

Stranger Danger: Redistricting, Incumbent Recognition, and Vote Choice*

M. V. Hood III, *University of Georgia*

Seth C. McKee, *University of South Florida, St. Petersburg*

Objectives. We take a step forward in examining the electoral effects of redistricting by: (1) demonstrating that voters with a new incumbent because of redistricting are less likely to recognize their representative, and (2) voters are less likely to vote for their representative if they fail to recognize him or her. *Methods.* Our data come from a survey of white respondents who resided in the redrawn Eighth District of Georgia for the 2006 U.S. House elections. We use probit regressions to first measure the effect of redistricting on incumbent recognition. Then, we assess the likelihood of voting for the incumbent depending on whether a respondent was redrawn or has the same incumbent after redistricting, and whether or not the respondent could recognize his or her representative. *Results.* Our analyses make it clear that redrawn voters were much less likely to recognize their incumbent and it is the inability to recognize one's incumbent, irrespective of whether the representative has changed due to redistricting, which accounts for a reduced likelihood of voting for the incumbent. *Conclusions.* Other scholars have examined the relationship between redistricting and incumbent recognition. Likewise, many have evaluated the effects of redistricting on vote choice. This article, however, is the first to merge these two relationships. We find that redrawn constituents are less likely to know who their representative is, and it is indeed a lack of familiarity that reduces an incumbent's vote share. Thus, we have shown empirically that the absence of a personal vote, which is exacerbated by redistricting, proves electorally harmful to the incumbent.

It is this electoral uncertainty implanted in the minds of our politicians in the House of Representatives—more than policy change—that constitutes the real “reapportionment revolution” nationally. (Fenno, 1978:12)

*Direct correspondence to M. V. Hood III, Department of Political Science, University of Georgia, 104 Baldwin Hall, Athens, GA 30602 (th@uga.edu). M. V. Hood III will share all data and coding information for purposes of replication. A previous version of this article was presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA. For their helpful comments, the authors thank David Canon, Gary Copeland, Neil Malhotra, and the anonymous reviewers. They also thank Chris D'Elia and James Gore, who, at the time, were affiliated with USF St. Petersburg, and provided us the grant money that made this research possible.

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Redistricting always has the potential to harm incumbents. The efforts of representatives to cultivate a personal vote among their constituents pays dividends at the ballot box. Boundary changes, however, can severely discount the incumbency advantage because residents drawn into the district lack familiarity with their new representative. The short timespan between the reconfiguration of the district and the ensuing election means that representatives race the clock to win new constituents' votes.

Fortunate are those incumbents whose redrawn voters possess demographic and political characteristics that foretell electoral support. And woe to those representatives whose new constituents fit the profile of an electorate inclined to support the challenger. Yet under either of these scenarios, the presence of a large contingent of unfamiliar residents raises incumbents' anxiety (Boatright, 2004; Fenno, 1978). Simply put, with regard to redrawn voters, the incumbency advantage is either entirely removed or drastically attenuated. Compared to voters who retain the same incumbent, redrawn constituents level the electoral playing field—the latter are not as familiar with their new representative and consequently more receptive to the appeals of both the incumbent and the challenger.

Despite an immense literature that evaluates the electoral effects of redistricting, few studies make use of individual-level data. In this article, we present the results of a survey designed to examine the influence of redistricting on political behavior. Our study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) To what extent does incumbent recognition vary as a result of redistricting? (2) To what degree does incumbent recognition affect support for the incumbent? Utilizing a survey of white voters in Georgia's Eighth Congressional District, we find that redistricting substantially reduces incumbent recognition and this inability to recognize the incumbent, in turn, reduced political support for the incumbent in question during the 2006 election.

This study presents a new approach to modeling voter support for the incumbent in the context of a redistricting. First, there are several works that, although they do not empirically test this claim, make the case that redistricting severs the incumbency bond and this accounts for why representatives perform better among their old constituents (voters who have the same incumbent before and after redistricting) (see Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart, 2000; Desposato and Petrocik, 2003; McKee, 2008a; Petrocik and Desposato, 1998). Second, a recent article (McKee, 2008b) empirically demonstrates that redistricting does significantly reduce the likelihood that an individual will correctly recall the name, or recognize the name, of his or her incumbent, but there is no attempt to demonstrate whether recognition affects vote choice.

Thus, none of the aforementioned studies, or any of the extant redistricting literature for that matter, actually makes incumbent recognition the locus of evaluating voter choice. In this study, we have taken the next step by first demonstrating that it is the case that redistricting reduces voter famil-

ilarity with the incumbent and, second, it is the inability to recognize the incumbent that accounts for a reduction in the incumbent's electoral support. Explicitly modeling support for the incumbent in terms of voter recognition results in an important finding. Redistricting threatens the reelection bid because of its negative effect on incumbent familiarity, but, as we demonstrate, once redistricting is accounted for, what really matters in terms of incumbent vote support is whether or not an individual recognizes his or her representative.

Our findings speak loudly to the electoral volatility created by redistricting, showing why incumbents are justifiably wary of the danger associated with the presence of a large number of resident strangers. Also of concern, although less so, is the smaller number of old constituents who are not as supportive of the incumbent because they are not familiar with him or her. For these reasons, our findings reinforce a well-known truism, using the incumbency advantage to enhance name recognition is a fundamental factor for maintaining elective office.

The Incumbency Advantage, Redistricting, and Political Behavior

Most scholars agree that the incumbency advantage can be conceptualized as those votes a representative receives that are not cast on the basis of party affiliation (see Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, 1987; Desposato and Petrocik, 2003; Petrocik and Desposato, 2004). Scholars, however, disagree on which factors comprise the incumbency advantage (see Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2002). Theoretically, an incumbent's vote share consists of two parts: (1) the partisan vote and (2) the personal vote. The personal vote is attributable to the nonpartisan actions incumbents take to garner political support—it represents the incumbency advantage.¹

There are numerous (often complementary) explanations for the incumbency advantage: credit claiming, position taking, and advertising (Mayhew, 1974), constituency service (Fiorina, 1977), declining party attachments (Ferejohn, 1977), strategic retirements (Cox and Katz, 2002) and strategic challenger entry (Cox and Katz, 1996; Jacobson and Kernell, 1983), and the declining ability of challengers to raise enough money for competitive campaigns (Abramowitz, 1991). Also, not only do the component parts of the incumbency advantage vary depending on the representative, but the size of the incumbency advantage varies directly with respect to a representative's efforts to obtain electoral support (Erikson and Wright, 2005) and changes

¹Scholars, however, do not agree on this simple dichotomy because the incumbency advantage is not entirely due to the cultivation of a personal vote. For instance, incumbents also benefit from drawing weak challengers or, likewise, deterring strong challengers (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart, 2000; Cox and Katz, 1996, 2002; Jacobson, 2004) and being the recipients of short-term tides that shift in their party's favor (Desposato and Petrocik, 2003).

in long-term (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart, 2000) and short-term political conditions (Ansolabehere and Snyder, 2002; Desposato and Petrocik, 2003).

Despite disagreement regarding the precise nature of the incumbency advantage, it cannot exist if the representative is unfamiliar to a voter.² The incumbency advantage is predicated on the theory that a voter is at least aware of his or her representative. If a voter cannot recognize the incumbent, then there is no reason to support the incumbent save for the partisan cue.³ *Ceteris paribus*, the attention incumbents obtain by holding public office translates into greater name recognition vis-à-vis their opponents. Of course, most incumbents work hard to establish a constituent bond that transcends name ID. Thus, compared to the challenger, it is no surprise that voters are much more familiar with and approving of their incumbent (Jacobson, 2004).

Redistricting, however, can diminish the incumbency advantage because voters who are drawn into the district may not recognize their new incumbent. According to Desposato and Petrocik (2003), in the absence of the incumbency cue, these redrawn voters are more susceptible to short-term conditions, more likely to use partisan cues, and more supportive of strong challengers. This argument is compelling, but the empirical support for it is based on aggregate-level data.⁴ In fact, with a handful of exceptions (e.g., Hayes and McKee, 2009; Karp and Garland, 2007; McKee, 2008a), most of what we know about the effects of redistricting on political behavior is from aggregate-level analyses (see Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart, 2000; Desposato and Petrocik, 2003; Engstrom, 2006; McKee, Teigen, and Turgeon, 2006; Petrocik and Desposato, 1998; Rush, 1992, 1993, 2000).

It is apparent from these studies that, notwithstanding short-term conditions that may either harm (see Petrocik and Desposato, 1998) or aid

²To be sure, incumbents may benefit from the votes of individuals who do not recognize them until they step into the voting booth and their name actually rings a bell, whereas the name of the challenger is truly obscure. For this reason, our survey presents a list of actual candidate names in order to simulate recognition as it occurs in the voting booth.

³This statement assumes that even if the voter was aware that the incumbent was performing deeds that warranted reelection, the voter is not able to reward the incumbent with his or her vote since the voter does not recognize the incumbent's name. Due to this lack of information, the voter either abstains or randomly chooses a candidate. Given our findings in this article, it should be stated that they comport with our hypotheses in a setting where the incumbent is *actually* noted on the ballot! Georgia's voter ballots identify the incumbent in the U.S. House contest by placing the word "incumbent" in parentheses in front of the representative's name.

⁴Petrocik and Desposato (2004) use American National Election Studies (ANES) data to demonstrate the variability of the vote awarded incumbents and demonstrate that their vote share is generally higher than the votes awarded fellow partisans in open seats because incumbency acts as an anchor for weak and independent voters who would otherwise be more susceptible to short-term political conditions. Their individual-level analysis, however, never looks specifically at the effects of redistricting. It is merely argued that redistricting weakens the incumbency advantage because redrawn (new) voters behave similarly to open-seat voters, who are more influenced by partisan cues and short-term political conditions.

incumbents (see Rush, 1993), redistricting generally has the effect of lowering incumbent vote shares (Desposato and Petrocik, 2003). This finding has strong historical support since Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2000) analyzed incumbent vote shares with county-level data from 1872–1988 and found that throughout this period, incumbent vote shares were higher in the old portions of their districts. Controlling for other factors, incumbents consistently perform better in the old parts of their districts because they have cultivated a personal vote by catering to the needs of these long-time constituents (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart, 2000; Desposato and Petrocik, 2003).

In this article we build on the extant literature by evaluating the results of a survey designed to assess the effects of redistricting on political behavior. Unlike previous studies, we present a two-stage approach for modeling the effects of redistricting on voting behavior. Because we agree with Desposato and Petrocik (2003) that the incumbency advantage hinges on the ability to recognize the incumbent, we first estimate the influence of redistricting on incumbent name recognition. Specifically, we hypothesize that boundary changes increase redrawn voters' information costs, making them less familiar with the incumbent. Our survey data support this expectation with a multivariate analysis that shows redrawn voters are significantly less likely to recognize the incumbent. Second, we emphasize the importance of incumbent recognition by illustrating that voters who cannot recognize the name of the incumbent—regardless of whether they were redrawn or have the same representative after redistricting—were more inclined to vote for the challenger.

Data and Methods

After the 2004 elections, by finally winning a majority of state house seats (the first time since Reconstruction), Georgia Republicans now controlled both the state legislature and the governorship. Similar to Texas Republicans in 2003, in 2005 the Georgia GOP implemented a mid-decade congressional redistricting valid for the 2006 midterm. The data for this project come from a survey of white respondents who voted in the 2004 general election and live in Georgia's Eighth Congressional District. African-American voters in the South display very little variance with regard to vote choice, routinely voting 90 percent and higher in favor of Democrats in contested U.S. House elections (Black, 1998). Consequently, most of the studies analyzing vote choice in the region, including our own, focus on examining the behavior of white residents (see, e.g., Valentino and Sears, 2005).

The survey was specifically targeted to reach voters living in Georgia's Eighth Congressional District as reconfigured for the 2006 midterm election and includes a stratified sample of respondents based on district

residency.⁵ The survey instrument was developed by the authors and administered by Polimetrix using a web-based instrument. The survey of District 8 residents is a panel. The preelection study of District 8 was conducted from October 18–31, 2006, with the postelection study running from November 11–December 20, 2006.⁶ In addition to questions concerning geographic location and demographic and political information, respondents were asked to identify the Eighth District congressional incumbent.

The survey respondents were asked to identify the Eighth District incumbent (Jim Marshall) for the 2006 election from a list that included all candidates (incumbents and challengers) running in the six reconfigured districts from which the newly drawn Eighth District was created.⁷ Specifically, the INCUMBENT RECOGNITION question asked respondents: “Can you tell me the name of the incumbent U.S. House Representative seeking reelection in your district for the upcoming 2006 elections?”⁸ Our methodology is a more stringent test for gauging candidate recognition when compared to other surveys that do not explicitly test a respondent’s ability to identify the incumbent in a specific race.⁹ In the postelection survey, respondents were also asked if they had voted in the Eighth District contest and which candidate they supported (Democrat Jim Marshall or Republican Mac Collins).

Incumbent Recognition Model

For purposes of this study we are primarily interested in determining (1) the relationship between redistricting and incumbent recognition, and (2) the extent to which incumbent recognition affects vote choice. First, we direct our attention to specifying a model designed to explain which factors are related to the ability of a voter to recognize the incumbent. The dependent variable in this model measures the ability of a respondent to

⁵The sample was stratified based on redistricting considerations; specifically, whether respondents were part of the Eighth Congressional District as it existed prior to 2005 or were drawn into the new Eighth District. The full sample is split almost evenly between these two groups, with 48.1 percent of respondents classified as same-incumbent and 51.9 percent classified as redrawn. The old Third Congressional District, which Jim Marshall represented from 2002–2005, comprises 55.3 percent of the voting-age population in the new District 8.

⁶The response rate (RR1) for the survey was 32.9 percent.

⁷Under the 2002 congressional boundaries, valid for the 2002 and 2004 elections, the survey respondents resided in parts of the First, Second, Third, Eighth, Ninth, and Thirteenth Districts.

⁸The list of choice options included Jack Kingston; Jim Nelson; Sanford Bishop; Brad Hughes; Jim Marshall; Lynn Westmoreland; Mike McGraw; Charlie Norwood; Terry Holley; Mac Collins; David Scott; Deborah Travis Honeycutt; Other; or None of the above currently represent me for the 2006 elections.

⁹For example, the ANES does not measure candidate recognition directly, but instead classifies respondents who choose the *Don't Recognize* response option on feeling thermometer questions as subsequently unable to properly recognize a specific House candidate.

correctly identify the incumbent in the Eighth District race. INCUMBENT RECOGNITION is coded 1 for respondents who correctly identified the Democratic incumbent, Representative Jim Marshall, and 0 for those who could not correctly identify Marshall. Of those who voted in the Eighth District contest, 33.9 percent were unable to correctly identify Jim Marshall as the District 8 incumbent. Since the dependent variable is binary, we use probit regression to estimate this model.

Our primary variable of interest, REDRAWN DISTRICT RESIDENT, is a dummy variable in which voters who were not part of Marshall's district in the 2004 election cycle are coded 1, while voters who were constituents of the incumbent prior to the 2006 election are coded 0.¹⁰ Among those respondents who indicated they had voted in the 2006 House contest, about half (52.7 percent) were classified as redrawn district residents. We expect that redrawn voters will be less likely to recognize the incumbent. Other control variables included in the incumbent recognition model measure time in residence, interest in politics, strength of partisan affiliation, age, income, educational attainment, marital status, and gender (see the Appendix for a detailed coding description of control variables).

Vote Choice Model

To study the effects of redistricting and incumbent recognition on voter preferences, we specified a second model in which the dependent variable is vote choice for the District 8 race. VOTE CHOICE is coded 1 if the respondent voted for the Democratic incumbent (Jim Marshall) and 0 if he or she voted for the Republican challenger (Mac Collins).¹¹

In this model, we create three variables to categorize voters based on their ability to recognize the incumbent and whether they were redrawn into the district prior to the 2006 election. The excluded or baseline category is comprised of those voters who were part of the district in 2004 and who could correctly recognize Marshall as the incumbent (SAME, RECOGNIZES INCUMBENT). The other categories, each comprising a separate dummy variable, include same voters who cannot recognize the incumbent (SAME, DOES NOT RECOGNIZE INCUMBENT), redrawn voters who can recognize the incumbent (REDRAWN, RECOGNIZES INCUMBENT), and, finally, redrawn voters who failed to correctly identify the incumbent (REDRAWN, DOES NOT RECOGNIZE INCUMBENT). Utilizing this approach we can simultaneously test the effects of both redistricting and recognition on vote choice. We hypothesize that compared to same voters who recognize the incumbent, both redrawn and

¹⁰Information regarding a respondent's congressional district during the 2004 election cycle was provided by Polimetrix.

¹¹Among the voters in our survey, 38.7 percent supported Marshall and 61.3 percent voted for Collins.

same voters unable to recognize the incumbent will be less likely to vote for Marshall. We further hypothesize that redrawn voters who correctly identified the incumbent should not exhibit behavior that is significantly different from the baseline category. In addition to the discussed variables of interest, controls for party affiliation, ideological predisposition, religious commitment, gubernatorial voting, age, income, educational attainment, marital status, and gender were also included in our model of vote choice.

Results

Our survey data indicate that 89 percent of voters who were previously represented by Jim Marshall during the 2004 election cycle correctly identified him as the incumbent in the race, compared with only about three-fifths (58 percent) of those voters who were redrawn into the district. This 31-point incumbent recognition gap is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (one-tailed). This finding shows that a relationship between redistricting and incumbent recognition does exist. The next step is to determine whether this relationship will hold up under additional controls.

The findings from the incumbent recognition model are displayed in Table 1. This model indicates that redrawn respondents were significantly less likely to correctly identify the incumbent Jim Marshall. Holding the other variables at their mean or modal values, the model predicts the probability that a resident redrawn into District 8 in 2005 could recognize Representative Jim Marshall is 0.57, compared with 0.85 for voters who were represented by Congressman Marshall during the previous election cycle—a statistically significant probability difference of 0.28.

Turning to the results of the vote choice model in Table 2, we find that both redrawn and same voters who were unable to recognize the incumbent were significantly less likely to vote for Democrat Jim Marshall compared to same voters who were able to recognize the incumbent. The other dummy indicator employed, REDRAWN, RECOGNIZES INCUMBENT, while negative is not statistically significant. Such a finding indicates that redrawn voters who are able to recognize the incumbent are statistically no different from existing district residents who are also able to correctly identify Marshall as the incumbent.

Holding the other variables in the model at their mean or modal values, the probability of voting for Marshall among voters who do not recognize the incumbent is 0.20 for same voters, compared to 0.16 for redrawn voters. Conversely, among those voters who did correctly identify the incumbent, the probability of voting for Marshall is 0.73 for same residents versus 0.60 for redrawn residents. The probability differences between same and redrawn voters within recognition categories are not statistically significant.

Figure 1 plots the probability of voting for Democrat Jim Marshall by redistricting status and incumbent recognition across the seven-point

TABLE 1
 Probit Model Predicting Incumbent Recognition

	Recognizes Incumbent
Redrawn voter	– 0.9022*** (0.2412)
Time in residence	– 0.0044 (0.0117)
Interest in politics	0.1410 (0.1754)
Strength of party identification	– 0.0845 (0.1272)
Age	0.0006 (0.0098)
Income	0.0392 (0.0317)
Education	0.0821 (0.0831)
Marital status	0.0848 (0.2736)
Gender	– 0.2384 (0.2348)
Constant	0.7104 (0.8541)
<i>N</i>	172

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed).

NOTES: Entries are probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Variable of interest in bold type. Model respondents voted in the GA 8 U.S. House race. The dependent variable is: 1 = recognizes incumbent, 0 = does not recognize incumbent.

party identification scale. The pattern in Figure 1 reveals that the effects of incumbent recognition and residency status are highly mediated by partisanship. Within each category of partisanship, an even starker pattern emerges between voters who can and cannot correctly identify the incumbent, regardless of residency status (same vs. redrawn). As is evident from Figure 1, those voters who failed to correctly identify Congressman Jim Marshall as their incumbent were much less likely to have voted for him compared with voters who could correctly identify him as the incumbent.

The model predicts the probability of voting for Representative Marshall among self-identified independents who correctly recognized him to be 0.88 for same voters, compared to 0.81 for redrawn voters. Among independent voters who failed to correctly recognize Marshall, the probability of voting Democratic plummets to 0.38 for same district voters and 0.36 for redrawn voters. Tests indicate that the probability differences between redrawn and same voters who cannot recognize the incumbent for each category of

TABLE 2
 Probit Model Predicting Vote for Incumbent

	Voted for Incumbent
Redrawn, does not recognize incumbent	– 1.8039*** (0.6686)
Same, does not recognize incumbent	– 1.8123* (1.0524)
Redrawn, recognizes incumbent	– 0.4041 (0.4230)
Party identification	0.5875*** (0.1545)
Ideology	0.8523*** (0.2181)
High commitment evangelical	– 0.0801 (0.3904)
Republican gubernatorial vote	– 0.6954 (0.6349)
Age	– 0.0093 (0.0141)
Income	0.0205 (0.0573)
Education	0.1037 (0.1369)
Marital status	– 0.9160* (0.5183)
Gender	1.3319*** (0.4764)
Constant	– 4.4494*** (1.6558)
<i>N</i>	165

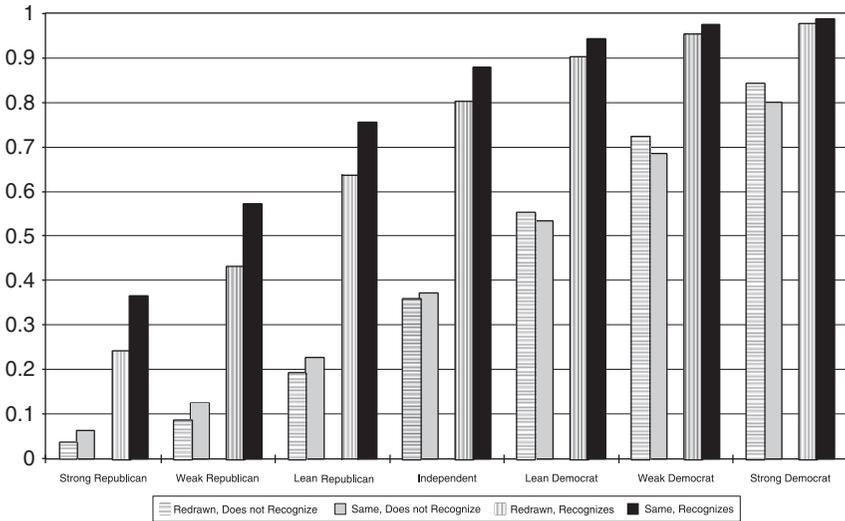
* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

NOTES: Entries are probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Variables of interest in bold type. Model respondents voted in the GA 8 U.S. House race. The dependent variable is: 1 = voted for Democratic incumbent Jim Marshall, 0 = voted for Republican challenger Mac Collins.

partisanship are not statistically significant. Likewise, the probability differences between same and redrawn voters who recognize the incumbent are also statistically insignificant—a further indication that it is recognition and not residency that directly affects vote choice.

Given the fairly small sample size for the vote choice model in Table 2, as a further check on the relationship between incumbent recognition and vote choice, we also ran a similar model with the preelection sample of respondents ($N = 318$). The dependent variable utilized was a generic ballot question that asked preelection respondents which party's House candidate they intended to vote for in the upcoming election (1 = Democratic House candidate; 0 = Republican House candidate). The results presented in Table

FIGURE 1
Probability of Voting for (D) Incumbent



3 mirror those from Table 2, with both redrawn and same voters who cannot recognize the incumbent (Democrat Jim Marshall) being less likely to indicate that they planned to cast a ballot for the Democratic House candidate.

Thus, the key factor in the vote choice models is whether a respondent can correctly identify the incumbent. As shown from the incumbent recognition model, redistricting negatively impacts the likelihood of identifying the incumbent and it is the inability to recognize the incumbent that, in turn, reduces political support. Once incumbent recognition is taken into account, however, any direct effect of redistricting on vote choice is largely nullified. To summarize, redistricting does affect vote choice, but it does so indirectly through its impact on incumbent recognition rates.

Conclusion

Our study analyzes one of the most competitive Democratic-held districts in the nation in the 2006 midterm elections to evaluate the effect of redistricting on incumbent recognition and vote choice.¹² We intentionally selected a highly competitive contest and yet we still see a large disparity in

¹²The two-party vote margin for Democrat Jim Marshall in District 8 was 1,752 (Barone and Cohen, 2007).

TABLE 3

Probit Model Predicting Vote for Democratic Candidate (Preelection Sample)

	Democratic House Vote
Redrawn, does not recognize incumbent	– 0.8332** (0.3804)
Same, does not recognize incumbent	– 1.3754** (0.6364)
Redrawn, recognizes incumbent	– 0.1184 (0.3163)
Party identification	0.6627*** (0.0838)
Ideology	0.4595*** (0.0995)
High commitment evangelical	0.1776 (0.2895)
Age	0.0273** (0.0109)
Income	0.0529 (0.0444)
Education	0.1142 (0.1004)
Marital status	0.3406 (0.3453)
Gender	– 0.1587 (0.2802)
Constant	– 6.0952 (1.1744)
<i>N</i>	318

* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

NOTES: Entries are probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Variables of interest in bold type. The dependent variable is a preelection generic ballot question (1 = intend to vote for Democrat; 0 = intend to vote for Republican).

recognition rates depending on whether a respondent had the same incumbent or was redrawn. Our survey offers an appropriate measure of incumbent recognition, and the choice of a competitive election provides a conservative test of the effect of redistricting on the ability to identify the incumbent representative. Specifically, our empirical analyses indicate that redistricting jeopardized Congressman Marshall's reelection bid because redrawn voters were significantly less likely to recognize him, and it is the inability to recognize the incumbent that accounts for a decline in political support.

In this article, the key variable in reducing the incumbency advantage is whether an individual can identify his or her representative. Redistricting is a critical feature in this relationship. Because redistricting constitutes an ex-

ogenous effect on incumbent recognition, its impact is considerable and persists even after controlling for many factors that are expected to increase the likelihood of knowing the incumbent. In other words, even after accounting for characteristics that make it more likely that someone will recognize their incumbent (e.g., level of education), redistricting still has an independent and negative influence on incumbent recognition (see McKee, 2008b). We think this is true mainly because when boundary changes are implemented, there is no official requirement to inform voters of who their incumbent is in their reconfigured district.

By contrast, voters who do not recognize the incumbent even though they had the same representative before redistricting constitute a much smaller segment of the voting electorate. The reason this subset of the electorate fails to correctly identify the incumbent is rooted in lower levels of political awareness. Among these voters there is perhaps little that the incumbent can do to increase his or her profile. But in the case of the much larger segment of redrawn constituents who are unfamiliar with their new incumbent, efforts by the representative to reach this group should have a much greater electoral payoff.

As Jacobson (2004:136) points out, “a substantial portion of the incumbency advantage derives from the greater familiarity incumbents enjoy.” The incumbency advantage is based on the establishment of a relationship between the voter and the representative, but redistricting severs this linkage (Desposato and Petrocik, 2003). Admittedly, this study is confined to a single congressional district and thus it would be hazardous to generalize beyond this case. Nonetheless, because name recognition is a critical component of the incumbency advantage, we suspect that for those representatives who seek reelection, redistricting is rarely a welcome change.

Appendix: Control Variable Coding

STRENGTH OF PARTY IDENTIFICATION (1 = independents; 2 = independent leaners; 3 = weak identifiers; 4 = strong identifiers)

INTEREST IN POLITICS (1 = not much interested; 2 = somewhat interested; 3 = very much interested)

TIME IN RESIDENCE (number of years a respondent has lived in his or her current residence)

GENDER (1 = female; 0 = male)

INCOME (1 = <\$10,000; 2 = \$10,000–14,999; 3 = \$15,000–19,999; 4 = \$20,000–24,999; 5 = \$25,000–29,999; 6 = \$30,000–39,999; 7 = \$40,000–49,999; 8 = \$50,000–59,999; 9 = \$60,000–69,999; 10 = \$70,000–79,999; 11 = \$80,000–99,999; 12 = \$100,000–119,000; 13 = \$120,000–149,000; 14 = \$150,000+)

EDUCATION (1 = no high school; 2 = high school; 3 = some college; 4 = associate's degree; 5 = BA; 6 = graduate)

MARITAL STATUS (1 = married; 0 = not married)

AGE (in years)

PARTY IDENTIFICATION (1 = strong Republican; 2 = weak Republican; 3 = lean Republican; 4 = independent; 5 = lean Democrat; 6 = weak Democrat; 7 = strong Democrat)

IDEOLOGY (1 = very conservative; 2 = conservative; 3 = slightly conservative; 4 = moderate; 5 = slightly liberal; 6 = liberal; 7 = very liberal)

HIGH COMMITMENT EVANGELICAL (1 = self-identified Protestants who attend church once or more a week; 0 = all others)

REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL VOTE (1 = voted for GOP incumbent Sonny Perdue; 0 = voted for Democrat Mark Taylor or some third-party candidate)

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