• Prohibit the purchase and possession of small amounts of marijuana.• By law, abortion should never be permitted.

Please take a few moments to review the candidates' positions and think about the degree to which each candidate reflects your views.

If you had to choose, which candidate would you vote for?

- Candidate A
 Candidate B

be allowed to marry”; see the appendix for all 27 issue questions). Consistent with research in the recent ideological tradition, we estimated a *latent ideology* variable by scaling respondents’ answers to the binary issue questions using a unidimensional item-response theory (IRT) model.³

We then conducted a follow-up wave in March 2014 with 515 of the Wave 1 respondents. Wave 2 contained our four main studies, in which we examined the relationship between political choices made during Wave 2 and issue opinions as measured during Wave 1. The two months between the two waves was intended to preclude bias in favor of the ideological innocence perspective: given how much time passed, respondents should not feel significant pressure to prefer politicians who share the individual issue positions they reported in Wave 1.

³We use the MCMCpack R package to generate 10,000 draws from a posterior distribution of each respondent’s estimated ideal point.

Study 1A: Probing the Demand for Ideological Representation with Random Positions

In our first study, we create match-ups like those shown in the second and third columns of Table 3 by picking candidates' positions completely at random: we pick four issues at random for each candidate and then pick four positions at random. Our main independent variables are the implied ideological and issue similarity between the voter and each politician generated by the experimental variation; our dependent variable is which politician the voter choice.⁴

How do citizens choose? Consistent with past studies of ideologically-driven choice (e.g., Boudreau, Elmendorf and MacKenzie 2013; Jessee 2009), the first column of Table 4 shows a significant bivariate association between citizens' ideological proximity to Politician B and a preference for Politician B. When we regress an indicator variable for choice of Politician B on Politician B's ideological proximity advantage (via OLS), we find that ideological proximity strongly predicts preference for Politician B.

However, as we noted, ideological agreement tends to correlate with issue agreement, making it unclear whether citizens who vote in a way the ideological perspective would predict are actually evaluating political figures on the basis of ideological proximity. And indeed, the evidence suggests that the association between ideological proximity and choice that many have noted may

⁴To measure the degree of congruence between these hypothetical politicians and respondents on issues, we simply calculate the proportion of positions for which the citizen's Wave 1 responses agree with each of the fictive politicians we randomly generated. Citizen i 's agreement score with Politician A is specified as $\text{Agreement}_{iA} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n (j_i = j_A)}{n}$, with j indexing the randomly chosen issues and n referring to the set of those issues for which the respondent expressed a Wave 1 opinion ($n = 4$ for all respondents). Our main measure of issue congruence in this test is *Politician B's issue agreement advantage*, $\text{Agreement}_{iB} - \text{Agreement}_{iA}$.

To measure ideological congruence, we estimate latent ideology for all possible politicians (combinations of four issue positions) with a unidimensional IRT model. Again using the MCMCpack R package, we generate 10,000 draws from a posterior distribution of each politician's estimated ideal point. We calculate *Politician B's ideological proximity advantage*—the probability that Politician B's ideal point (ψ_B) is ideologically closer than Politician A's (ψ_A) to citizen i 's (θ_i)—as follows:

$$Pr(\text{Politician B is more proximate}) = \frac{\sum_{d=1}^{10,000} |\theta_{id} - \psi_{Bd}| < |\theta_{id} - \psi_{Ad}|}{10,000},$$

where d indexes draws from the posterior distributions. We use this measure of Politician B's ideological advantage and the measure of Politician B's issue agreement advantage detailed in the above paragraph to assess the extent to which issues and ideological proximity affect respondents' tendency to prefer the representation provided by Politician B.

Table 4: The Effect of Ideological Proximity on Political Choice Flows Through Issue Agreement

	DV: Preference for Politician B	
	(1)	(2)
Pol. B ideological proximity advantage	0.48** (0.20)	0.06 (0.21)
Pol. B issue agreement advantage		0.51*** (0.08)
Constant	0.23** (0.10)	0.46*** (0.11)
R ²	0.03	0.13
SER	0.49	0.47
Observations	513	513

Robust standard errors reported in parentheses. * = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$.

be a byproduct of its correlation with issue agreement. In other words, what has been seen a strong evidence that citizens evaluate politicians based on ideological proximity may reflect significant omitted variable bias because agreement on issues is not usually included in these statistical models. As column 2 shows, when we introduce Politician B's issue agreement advantage into the regression model, the apparent effect of ideological proximity on politician preference plummets to near zero.⁵ Moreover, we find that when we pit ideological advantage and issue agreement advantage against each other in this model, only issue agreement strongly predict citizens' preferences. *Ceteris paribus*, we would expect a respondent to be 26 percentage points more likely to support a politician who agrees with her on three of the four issues than one who agrees with her on just one issue.

The data from our first study thus suggests that when citizens have the choice between representatives who represent their claimed positions on individual issues and their implied ideological positions to a different extent, citizens appear to be fairly indifferent to ideological match. How-

⁵Collinearity in a linear regression does not bias estimates (Achen 1982), although it does favor concepts that are more precisely measured. In this case, our measure of ideological agreement is drawn from the literature, although our measure of issue agreement is coarse and does not reflect that citizens might see some issues are more important than others. Nevertheless, we see the coarse measure of issue agreement significantly outperforming the sensitive ideological measure.

ever, this preference for issue agreement can be mistaken as ideological voting if the issue alternative is not considered. By contrast, citizens strongly prefer politicians who represent their claimed positions on individual issues. This provides our first hint that citizens would not necessarily be much more satisfied with representation if politicians moderated in a general ideological sense.

Study 1B: A Direct Test of The Demand for Ideological Representation with Tailored Politicians

Study 1A suggested that citizens evaluate political representation on the basis of issue agreement to a much greater extent than they do on the basis of ideological proximity, to the extent citizens appear to prioritize ideological representation at all. To put the question of citizens' preference for ideological representation vis-à-vis issue representation to a starker test, in Study 1B we present citizens with a stark choice between the two. We again use the "Politician A vs. Politician B" format from Study 1A but tailor the politicians so that their issue positions and underlying ideologies are not merely random but instead force the respondent into a stark tradeoff between issue and ideological representation.

An example of this stark tradeoff was shown in Table 3. We constructed politicians like these for all respondents as follows. To construct the "ideologically correct" politicians for our respondents, we considered every possible hypothetical politician who took four positions and disagreed with a particular respondent's prior positions on all four, scaled them one-by-one with all Wave 1 respondents, and selected the politician who was closest to the respondent on latent ideology.⁶ We

⁶Specifically, we first created a list of every possible politician who took four positions, all of which disagree with the respondent's Wave 1 responses to the binary choice issue questions. We then scaled each of these politicians together with all of the Wave 1 survey respondents, one by one, using a unidimensional IRT model and calculated the mean squared distance between the politician and the citizen to whom we were attempting to pair a politician. Among the politicians who disagreed with the respondent's previously stated preferences on all four issues, we then found the politician who nevertheless was likeliest to share the citizen's ideological position, as measured by minimum mean squared distance. By the ideological perspective, the citizen should be quite satisfied with this politician despite having taken issue positions entirely at odds in the previous wave. In pseudo-code, the procedure for finding the 'ideology-only agreement' candidate is as follows:

```
for voter in all.voters:
  for candidate in all.possible.candidates:
```

then constructed an “ideologically incorrect” politician who took positions in concordance with each of the respondent’s previously stated issue preferences but who was very likely to be ideologically inferior to the “ideologically correct” politician.⁷ Figure 3 shows the results of this process for one respondent. In black is the density of estimated ideal points for all Wave 1 respondents. In blue is the respondent’s own estimated ideal point, in green is the estimated ideal point of the “ideologically correct” politician, and in red is the estimated ideal point of the “ideologically incorrect” politician we showed this respondent. If the ideological perspective is correct and citizens evaluate representation on an ideological basis, respondents should more often choose the politician with an implied ideological ideal point very close to their own over the politician with an implied ideological ideal point quite far away.

As in Study 1A, we asked citizens to imagine choosing between these two candidates in a congressional election. We randomly assigned the “ideologically correct” and “ideologically incorrect” candidate to occupy the positions of “Politician A” and “Politician B” to avoid order

```

    if issue.agreement.proportion(voter, candidate) == 0:
        ideal.points <- scale([all.voters, candidate])
        ideological.distance[candidate] = ideal.points[candidate] -
ideal.points[voter]
    else:
        pass
candidate.shown[voter] <- which(min(ideological.distance))

```

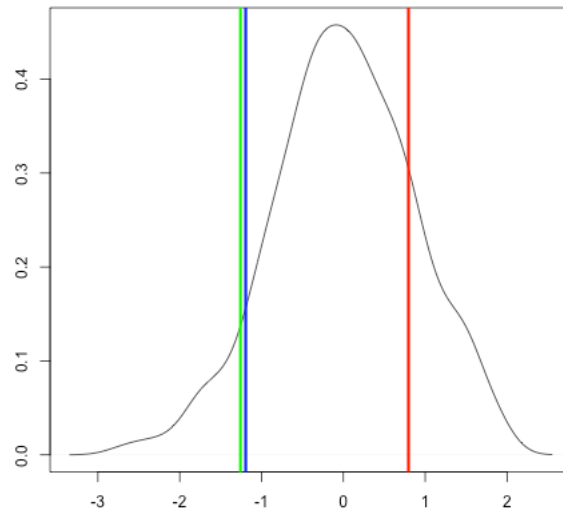
⁷To construct the “ideologically correct” politicians, we began with the universe of all possible politicians that took four positions, each of which the respondent had also taken in Wave 1. For each possible citizen-politician pair i , we then estimated ideal points for all citizens, the “ideologically correct” politician already selected for citizen i , and each potential “ideologically incorrect” politician j , again one hypothetical politician at a time. We then calculated the probability (again, with the MCMCpack package) that the “ideologically correct” politician already paired with citizen i would be superior in an ideological sense to each potential “ideologically incorrect” politician j . We finally selected as the “ideologically incorrect” politician the one which, despite agreeing with the respondent on every issue, was most likely to be worse from an ideological perspective than any other potential politician. In pseudo-code, the procedure for finding the ‘issue-only agreement’ candidate is as follows:

```

for voter in all.voters:
    for candidate in all.possible.candidates:
        if issue.agreement.proportion(voter, candidate) == 1:
            ideal.points <- scale([all.voters, candidate])
            ideological.distance[candidate] = ideal.points[candidate] -
ideal.points[voter]
        else:
            pass
candidate.shown[voter] <- which(max(ideological.distance))

```

Figure 3: Example of Ideologically Correct and Ideologically Incorrect Politicians' Ideological Positions in Study 1B



Blue: respondent's estimated ideal point. Green: estimated ideal point for "ideologically correct" politician who nevertheless disagrees with citizen on all particular issues. Red: estimated ideal point for "ideologically incorrect" politician who agrees with citizen on all issues. Gray: estimated density curve for all respondent ideal points.

effects.

When presented with the stark choice between a politician who mirrors their implied ideology and is similarly not polarized (yet disagrees with their previously stated positions) or a politician who takes their previously stated positions on individual issues (yet takes a consistent set of liberal or conservative positions), which do citizens choose? We find that they overwhelmingly prefer the politician who agrees with their previously stated issue positions despite being more polarized and inferior from an ideological perspective. 69.9% of the 513 respondents in Study 1B selected the "ideologically incorrect" politician, while just 31.1% selected the "ideologically correct" politician ($p < 0.001$, 95% CI: [24.9%, 37.3%]). A clear minority of respondents behaved in accordance with the predictions of the ideological perspective while a clear majority appear to have evaluated the politicians according to their distinct positions on individual issues.

Before exploring the implications of these results in greater detail, we first explore their robustness in Study 2.

Study 2: Citizens Are Indifferent To Ideology In The Presence of Issue Information

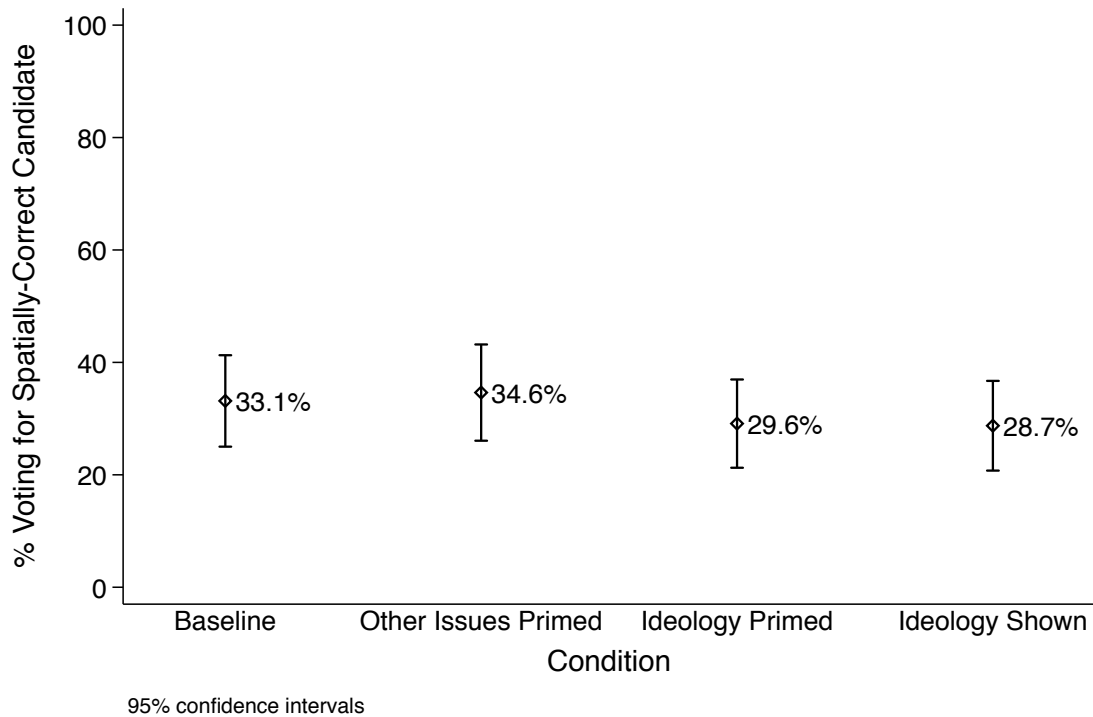
A potential alternative explanation for the results from Study 1 is that citizens would have preferred an ideologically proximate politician but did not understand how ideology tends to constrain the issues we selected. That is, respondents may not have understood “what goes with what” (e.g., Converse 1964). For example, a Voter in Table 1 may mistakenly believe that Politician A’s pattern of positions is actually more indicative of his own underlying ideology and, thus, that selecting Politician A is ideologically correct. Further complicating matters, citizens usually evaluate potential representatives in an information-rich environment, i.e., when campaigns are active and thus providing ideological cues.

To assess these possibilities and the robustness of citizens’ indifference to ideology, we introduced a series of ideological primes and information before voters chose in Study 1B. Specifically, we varied the extent of ideological information and priming with three treatments of differing impact and directness.

Our first two treatments were relatively indirect. First, before allowing them to choose between the politicians, we randomly asked 122 respondents whether they thought Politician A (randomly assigned to be either the “ideologically correct” or “ideologically incorrect” politician) would agree or disagree with 5 other issue statements (randomly chosen from the 22 binary response issue questions not displayed as part of Politician A’s platform). This task was meant to lead respondents to think more carefully about how issues fit together and thus the politicians’ implied ideologies. Second, as discussed in the above subsection, we randomly asked 132 respondents where they thought the two politicians stood on a 7-point ideological scale, directly asking them to consider politicians’ ideology before voting.

Finally, to put the external validity of Study 1B to an even tougher test, our final and most direct treatment actually showed 127 respondents the ideal point estimates for the two politicians, a more

Figure 4: Priming Ideology and Providing Ideological Information Fail to Increase Demand for Ideological Representation

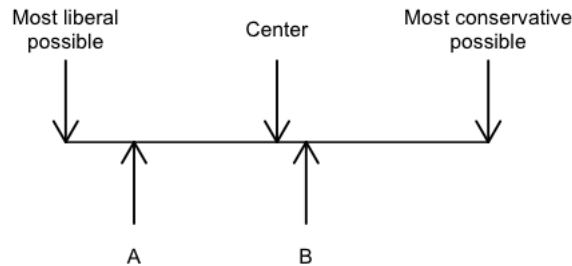


direct ideological treatment than even election campaigns typically deliver. In addition to the four positions for each politician, we showed respondents an image featuring an ideological dimension bounded by “liberal” on the left, “conservative” on the right, and arrows indicating the estimated ideal points for Politicians A and B. (See Figure 5 for an example.) We told respondents that, “based on these positions, scholars believe these two candidates are at about the positions shown on a liberal-conservative spectrum” before asking them to choose between the two.⁸ This treatment should leave no doubt about the ideological aspect of the choice respondents faced. Indeed, studies that adopt the ideological perspective increasingly capture citizens’ views by asking them to place themselves and politicians on scales like this (Ahler, Citrin and Lenz N.d.; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014); thus, we suspected that citizens might be able to make sense of these candidates with this aid.

⁸To avoid demand effects, we did not include respondents’ estimated latent ideal points on these figures.

Figure 5: Example of “Ideology Shown” Condition

Based on these positions, scholars believe these two candidates are at about the positions shown below on a liberal-conservative spectrum:



In this example, Candidate B is the respondent’s “ideologically correct” candidate who nevertheless disagrees with the respondent on all four issues, while Candidate A is the respondent’s “ideologically incorrect” candidate who agrees with the respondent on all four issues.

None of these interventions led citizens to evaluate potential representatives ideologically. As Figure 2 shows, compared to the baseline condition, respondents were no more likely to choose the “ideologically correct” politician when primed to think about where one politician likely stands on other issues. Nor were they more likely to choose the “ideologically correct” politician when asked about the politicians’ likely ideological predispositions. Across all three of these conditions—priming issue packages, priming ideology, and the baseline—a clear minority of respondents choose the ideologically correct candidate over the ideologically distant candidate who agrees with them on all four issues. As such, Study 2 provides no evidence that citizens think about representation ideologically when it is made salient or when ideological information is readily available.

In summary, Studies 1 and 2 are consistent with the view that Americans have real views specific to individual issues that they want to see represented and do not evaluate representation on an ideological basis. As we will elaborate in the remaining studies, if citizens evaluate representation on the basis of individual issues instead of ideology, we may need to re-examine why they are dissatisfied with the representation they receive today and whether electing moderates would address their grievances. Since citizens tend to claim ideological moderation (Fiorina and Abrams 2009) and, indeed, tend to appear ideologically moderate when we scale their responses to individual

policy questions (Bafumi and Herron 2010),⁹ scholars of representation in the ideological tradition argue that moderation by parties and candidates would remedy the “disconnect” citizens feel. But if citizens evaluate the representation they receive not according to ideological fit but instead according to whether politicians advocate for the individual policy positions they favor, reducing elite polarization may not improve representation in many citizens’ eyes, despite citizens’ own lack of polarization – just as electing Legislator B in Table 1 would not improve representation for these citizens.

Study 3: Do Citizens Reliably Support Moderate Policies?

“Within the range of alternatives permitted by the mass public, elites in the district further constrain the congressman by not tolerating some alternatives that were tolerated by the mass.”

– (Kingdon 1989, p., 291)

A second way elite polarization has been said to degrade representation is by encouraging politicians to take extreme positions within issue areas relative to voters’ moderate positions on issues (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Fiorina and Abrams 2009; Mann and Ornstein 2013). For example, if Democrats in Congress support raising taxes by 5% and Republicans support lowering them by 5%, this view would lead us to expect that nearly all citizens would like their representatives to support a tax rate somewhere in the middle of these extremes. Consistent with this idea scholars like Ellis and Stimson (2012) speak of a large group of centrist voters who tend to see the policies advanced by leftist parties as “more leftist than it prefers” and the policies advanced by rightist parties as too rightist (p. 47-8).

But the existence of elite polarization has more ambiguous implications than many realize for elites’ and voters’ preferences on issues. Table 5 illustrates why. Suppose policy options on four issues can be arrayed from left to right on a 7-point scale, with Democrats and Republicans

⁹Also see Figure 3 which shows that this tendency appears in this data.

consistently supporting policies at 3 and 5, respectively. Moreover, suppose that voters’ “average positions” or “ideology” is at 4, in the center. When everyone’s views are boiled down to an ideological dimension, Democrats and Republicans may appear polarized (at 3 and 5, respectively) and all voters in between them (at 4). However, observing voters’ ideal policies within each area may reveal that politicians are much closer to the center of public opinion on each issue than at first glance. The problem is that individual voters in the example do not disagree with elites in a consistent way across different policies, leaving them appearing ‘similarly conflicted’ at the middle of one dimension despite their dramatic differences with each other relative to elites’ small disagreements. Only if we assume that individuals’ policy views are error-laden views into a moderate ideology can we dismiss the possibility Table 5 raises, but Studies 1 and 2 suggest it cannot be dismissed.

Table 5: Elite Polarization Does Not Imply Politicians’ Ideal Policies Are More Extreme Than Voters’

	Ideal Policy on 1 to 7 Scale				Democratic Legislator	Republican Legislator
	Voter 1	Voter 2	Voter 3	Voter 4		
Issue 1	1	3	5	7	3	5
Issue 2	7	5	3	1	3	5
Issue 3	5	7	1	3	3	5
Issue 4	3	1	7	5	3	5
“Ideology”	4	4	4	4	3	5

Remarkably little existing data speaks to the extent of voters’ support for moderate policies within policy areas; scholars typically infer that citizens have moderate views on issues because they have moderate scores on ideological scales. But, as we have shown, there is far more heterogeneity among ‘moderate’ citizens than this inference requires (see also Broockman 2015).

Issue-specific measures are thus necessary to understand how moderate or extreme citizens’ preferences are within issue areas; we cannot impute citizens’ policy preferences from their ideological scores. However, political surveys typically ask citizens to pick between Democratic and Republican policy proposals, without options somewhere in the middle or to the far left or right. Some psychometric scales ask citizens to define their own preferences, but typically in a vague

manner that makes it difficult to compare their preferences to their representatives' positions. Except for a small number of items on the ANES, it is difficult to find survey data that give citizens a choice between multiple concrete options within a given policy domain, including a moderate policy option.

We designed such items across a dozen policy domains and administered them to citizens in Studies 3 and 4, dramatically expanding the number of policy domains where citizens' moderation has been directly measured. These studies consider what citizens say they want government to do on individual issues to reexamine the “disconnect” between politicians and citizens.

Data

To explore congruence between politicians and citizens on individual issues, we asked respondents for their positions on 13 issues. These 13 issue questions are notably different from those on most surveys. Most issue questions on national surveys are like those we used in Studies 1 and 2: they are binary-choice and ask whether citizens prefer the typical Republican or Democratic position. It is difficult to know from such questions how many citizens would prefer more moderate or more extreme courses of actions than those offered by either party. For example, if a citizen opposes President Barack Obama's health care plan, does this mean the citizen would prefer a policy somewhere in the middle, would be satisfied with the Republicans' proposals, or perhaps even a policy more conservative than this? We cannot tell, and thus it is difficult to assess how well Democrats, Republicans, or alternatives would represent this person on this issue on the basis of their response to this binary-choice question alone.

In order to capture citizens' issue preferences with greater nuance, our 13 issue questions thus provided seven response options ranging from very liberal statements to very conservative statements (see the appendix for all 7-point scales, as well as all binary-choice issue questions from Studies 1 and 2). To craft these scales, a team of research assistants catalogued the positions of all senators from the 113th Congress on these 13 issues. We measured elite positions in the interest

of making scale points “3” and “5” correspond with mainstream Democratic and Republican elite positions. We then composed a point “4” occupying centrist ground for each of the 13 issues.¹⁰

In Study 3A, we rely on survey data using these scales to explore whether citizens would reliably prefer policies more moderate than either party, tend to support either party’s positions, or even prefer policies that are more extreme. We find that a sizable proportion of individuals support policies as or more extreme than either party’s typical position and that these responses do not represent erroneous measurement. In Study 3B, we then demonstrate that citizens by and large do not prefer moderates to their current copartisan representatives.

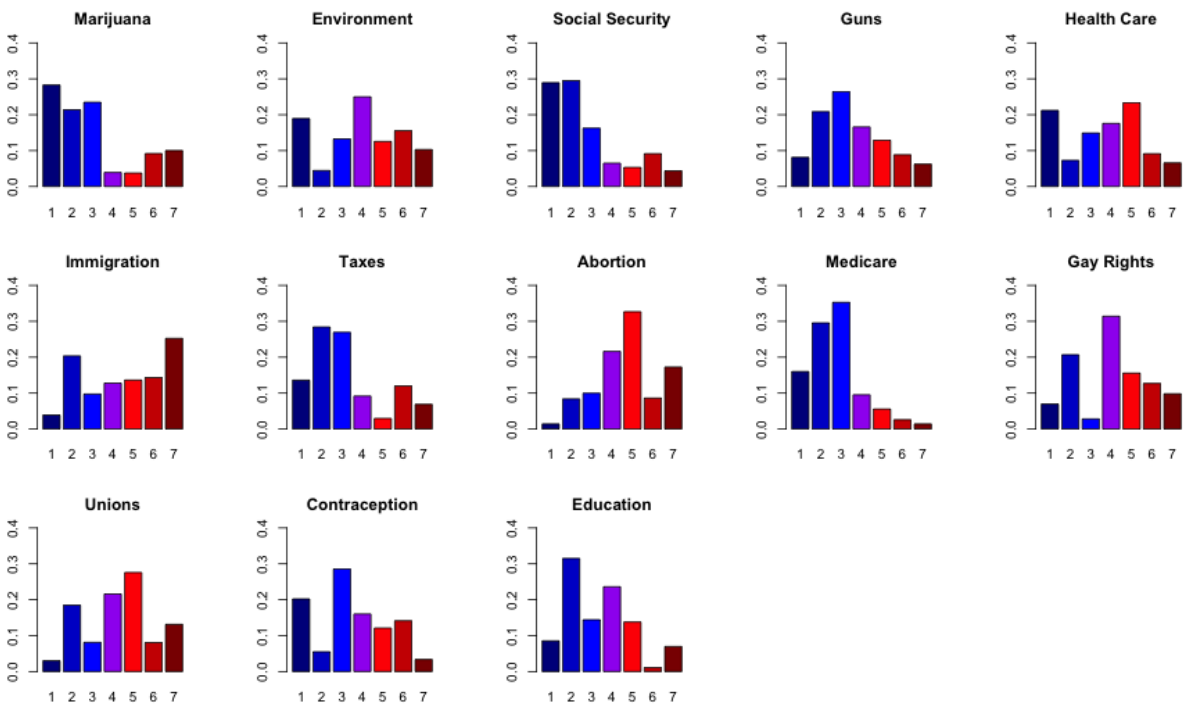
Study 3A: The Centrist Public? The Prevalence of Immoderate Policy Preferences

We first explore the demand for politicians with moderate policy positions by exploring demand for moderate policies via responses to the 7-point policy questions. These responses are shown in Figure 6. First, consider which responses citizens most commonly give. On only two of the 13 issues—environmental/energy policy and gay rights—is the centrist response (scale point 4) citizens’ modal preference. This is the same as the number of issues on which the modal preference is one of the outside-the-mainstream policies. On marijuana, a modal 26.7% of respondents expressed a preference for the complete legalization of cannabis, a very liberal position nearly no national political elites adopt. By contrast, on immigration, a modal 24.4% expressed a preference for a very conservative position: the immediate roundup and deportation of all undocumented immigrants and an outright moratorium on all immigration until the border is proven secure. On these

¹⁰Coding of senators’ positions took place in three stages. First, we coded positions for roughly a quarter of the Senate according to an early version of the 7-point scales shown in the appendix. RAs (two per senator) independently researched the senators’ public statements (through press releases, website content, and local media coverage) on each of the 13 issues and recorded the scale point closest to each senator’s apparent position on each issue with available information. We then adjusted the scales so that they captured the major facets of elite discourse and debate on each of these issues and so that scale points “3” and “5” would represent the mainstream party positions, “2” and “6” would represent the extreme positions in the Senate, and “1” and “7” would stand outside the political mainstream. We then repeated the coding process for all senators, including the original subset.

two issues, then, there appears to be greater demand for immoderate policies than centrist ones, albeit in discrepant ideological directions.

Figure 6: The full range of public opinion on 13 issues.

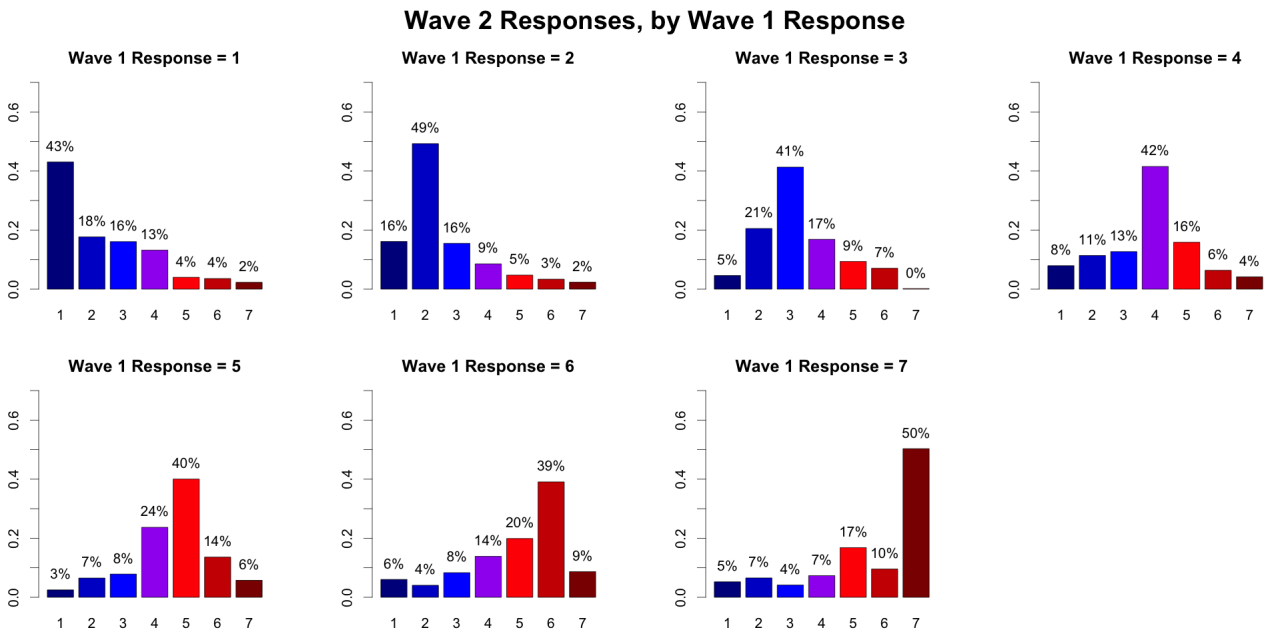


More generally, we observe widespread support for the policies championed by the parties-in-government on many issues (or positions even more extreme). For example, the Democratic Party appears to represent citizens’ preferences on issues of social welfare and economic fairness: on Medicare, Social Security, and taxes, a majority of respondents placed themselves at scale points 2 or 3, implying that the party’s delegation to Congress represents citizens well on these issues. By contrast, the Republican Party appears to represent the views of at least a clear plurality of citizens on other issues, namely abortion and the rules governing labor unions.

Should we believe citizens’ claims that they have these immoderate views on issues? There is no doubt some measurement error in citizens’ responses to policy questions; but is there enough

that we should disregard their answers to these questions entirely? The panel data we collected allows us to explore whether these views reflect mistaken measurement, as we can examine whether citizens take the same position again two months later. At the end of Wave 2, we asked respondents a random subset of the 7-point policy questions from Wave 1. Reassuringly, we find that these preferences on individual issues are relatively stable over time. As Figure 7 shows, citizens who express views outside the elite mainstream on an issue also tend to do so again two months later. Within issues, respondents are far more likely to select their Wave 1 response as their preference than any other option in Wave 2, and deviations tend to be proximate to that prior response. Further, immoderate opinions are at least as stable as more moderate opinions, if not more so. We thus find it difficult to chalk immoderate attitudes up to measurement error. (Study 4 considers this possibility in more detail.)

Figure 7: Intertemporal Stability Within Issues



Moreover, as Figure 8 shows, the correlations between Wave 1 and Wave 2 responses are considerably stronger within issue domains than across issue domains. If citizens merely answer survey questions by attempting to apply their overall ideology, we should not see this pattern. Instead,

we find evidence that these policy preferences are both genuine and unique to their issue domains, and thus not mere reflections of citizens' ideologies; there are clearly attitudes respondents rely on specific to each issue.

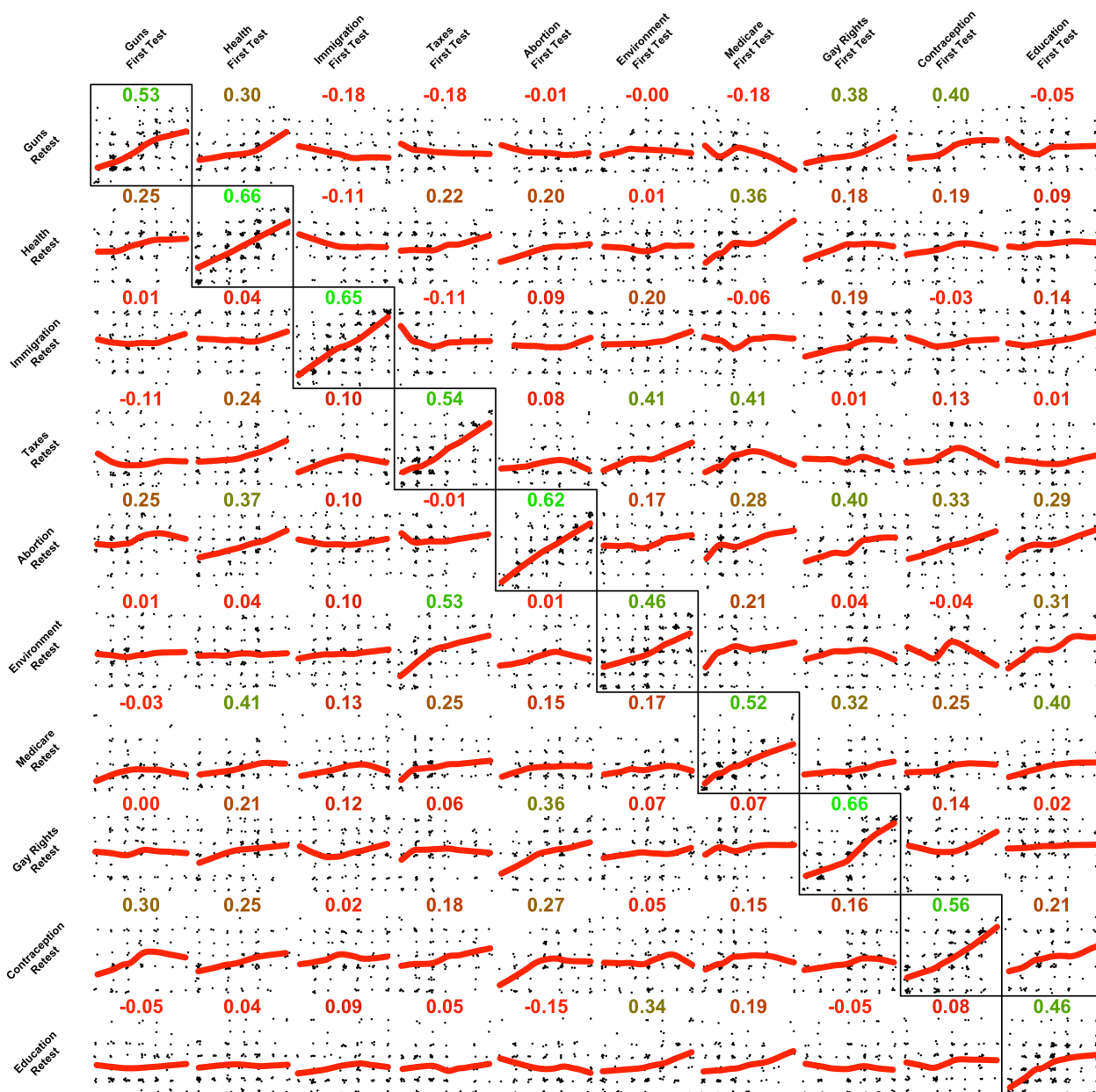
In summary, Study 3A suggests that characterizing citizens as moderate overstates the mass publics' desire for representatives with moderate issue positions. Citizens who appear moderate overall when their issue positions are aggregated into an ideological index often espouse positions on many individual issues that are consistent with typical party positions or even more extreme (e.g., Broockman 2015). These positions are stable over time, implying that they are genuine. Finally, and consistent with the ideological innocence perspective, these positions do not correlate well across issues. Not only do citizens appear to judge representation on the basis of individual issues, and not their moderate ideologies, but their views on these issues are not reliably moderate.

Study 3B: Would Citizens Prefer Moderates to Contemporary Party Politicians?

We have argued that the “disconnect” between citizens and representatives does not reflect a wholesale failure of politicians to take moderate positions on issues, as citizens want to see their issue views represented and appear to have many immoderate views on issues. Study 3A was consistent with this notion, as citizens explicitly register such preferences. Here we test another implication of our perspective – that even if candidates with moderate positions were on offer in American politics, most voters would still prefer their copartisan representatives.

In Study 3B, we showed respondents three hypothetical candidates for US House, a “pure Republican,” a “pure moderate,” and a “pure Democrat.” These candidates took positions on three distinct issues. We randomly selected which issues these were, but not the positions themselves: the “pure Democratic” politician consistently took the Democratic party-line position on all issues, the “3” statement on the corresponding 7-point policy scale. The “pure Republican” politician consistently took the Republican party-line position on all issues, or the “5” statement. Finally, the “pure moderate” politician consistently took the centrist position between the two parties, or

Figure 8: Intertemporal Stability Within Issues but not Across Issues



Notes: Each subgraph depicts responses on a first issue during the first survey wave on the x-axis and responses on a second issue a month later on the y-axis. Raw data is plotted with jitter given the categorical nature of the variables. Red lines depict the loess smoothed relationship between the responses. Polychoric correlations are shown above each graph. Issue names for the x- and y-axes of each graph are shown, respectively, along the top and left of the figure.

the “4” on statement. To avoid party effects, we labeled all three candidates with the respondent’s self-professed party label from the previous wave.¹¹

Table 6 shows an example of how these positions were assigned, and Figure 9 shows how the choice appeared to respondents.

Table 6: Example Matchup Shown to Respondents in Study 3B

	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3
Party	Same as Respondent	Same as Respondent	Same as Respondent
Issue 3	3	4	5
Issue 5	3	4	5
Issue 10	3	4	5

Would citizens reliably prefer politicians who take moderate positions over politicians who take the positions contemporary Democrats and Republicans take? These results of Study 3B imply that the public’s demand for centrists is weaker than many suggest. Just 32.5% of all respondents ($n = 513$) voted for the consistently centrist candidate. By contrast, the candidate who consistently took Democratic party-line positions won the most votes with 40.3%. The consistently Republican party-line candidate took 27.2%.

The results of Studies 3A and 3B raise questions about the idea that overwhelming majority of Americans would favor a representative with moderate positions over one with the issue positions typically taken by their party. To be clear, these results are consistent with the view that moderate politicians may perform better in elections under certain electoral rules. Some Americans also seem to prefer the positions moderate politicians take on the whole. But, the demand for representatives with moderate positions on issues is nowhere near universal.

Study 4: An Alternative “Disconnect”

“The definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power.” – Schattschneider (1960)

¹¹We randomly assigned non-leaning independents to see either all Democrats or all Republicans.

Figure 9: Study 3B as Shown to Respondents

Now, imagine choosing between these three candidates for US Congress described below:

Party Affiliation		
Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Republican	Republican	Republican

Issue 1: Education		
Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
The government should create a voucher program in all school districts, paying private school tuition for families so that they always have the choice to send their children to private schools.	The government should create private school voucher programs in school districts where regular public schools are failing so all families in such areas can send their children to a private school if they wish.	Private schools should be legal and retain tax exempt status, but government should play no active role in funding private education.

Issue 2: Abortion		
Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Abortion should only be legal if the life of the mother is in danger or in cases of rape and incest.	Abortions should be legal in the first two trimesters, though the government should not play any role in financially supporting abortions.	Abortions should be legal in the first two trimesters at least, and the government should require private insurers to cover abortions.

Issue 3: Unions		
Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Workers should be allowed to attempt to form unions with voluntary dues and membership. Unions should only be formed through secret ballots, and unionized workplaces must hold recertification elections regularly. Corporations should not be allowed to fire workers for starting them.	Workers should be allowed to attempt to form unions with voluntary dues and membership. Unions should only be formed through secret ballots. Corporations should not be allowed to fire workers for starting them.	Workers should be allowed to attempt to form unions that charge mandatory dues, by secret ballot. If a company's workers form a union, new employees may be compelled to join.

Please take a few moments to review the candidates' positions and think about the degree to which each candidate reflects your views.

If you had to choose, which candidate would you vote for?

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Candidate C

Our studies so far suggest an alternative to the standard view of the ‘disconnect’ in American politics. Figure 11 summarizes the traditional view of this disconnect and this alternative. In the traditional view, the parties misrepresent citizens because they reliably take positions that are too polarized across issues and too extreme on issues. However, Figure 6 implied a different disconnect, one between the range of policy options that characterize elite conflict and the range of policy options popular among citizens: on some issues both parties are too far to the left or too far to the right for most Americans’ tastes. Moreover, this revised view sees little role for ideological representation, as citizens themselves do not reliably line up in the same order across all issue areas and cannot be summarized in an ideological manner.

Figure 10: Citizens do not Overwhelmingly Choose the Centrist Candidate in Study 3B

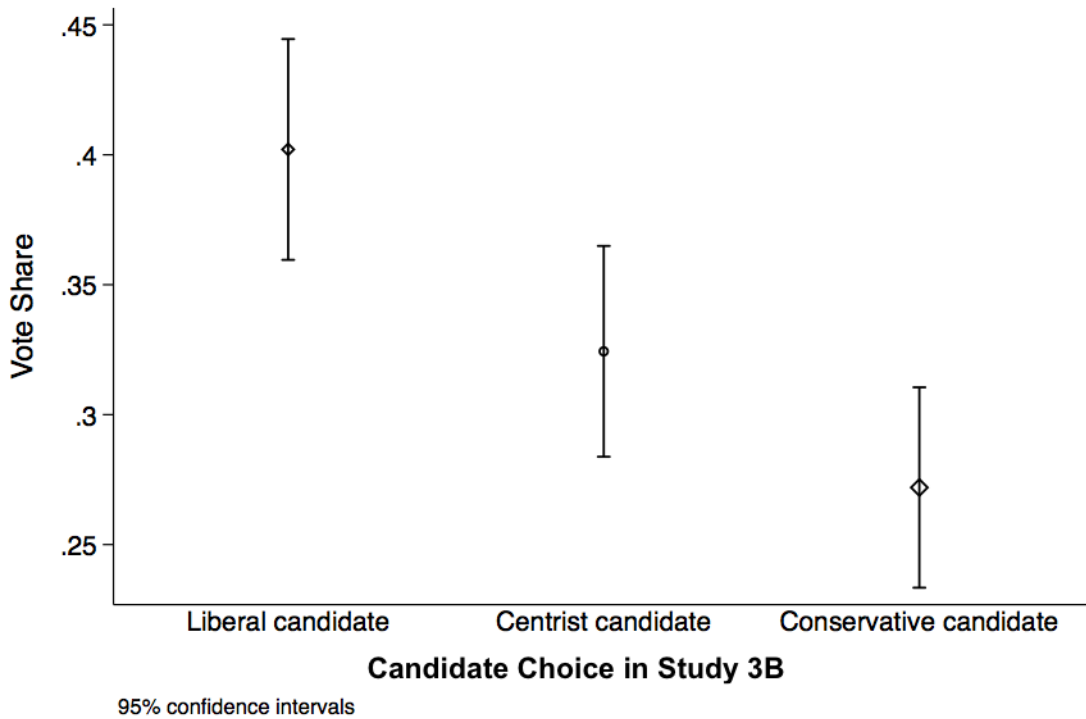


Figure 11: The Traditional “Disconnect” Versus a Revised “Disconnect”

	Traditional "Disconnect"	Revised "Disconnect"
Issue 1	D — A — B — C — R	D — A — R — B — C
Issue 2	D — A — B — C — R	B — A — D — C — R
Issue 3	D — A — B — C — R	C — D — R — A — B
Issue 4	D — A — B — C — R	B — C — A — D — R

Notes: Politicians shown as ‘D’ and ‘R,’ and voters shown as the remaining letters.

Our last study, Study 4, directly pits the traditional view against our revised view. In this study, we give voters a choice between two candidates, one who represents our view of voters' ideals, and one who represents the traditional view of voters' ideal.

We designed these candidates as follows. First, we designed our 'alternative' candidate to be as different from the traditional view as possible. Our candidate is a tailed politician taking the three least moderate positions each voter previously reported on the 7-point items in Wave 1. This politician is "immoderate," albeit in an idiosyncratic way consistent with the respondent. Under the view that citizens do not have immoderate views, these are the survey responses that the traditional view would suggest are the likeliest to represent 'mistakes.'

The other politician in these matchups, representing the traditional view of what most citizens would broadly like, consistently takes the centrist ("4") option on those same issues, and so is moderate on issues and ideologically.

Table ?? shows an example. If a citizen gave a series of issue responses like that shown in Table ??, she would be shown the candidate match-up in Table ??. (Figure 12 shows how this match-up appeared to respondents.)

Table 7: Example: Study 4 stimulus

(a) Example Wave 1 Issue Responses

Issue 1	2	Issue 7	4
Issue 2	4	Issue 8	5
Issue 3	5	Issue 9	1
Issue 4	7	Issue 10	3
Issue 5	3	Issue 11	5
Issue 6	3	Issue 12	3

(b) Example Wave 2 Match-Up

	Candidate 1	Candidate 2
Issue 1	2	4
Issue 4	7	4
Issue 9	1	4

The results of this study are the most decisive yet. When presented with a choice between a

Figure 12: Stimulus Shown to Respondents in Study 4

Now, imagine choosing between these two candidates for US Congress described below:

Candidate A	Candidate B
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social security benefits should be tied to the Chained Consumer Price Index, meaning that benefits would rise slower with time than they currently do.• Immigration of highly skilled individuals should greatly increase, and immigration among those without such skills should be limited in time and/or magnitude, e.g., through a guest worker program.• Maintain current levels of federal spending and federal income taxes on the rich, middle class, and poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social security benefits should be increased.• Further immigration to the United States should be banned until the border is fully secured, and all illegal immigrants currently in the US should be deported immediately.• Move to a completely flat income tax system where all individuals pay the same percentage of their income in taxes, accomplished by decreasing government services.

Please take a moment to review the candidates' positions and think about the degree to which each candidate reflects your views.

If you had to choose, which candidate would you vote for?

- Candidate A
 Candidate B

politician who espouses their own least moderate positions and a politician who is centrist on those same issues, 74.6% of respondents ($n = 513$) select the politician who mirrors their previously reported immoderate issue views ($p < 0.001$, 95% CI: [68.6%, 80.7%]). This result is consistent with our suggestion that citizens do not reliably clamor for moderates on every issue. Rather, consistent with findings from the previous studies, citizens appear to desire politicians who represent their own unique bundle of genuinely held positions, including many that are not moderate.¹²

¹²The ideological implications of the “immoderate” politician appears not to influence respondents’ choices; we find no difference in respondents’ willingness to support the extreme politician across the extremity of this politician. See OA subsection D.1.

Discussion: A New Perspective on the Representational “Disconnect”

The essence of polarization is the lack of elected officials who have a mix of liberal and conservative positions. Most voters do, and a popular perspective laments this contrast as a clear failure of representation (e.g., Bafumi and Herron 2010; Fiorina and Abrams 2009). This paper raised new questions about two common forms of this lament.

First, according to a common perspective, this contrast implies that the distribution of polarized politicians' *ideological* positions fails to mirror the public's generally moderate ideological preferences in a way that the public would like to see resolved. However, we found that the public appears largely indifferent to ideological representation and thus does not seem to have a strong desire for ideologically moderate politicians per se, despite most citizens appearing ideologically moderate. Specifically, in Study 1 we found that citizens tend to prefer politicians who represent their distinct issue positions rather than their ideological predispositions. In Study 2 we found that this pattern holds even when we encourage citizens to consider politicians ideologically in a number of ways—including directly showing citizens politicians' ideological locations. These studies suggest that increasing politicians' congruence with citizens' ideological orientations will do little to improve representation in citizens' eyes in and of itself. Rather, citizens appear to evaluate representation on the basis of individual issues.

It is on individual issues where a second group of scholars see polarization as implying a disconnect between politicians and voters. These scholars characterize politicians' positions on individual issues as extreme and citizens' views on individual issues as moderate (Ellis and Stimson 2012; Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Fiorina and Abrams 2009). However, surprisingly little data has evaluated the extent of citizens' support for more moderate policies within areas, rather than assuming that these positions can be inferred from citizens' ideologies. In Study 3, we found that citizens' opinions on the issues do not seem reliably more moderate than the parties. Study 4

also indicated that citizens' demand for politicians who represent these immoderate issue views appears greater than their desire for politicians with centrist positions. Finally, even when given the chance, we find that a majority of citizens do not prefer the representation a centrist politician would provide over the representation typically offered by one of the contemporary parties.

Our findings do not imply the absence of a representational disconnect but rather prompt us to revisit its nature. Studies 3 and 4 suggest that citizens do not overwhelmingly want politicians who support moderate policies to represent them, contrary to what scholars and political observers suggest. Instead, what many scholars characterize as centrism actually appears to reflect citizens who have a *mixed* set of positions. However, because each citizen prefers a different mix of policies, there is no one mix a politician could adopt that would broadly satisfy citizens. Thus, it is natural that many citizens appear frustrated with the choices they have in American elections; yet, given the relatively idiosyncratic nature of citizens' own preference bundles, it is also unclear that there is dramatic room for improvement.

This revised understanding of the disconnect has important implications for efforts to improve representation. Reforms attempting to elect moderates by giving citizens a stronger voice are increasingly under consideration, predicated on the view that citizens would broadly prefer to be represented by moderates if they had the chance. But, surprising in light of this view, scholars who have studied reforms that empower voters like open primaries, non-partisan redistricting, and public funding of primary elections have generally found that these reforms fail to help moderate politicians (Ahler, Citrin and Lenz N.d.; Bullock and Clinton 2011; Kousser, Phillips and Shor 2013; Hall 2014; McGhee et al. 2013).¹³ Our argument may help make sense of why. Reforms trying to boost moderate candidates' electoral fortunes by magnifying the "voice of the people" may not have boosted moderate candidates' electoral fortunes as much as many have expected because

¹³Some empirical work finds that citizens tend to prefer moderate candidates in elections (Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan 2002; Hall 2015, e.g.), but this work is by no means alone (e.g., Adams et al. 2013; Hopkins 2014; Stone and Simas 2010) For example, Hopkins (2014) finds that "moderates are in fact less electorally secure than their more ideologically extreme congressional colleagues, and their rate of reelection has declined over time."

the voice of the people does not appear to be singing in unison in support of ideologically moderate politicians or politicians with moderate positions on issues. Rather, underneath the public's ostensible centrism is a multiplicity of ideologically mixed and often immoderate views on issues that more strongly inform citizens' view of the political world.

This alternative picture points to inherent difficulties in achieving the robust collective representation American political thought has long valued. John Adams hoped American legislators would look like “in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large.” If nearly all Americans wanted politicians to take a clear set of moderate positions on issues or to position themselves as moderates in an ideological sense, this ideal would be relatively straightforward to achieve. But we have suggested a different portrait of the “disconnect” between elites and citizens in American politics than scholars and observers typically paint. Contrary to the conventional wisdom rooted in the ideological perspective, most citizens do not seem to wish the Senate were composed of 100 Olympia Snowes and Max Baucuses, the noted Senate moderates. But this does not mean that Americans are satisfied with the politicians who represent them either. Rather, because each citizen's pattern of views across issues appears unique, each citizen is likely to be “disconnected” from the positions their representatives take in his or her own way, a situation which the election of more moderates—or more of any other one particular kind of politician—could not easily resolve (Plott 1967).

There are certainly many other political ills that polarization may cause or exacerbate. Decreasing agreement between parties may create gridlock (Krehbiel 1998) and incentives to tarnish the other party's reputation may make it even more difficult for new laws to be passed (Lee 2009). Our data says little about these potential consequences. However, our analysis does underscore that the implications of polarization for representation are not always as obvious as they may seem. The precise ways in which polarization degrades representation – not only its antecedents – deserve more careful scrutiny than many realize.

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Appendix

Issue Questions and Policy Scales

Binary-Choice Issue Questions

We asked respondents to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with each of the following items in Wave 1. (We did this across many screens, with different tasks in between screens, to prevent respondent fatigue.) In Wave 2, we presented either these statements (or crafted versions, for purposes of making sense as politician statements) or their negations to make the politician profiles.

- I support free trade and oppose special taxes on the import of non-American-made goods.
- There should be strong restrictions on the purchase and possession of guns.
- Implement a universal healthcare program to guarantee coverage to all Americans, regardless of income.
- Laws covering the sale of firearms should be made less strict than they are.
- The US should immediately act to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons development facilities.
- Grant legal status to all illegal immigrants who have held jobs and paid taxes for at least 3 years, and not been convicted of any felony crimes.
- Increase taxes for those making over \$250,000 per year.
- Regulate greenhouse gas emissions by instituting a carbon tax or cap and trade system.
- Allow doctors to prescribe marijuana to patients.
- Require minors to obtain parental consent to receive an abortion.
- The government should provide parents with vouchers to send their children to any school they choose, be it private, public, or religious.
- Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry.
- Legalize the purchase and possession of small amounts of marijuana.
- The US should contribute more funding and troops to UN peacekeeping missions.
- The government should not provide any funding to the arts.
- Allow illegal immigrants brought to the US as children to apply for citizenship.
- Give preference to racial minorities in employment and college admissions in order to correct for past discrimination.

- Let employers and insurers refuse to cover birth control and other health services that violate their religious beliefs.
- Allow more offshore oil drilling.
- By law, abortion should never be permitted.
- I support the death penalty in my state.
- Government spending can stimulate economic growth.
- The federal government should subsidize student loans for low income students.
- The minimum wage employers must pay their workers should be increased.
- The federal government should try to reduce the income differences between rich and poor Americans.
- This country would be better off if we just stayed home and did not concern ourselves with problems in other parts of the world.
- The federal government should do more about protecting the environment and natural resources.

7-Point Policy Scales

We presented respondents with these scales in Wave 1. Respondents randomly saw the scales ordered either as shown below (1 is most liberal, 7 is most conservative) or in the reverse order to minimize order effects while preserving ordinal scale.

- Marijuana
 1. The federal government should legalize marijuana for all uses.
 2. The federal government should allow states to individually determine whether to legalize marijuana for both medical and recreational uses.
 3. The federal government should allow states to individually determine whether to legalize marijuana for medical uses, but prohibit recreational use of marijuana.
 4. The federal government should keep marijuana illegal for all purposes, but decriminalize its use (decrease the severity of punishments).
 5. The federal government should keep marijuana illegal for all purposes and/or keep punishments at their current levels.
 6. The federal government should impose harsher penalties on those who produce, use or distribute marijuana with measures including lengthy prison terms and mandatory minimum sentences.

7. The federal government should put people in jail for life if they are convicted of using or distributing marijuana.
- Energy/Environment
 1. The government should institute a carbon tax or cap and trade system that would significantly decrease US carbon emissions over the next several decades.
 2. The government should institute a carbon tax or cap and trade system that would keep US carbon emissions at or just below their current levels.
 3. The government should discourage the use of energy sources that contribute most heavily to global warming (e.g., coal) and subsidize the use and development of solar, wind, and nuclear energy. However, there should be no general cap on or market for carbon emissions overall.
 4. The government should enact regulations encouraging energy efficiency and subsidize the use and development of solar, wind, and nuclear energy.
 5. The government should encourage energy efficiency but not subsidize the development of 'green' energy.
 6. The government should allow for further oil drilling offshore and/or on federal lands, prioritizing American energy independence and low prices over environmental concerns.
 7. The government should both allow AND subsidize increased domestic production of fossil fuels (i.e., coal, oil, and gas).
 - Social Security
 1. The government should increase social security benefits AND provide new, direct non-cash benefits to seniors such as food aid and in-home care.
 2. Social security benefits should be increased.
 3. Social security benefits should remain at their current levels.
 4. Social security benefits should be tied to the Chained Consumer Price Index, meaning that benefits would rise slower with time than they currently do.
 5. Federal spending on social security should decrease, either by raising the retirement age or decreasing cash benefits.
 6. Social security should be mostly or wholly privatized, allowing taxpayers to invest their social security savings as they see fit.
 7. Social security should be abolished entirely or made semi-voluntary, with the government potentially providing incentives for retirement saving but not managing individuals' retirement funds.
 - Gun Control

1. Sales of firearms of any kind should be completely banned in the United States.
 2. Weapons with high-capacity magazines of all kinds should be banned in addition to fully automatic weapons, and those wishing to buy other kinds of guns should always have to pass a background check. Ammunition should be heavily regulated, with certain types (e.g., armor-piercing bullets) banned outright. Additionally, it should be illegal for civilians to carry concealed guns in public.
 3. Weapons with high-capacity magazines of all kinds should be banned in addition to fully automatic weapons, and those wishing to buy other kinds of guns should always have to pass a background check. Ammunition should also be heavily regulated, with certain types (e.g., armor-piercing bullets) banned outright.
 4. Fully automatic guns like high-powered machine guns should be extremely difficult or illegal for civilians to purchase. Those wishing to buy other kinds of guns should always have to pass a background check, except when buying guns from friends and family.
 5. Fully automatic guns like high-powered machine guns should be extremely difficult for civilians to purchase. Other firearms should be free to be bought and sold at gun shows and in other private transactions without restrictions.
 6. All Americans should be allowed to buy any kind of gun they want, including automatic guns. No background checks or licenses should be required.
 7. Certain Americans who are not in law enforcement (e.g., teachers and school staff) should be **REQUIRED** to own a gun to protect public safety.
- Health Care
 1. The United States should move to a system like Great Britain's, where the government employs doctors instead of private companies and all Americans are entitled to visit government doctors in government hospitals free of charge.
 2. The government should expand Medicare to cover all Americans, directly providing insurance coverage for all Americans free of charge.
 3. The government should guarantee full private health insurance coverage to all Americans, regardless of their age or income.
 4. The government should help pay for all health care for vulnerable populations like the elderly, children, and those with low incomes. Other Americans should only receive assistance in paying for catastrophic illnesses.
 5. The government should help pay for some health coverage for vulnerable populations like the elderly and those with very low incomes, including prescription drugs. However, other individuals should not receive government assistance. The government should primarily pursue market reforms (e.g., tort reform, increasing tax deductions, allowing citizens to buy across state lines) to make insurance more affordable.

6. The government should only help pay for emergency medical care among the elderly and those with very low incomes. Other individuals and any routine care should not be covered. Instead, the government should pursue market reforms to make insurance more affordable.
7. The government should spend no money on health care for individuals. Those who cannot afford health care should turn to their families and private charity for help.

- Immigration

1. The United States should have open borders and allow further immigration on an unlimited basis.
2. Legal immigration to the United States should greatly increase among all immigrant groups, regardless of their skills. Immigrants already in the United States should be put on the path to citizenship.
3. Immigration of highly skilled individuals should greatly increase. Immigration by those without such skills should continue at its current pace, although this immigration should be legalized.
4. Immigration of highly skilled individuals should greatly increase, and immigration among those without such skills should be limited in time and/or magnitude, e.g., through a guest worker program.
5. The United States should admit more highly skilled immigrants and secure the border with increased physical barriers to stem the flow of other immigrants.
6. Only a small number of highly skilled immigrants should be allowed into the United States until the border is fully secured, and all illegal immigrants currently in the US should be deported.
7. Further immigration to the United States should be banned until the border is fully secured, and all illegal immigrants currently in the US should be deported immediately.

- Federal Taxes

1. Establish a maximum annual income, with all income over \$1,000,000 per year taxed at a rate of 100%. Decrease federal taxes on the poor and provide more services benefiting the middle class and poor.
2. Increase federal income taxes on those making over \$250,000 per year to pre-1990s levels (over 5% above current rates). Use the savings to significantly lower taxes and provide more services to those making less and to invest in infrastructure projects.
3. Increase federal income taxes on those making over \$250,000 per year to 1990s rates (5% above current rates). Use the savings to lower taxes and provide more services to those making less while also paying down the national debt.
4. Maintain current levels of federal spending and federal income taxes on the rich, middle class, and poor.

5. Decrease all individuals' income tax rates, especially high earners who pay the most in taxes now, accomplished by decreasing government services.
 6. Move to a completely flat income tax system where all individuals pay the same percentage of their income in taxes, accomplished by decreasing government services.
 7. Move to a flat consumption tax where all individuals pay the same percentage of their purchases in taxes, banning the income tax, even if this means the poor pay more in taxes than the rich. Significantly decrease government services in the process.
- Abortion
 1. Abortions should always be legal, and the government should pay for all abortions.
 2. Abortions should always be legal, and the government should help women pay for abortions when they cannot afford them.
 3. Abortions should be legal in the first two trimesters at least, and the government should require private insurers to cover abortions.
 4. Abortions should be legal in the first two trimesters, though the government should not play any role in financially supporting abortions.
 5. Abortion should only be legal if the life of the mother is in danger or in cases of rape and incest.
 6. Abortion should only be legal if the life of the mother is in danger.
 7. Abortion should always be illegal.
 - Medicare
 1. Replace Medicare with government-run hospitals and clinics for the elderly that directly employ doctors, nurses, and surgeons.
 2. Increase spending on Medicare, allowing the program to provide even more benefits than it does today, although retain its current structure.
 3. Maintain the current annual growth in Medicare spending and all other aspects of the program in their current form.
 4. Reduce the rate of growth in Medicare funding over time, though continue to leave the program as structured.
 5. Reduce the rate of growth in Medicare funding over time and transition towards a voucher system that helps seniors to buy private insurance instead of directly covering health costs.
 6. Significantly reduce funding for Medicare so that it helps seniors only with catastrophic health costs like expensive surgeries, leaving other costs to be paid for by their savings, their families, and private charities.
 7. The government should not assist the elderly in paying for any health expenses.

- Gay Rights

1. Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry and adopt children; the government should prosecute companies for firing individuals because they are lesbian or gay; the government should require corporations to offer the same benefits to partners of gay and lesbian employees as they do to straight employees' partners; and, government should require that all schools teach children about gay and lesbian relationships.
2. Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry and adopt children; the government should prosecute companies for firing individuals because they are lesbian or gay; and, the government should require corporations to offer the same benefits to partners of gay and lesbian employees as they do to straight employees' partners.
3. Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry and adopt children; and, the government should prosecute companies for firing individuals because they are lesbian or gay.
4. Same-sex couples should be allowed to marry each other and adopt children.
5. Same-sex marriage should not be legal, although the government should not regulate homosexual conduct or ban gays and lesbians from adopting children.
6. Gay sex should be permitted, but same-sex marriage should be illegal and known gays and lesbians should not be allowed to adopt children.
7. Gay sex should be illegal and punishable by imprisonment, similar to the penalties for committing incest and bestiality.

- Unions

1. The government should periodically administer union elections in all workplaces where a union has not been formed.
2. The government should automatically recognize unions in instances when over 50% of a workplace's employees indicate interest in forming a union.
3. Workers should be allowed to attempt to form unions that charge mandatory dues, by secret ballot. If a company's workers form a union, new employees may be compelled to join.
4. Workers should be allowed to attempt to form unions with voluntary dues and membership. Unions should only be formed through secret ballots. Corporations should not be allowed to fire workers for starting them.
5. Workers should be allowed to attempt to form unions with voluntary dues and membership. Unions should only be formed through secret ballots, and unionized workplaces must hold recertification elections regularly. Corporations should not be allowed to fire workers for starting them.
6. Workers should be allowed to attempt to form unions with voluntary dues, but corporations should have the right to fire workers for attempting to start such unions and/or the power of the National Labor Relations Board to issue directives to unionized companies should be significantly curtailed.

7. Workers should not be allowed to form unions, just as corporations are not allowed to form cartels.
- Birth Control
 1. The government should help pay for birth control pills for all women AND other forms of contraceptives for women who cannot afford them.
 2. The sale of birth control pills should be allowed. Pharmacists should be required to sell them and the government should cover their cost.
 3. The sale of birth control pills should be allowed. Pharmacists should be required to sell them and insurance companies should be forced to cover their cost.
 4. The sale of birth control pills should be allowed and pharmacists should not be allowed to refuse selling birth control pills. However, employers and insurance companies may decline to cover birth control.
 5. The sale of birth control pills should be allowed to people of all ages. However, insurance companies, pharmacists, and employers should be allowed to refuse selling or covering birth control.
 6. The sale of birth control pills should be allowed, but only to women over 18 years of age. Insurance companies, pharmacists, and employers should be allowed to refuse selling or covering birth control.
 7. Birth control pills should be banned.
 - Public Funding for Private Education
 1. All children should attend public schools. Private schools perpetuate economic inequality and should be banned.
 2. Private schools should be legal but the government should play no role in funding private education – for example, private schools should not be exempt from taxes.
 3. Private schools should be legal and retain tax exempt status, but government should play no active role in funding private education.
 4. The government should create private school voucher programs in school districts where regular public schools are failing so all families in such areas can send their children to a private school if they wish.
 5. The government should create a voucher program in all school districts, paying private school tuition for families so that they always have the choice to send their children to private schools.
 6. The education system should be fully privatized, although the government should still provide support for private school tuition.
 7. The education system should be fully privatized, with government playing no role in paying for families' education expenses. However, private school tuition should be tax deductible.

Online Appendix

.1 Introduction and Study 1

.1.1 Sample Demographics

Table SI-1 compares the demographics of the SSI sample used in this study to a probability sample of U.S. citizens (the 2012 American National Election Study [ANES]) as well as to Census data.

Table 8: Raw and Unweighted SSI Sample Compared to ANES and Census Data

	SSI Sample (January 2013) quota	Weighted SSI Sample (January 2013) quota w/ survey weights	ANES (2012) probability	Weighted ANES (2012) weighted prob.	U.S. Census (2010) population
Age					
18-24	5.2%	7.3%	0.6%	1.4%	9.2%
25-34	21.0%	19.6%	3.9%	9.4%	17.5%
35-49	26.6%	26.9%	16.6%	27.3%	27.2%
50-64	30.7%	26.6%	49.1%	40.3%	17.9%
65+	16.5%	19.6%	30.0%	21.6%	17.2%
Gender					
Male	47.6%	55.6%	61.2%	57.7%	49.1%
Female	52.4%	44.4%	38.8%	42.4%	50.9%
Race/Ethnicity					
Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian	41.6%	59.7%	83.3%	83.0%	63.7%
Black/African-American	30.5%	13.9%	4.9%	4.9%	12.2%
Asian/PI	11.7%	4.9%	1.0%	2.0%	4.8%
Hispanic/Latino	13.2%	17.3%	4.6%	4.0%	16.4%
Native American	1.8%	0.3%	0.9%	0.7%	1.1%
Other	1.4%	3.9%	5.3%	5.4%	6.2%
Education					
Less than HS degree	1.2%	3.8%	0.5%	2.6%	8.9%
High school/GED	18.6%	37.2%	7.8%	9.9%	31.0%
Some college/2-year degree	39.8%	25.2%	33.2%	33.7%	28.0%
4-year college degree	25.1%	22.7%	31.3%	29.6%	18.0%
Graduate/professional degree	15.3%	11.0%	27.2%	24.3%	9.3%
Party Identification					
Democratic (inc. leaners)	55.3%	47.3%	46.9%	49.0%	
Republican (inc. leaners)	27.4%	39.9%	41.9%	39.0%	
No party preference/Other	17.3%	12.8%	11.3%	11.9%	
Ideology					
Liberal (inc. leaners)	34.4%	25.2%	39.5%	38.6%	
Moderate	38.8%	40.3%	15.5%	18.9%	
Conservative (inc. leaners)	26.8%	34.5%	45.0%	42.3%	

.2 Study 2

.2.1 Study 2A: No Order Effects for Vote Choice and Spatial Perception Items

In Study 2A we find that participants' ideological perceptions of the hypothetical politicians correlate positively and significantly with the actual estimated ideal points for these hypothetical politicians. We further find that this trend holds when we fold both measures, implying that citizens do have some sense of how positions fit together in terms of elite ideology. However, we asked some participants for their ideological perceptions of these politicians before they voted while we asked others to do so after. Here, we show that there are no significant differences in the groups' predictive abilities based on whether they voted first or reported perceptions first.

In particular, if there was an order effect, we would expect to see a significant coefficient associated with the interaction between question order and estimated ideal point when we regress ideological perceptions on these two variables plus their interaction. As the table below shows, we fail to observe such a coefficient, either in the analysis of perceived ideology or implied perceived extremity (folded perceptions).¹⁴

Table 9: Can Citizens Infer Ideology from Issue Positions?

	DV: Perceived Ideology
Estimated politician ideology	0.92*** (0.13)
Order: Vote First	0.09 (0.11)
Order x Estimated Ideology	-0.13 (0.16)
Constant	3.66*** (0.09)
R ₂	0.15
SER	1.68
Respondent-politician Pairs	772

Robust standard errors, clustered at the respondent level, reported in parentheses. * = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$.

¹⁴Note that the apparent positive correlation between perceived extremity and estimated extremity falls out of conventional ranges of statistical significance, but also that this is because the standard error rises (compared to Table 3 in the paper) because we are effectively cutting the data in half by estimating the correlation separately for the two groups (those who voted first and those who reported perceptions first). The strength of the correlation is largely unchanged.

.2.2 Study 2A: Ideological Perceptions of “Spatially Correct” and “Spatially Incorrect” politicians

To further demonstrate that the apparent correlation between respondents’ ideological perceptions of the hypothetical politicians and those politicians’ estimated ideal points is robust, we show that the correlation appears for both “spatially correct” and “spatially incorrect” politicians separately.

Table 10: Can Citizens Infer Ideology from Issue Positions? (“Spatially Correct” Politicians Only)

	DV: Perceived Ideology
Estimated politician ideology	0.95*** (0.14)
Constant	3.63*** (0.09)
R ₂	0.11
SER	1.71
Respondents	386

Robust standard errors reported in parentheses. * = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$.

Table 11: Can Citizens Infer Ideology from Issue Positions? (“Spatially Incorrect” Politicians Only)

	DV: Perceived Ideology
Estimated politician ideology	0.76*** (0.08)
Constant	3.83*** (0.09)
R ₂	0.17
SER	1.65
Respondents	386

Robust standard errors reported in parentheses. * = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$.

.3 Study 3

.3.1 Study 3: Distribution of Opinion Across All 7-Point Policy Scales

See the appendix in the paper for the corresponding policy positions.

Table 12: Opinion is Dispersed and Not Always Moderate in Central Tendency

Issue	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marijuana	26.7%	23.2%	18.7%	6.7%	4.1%	9.8%	10.9%
Energy/Environment	16.0%	6.8%	7.4%	26.8%	15.3%	14.1%	13.6%
Social Security	23.4%	36.8%	16.1%	5.3%	7.0%	9.8%	1.5%
Gun Control	4.0%	21.2%	22.8%	20.5%	17.2%	7.9%	6.4%
Health Care	17.5%	6.6%	19.4%	17.22%	21.7%	10.3%	7.3%
Immigration	4.7%	17.4%	10.8%	12.0%	17.0%	13.8%	24.4%
Taxes	11.7%	26.22%	28.6%	10.9%	1.4%	13.3%	7.9%
Abortion	1.0%	9.8%	9.2%	19.4%	30.4%	13.1%	17.1%
Medicare	14.7%	32.7%	30.3%	9.6%	8.7%	1.6%	2.5%
Gay Rights	6.9%	13.4%	2.1%	32.2%	20.9%	14.1%	10.5%
Unions	5.8%	14.1%	5.0%	19.0%	32.1%	13.7%	10.3%
Contraception	20.7%	5.2%	25.3%	18.7%	11.6%	16.7%	1.7%
Education	6.4%	29.3%	17.0%	25.1%	10.9%	1.4%	9.9%

.4 Study 4

.4.1 Study 4A: Extremity of the Extreme Politician Fails to Affect Choices

In Study 4A, we asked respondents to choose between two tailored politicians: one who took the four most immoderate positions they expressed in Wave 1, and one who took the moderate positions on those issues. As the figure below shows, the ideological implications of the “immoderate” politician appears not to influence respondents’ choices. Since just 6.8% of respondents took four or more outside-the-mainstream positions and roughly 30% took none at all, we observe variation in the overall extremity of the “extreme” politician. However, we find no difference in respondents’ willingness to support the extreme politician across the extremity of this politician.

Figure 13: Choice of Extreme Politician, by Extremity of Extreme Politician

