REGIME FATIGUE: A COGNITIVE-PSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL FOR IDENTIFYING A

SOCIALIZED NEGATIVITY EFFECT IN U.S. SENATORIAL AND GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS

FROM 1960-2008

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Introduction

Part of what makes the study of elections and voting behavior so interesting is the fluidity of public sentiment and the unpredictability of electoral outcomes. Political scientists have endeavored to build elaborate predictive models for Presidential elections that can be argued to work with a reasonable amount of accuracy. Even so, every few decades an election comes along where most of the models break down; such as Kennedy's victory in 1960 (Norpoth, 2001) or Bush's victory in 2000. For example, every major model considered here in the literature review wrongly predicted the 2000 election as a win for Gore (Lockerbie, 2004). Barack Obama, a relative unknown nationally before the primaries, bucked conventional political wisdom by winning a hard-fought primary against Hillary Clinton, an opponent who was widely considered to be the foregone conclusion for the Democratic nomination up until that point. Obama then went on to defeat his moderate Republican challenger in a strong showing with considerable support from independents. One is hard pressed to find a common characteristic across these three elections; the partisan affiliation differs, the state of the economy at the time of the election varied widely, as does the candidate's showing in the primary. The proverbial elephant in the middle of the room is that in each election, the losing candidate is from the party that held power for the two previous terms. Two possible implications arise from this fact. Roughly the same percentages of people self-identified with a particular party in 2000 as in 2008 yet Obama's margin of victory was much greater than Bush's in 2000 leading one to assume (probably correctly) that Obama captured more of the critical "moderate" vote than Bush in his own Presidential bid. Yet, this raises an interesting question. Obama was very similar in the stated policy positions that he supported pre-election to former Presidential contenders John Kerry and Al Gore, yet he was enormously more successful in an electoral showdown. If Downsian theory is correct, did Obama just more accurately estimate

the policy position of the median voter? Is it all just a Nash Equilibrium? All of the reasons

contributing to an Obama victory will not be answered here, but an important implication does

arise from its study that will be used as a jumping off point for the thesis in that the vast

"middle" of the American voting public seems to have extremely fluid voting preferences. This

idea is in sharp contrast to the early days of political surveying where voter opinion was

assumed to be relatively "fixed" in nature. In fact, the longest running voter preference model

in existence, the Michigan Model, is predicated on this very idea and a strong identification with

a particular party is still the primary variable that can be used to overwhelming predict voter

preference for a political contest in a predictive statistical voting model. Even if a voter does not

identify with a particular partisan label, however, the assumption would be that their party

voting preferences would remain relatively stable as long as the two party candidates continued

to adhere to their party's traditional voting platform. In a challenge to the Michigan Model,

James Stimson argues in his book *Tides of Consent* that public opinion is, in actuality, very fluid

and in a state of constant flux. So at a minimum, the relatively large margin of Obama's victory

after eight years of Republican control of the White House lends credence to the idea that

public opinion will ebb and flow drastically even over the relatively short period of eight years.

A second possible question that arises from the acknowledgement of the fluidity of public

opinion is whether or not there is a systemic element to it or if a pattern can be found amongst

these "tides of consent". Perhaps instead of the analogy of oceanic tide, public opinion is more

akin to a see-saw where public opinion (because it is fluid) swings from one side to the other

after reaching a certain tipping point. In other words, perhaps the nature of our two-party

representational democracy creates an environment where eventual regime change is not only

an inevitability, but also grows increasingly more probable with every election. Yet the

literature specifically addressing the idea of a form of regime or "party fatigue" has always

treated it as either a mitigating variable to be considered on a secondary basis or as one of

several independent variables. Furthermore, no outside literature could be found that

examined the possible effects of party fatigue on the state level.   To this end, I conducted some

preliminary research into developing and testing a theory of regime fatigue on the gubernatorial

level in state elections over the past forty years. The initial results were positive, demonstrating

what appeared to be a successive decline in mean proportional vote across regime generations

in gubernatorial elections:

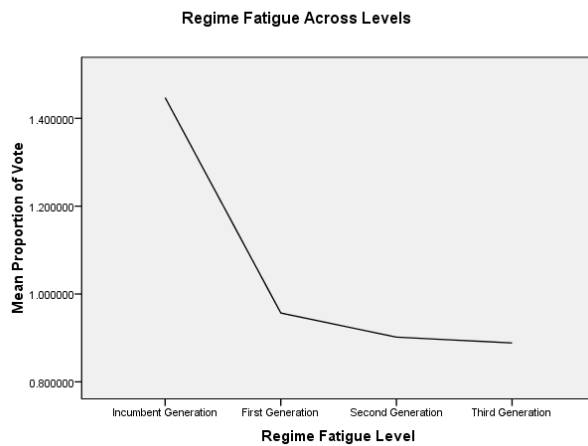*Figure 1*. Mean proportional vote in gubernatorial elections, 1968-2008.

Proportion of Vote

Regime Fatigue Level	Mean	N
Incumbent Generation	1.57917930	18
First Generation	.95672478	46
Second Generation	.90176292	15
Third Generation	.88848834	3
Total	1.08081069	82

Figure 2. Proportion of vote in gubernatorial elections, 1968-2008.

But correlation is far from causation and the constraints of time and the original data set left considerable room for error despite initially promising results. For one, the data set was far from complete due the fact that vote totals had to be requested through state-equivalents of the Freedom of Information Act, and noticeably absent from the data were many of the Southern states that have traditionally been dominated by the Democratic Party on the state-level and below. Furthermore, while the trend of a decreasing proportional vote amongst incumbent party candidates in open elections was interesting, there were few supporting variables that could relate the causation of the decreasing proportional votes to the explanatory factors of a socialized "negativity effect" and schema-level memory recall that was critical to the formation of my initial regime fatigue theory[1]. In other words, it is entirely possible that the causation behind atrophying proportional vote could range from the economic (a greater willingness on the part of state and national parties to fund opposition candidates in open seat elections) to the individual (better qualified candidates being attracted to running in races where the seat is open because they calculate that their chances for potential victory are better) as opposed to the emotional/psychological. Additionally, while a "negativity effect" (the greater salience of negative information for a longer duration of time) is widely acknowledged as a phenomenon within cognitive psychology in the field of interpersonal relations, my previous work with gubernatorial elections did not draw on any established research within the field of political science to demonstrate that negative information appears to have any effect on voter perception of a candidate.

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[1]In my preliminary exploratory research, I referred to the regime fatigue that I was trying to measure as "regime fatigue theory". This is a bit of a misnomer in that the intention is not to create a new predictive voting model or expansive theory, but instead to demonstrate the existence statistically of a decline in proportional vote of the incumbent party in aggregate across the country. I have changed the terminology in this thesis to "regime fatigue effect" because it more accurately describes the intended object of research.

The purpose of this thesis is three-fold. First, an effort will be made to further expand on the operational theory behind the regime fatigue effect by drawing on research from the relevant fields of political science, sociology, and psychology. My initial foray into explaining what appeared to be a regime fatigue effect in a limited number of mostly northeastern and western Gubernatorial elections was operationalized almost entirely on the individual level as the result of schema-level memory recall and a "negativity effect" in which individuals prioritized negative information about a candidate and his/her party over positive information (a more robust discussion of the psychological literature describing this effect can be found in the literature review). While the results of the earlier exploratory research seemed promising towards demonstrating the existence of an effect, the theory itself did not seem compelling enough to my mind and still open to several critiques that I had of my own work. These critiques were not methodological ones, but critiques of reasonable causation. In the absence of a wide-scale randomly sampled voter survey on gubernatorial and senatorial elections across the nation over a forty year time series, there was no easily apparent way to attribute incumbent proportional vote decline to largely a mental and psychological process. Additionally, emerging research in the fields of social networks and mass voter psychology offered potentially competing or additive explanations that seemed equally compelling. A major goal of this thesis is to integrate the research into social networks, the effects of social clustering, literature on negative campaigning, and emergent research into the interaction between affect and cognition into a more robust explanation of the regime fatigue effect. A secondary goal was to expand and improve the data set across multiple branches of state government. The data set used in this analysis now includes the gubernatorial and U.S. Senatorial elections for all fifty states from 1968-2008. Elections in both the legislative and the executive branch were chosen deliberately for the express purpose of examining how the effect

of regime fatigue changes when examining elections in the legislative branch of government as opposed to the executive. [2] Last but not least, by contrasting the results of the secondary analysis across three demographic dimensions, this thesis hopes to discover some support for a psychological explanation to the regime fatigue effect. Granted, this is a bit of the long way around and akin to lending support to the Big Bang Theory by examining background radiation, but one must work with the data set that is available to them. As social survey methodology improves and more states begin to make the secondary data that they gather more easily accessible to academia and the public, I expect a better method for testing the validity of a psychological explanation to voting phenomena will be created.

This research project proposes to try to isolate and measure the influence of "regime fatigue"[3] on gubernatorial elections and senatorial elections where there is no incumbent running. First, in order to properly explicate this experiment's operating premises, a review of the relevant literature in the field of public opinion in regards to voting (and where applicable, public survey research) will be discussed beginning with the literature on competing considerations and traditional notions of the calculating voter. This review will end with a discussion of Stimson's work in public opinion research and the fluidity of public opinion. Next, available research in the fields of neurology, sociology, and cognitive/emotional psychology will be reviewed as they apply to preference formation in an attempt to lay a theoretical bridge between Stimson's work on swinging public opinion to the negativity effect as it manifests itself as a cognitive psychological process. Applicable literature on the topics of social clustering and homophily is then highlighted as it provides the vehicle through which the negativity effect

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[2]Additionally, a complete data set of U.S. Senatorial Elections from 1968-2008 was available from the Clerk of the House of Representatives.

[3]The possibility exists that this regime fatigue can also manifest itself intra-party (e.g. as we saw with Clinton vs. Obama in the 2008 Presidential Primaries), as well as inter-party. The decision has been made to use the term "regime fatigue" as a more encompassing expression of the proposed phenomena than simply "party fatigue".

disseminates across collections of socially-clustered individuals and ultimately contributes to the tides of public opinion that Stimson has noted despite the fact that the political party identification can remain relatively fixed in the aggregate. Additionally, in order to understand the specific methodology of how the actual experiment will be conducted and regime fatigue (if it exists) is to be measured, a survey will be conducted of the existing literature that utilizes a measurement of regime fatigue for predictive purposes. This literature draws largely from national voting models by necessity, not by choice, but a brief examination of some of these models (especially the Time-For-Change model) is important for our purposes here. Next, the available literature that will also shape the selection and exclusion of independent variables will also be considered.   Finally, deficiencies in the current literature will be addressed, followed by a hypothesis about anticipated results. The methodology of the study will be discussed in detail and then the results of the secondary data analysis will be shown. The thesis will conclude with a summation of the potential value-added significance of the study results for the field of political science and real-world political campaigns and ideas for future research.

Literature Review

Introduction

The existing literature relevant to this study will be examined in three distinct

categories: the public opinion literature (both rational choice and psychological) that drives the

experiment's epistemological assumptions, including responses to potential critiques of

methodology; predictive national voting models; and a very brief survey of what previous

studies have said regarding voter motivation in selecting a Governor and a Senator, *when it is*

relevant to the methodology selected here for this study. In other words, the literature about

Gubernatorial and Senatorial races as a whole is too vast and expansive to adequately address

here, but particular studies relevant to the selection of the independent and control variables in

this proposal will be noted.

Competing Considerations and the Calculating Voter

Central to the operating premises that serve to define the parameters of and the

motivations behind this experiment is James Stimson's idea of public opinion as "tides of

consent". As Stimson points out in his ground-breaking work of the same name, public opinion

is remarkably fluid (Stimson, 2004). As Stimson eloquently points out, research into voting

patterns have traditionally described voters as rational and informed political actors or as

almost the exact polar opposite: emotionally driven and uninformed ("re")actors. These

assumptions were largely driven by researchers' desire to develop a consistent view of the

human condition. Stimson argues that this view is wrong and that in fact, the average voter is

simultaneously uninformed *yet calculating*, and moreover, there is no impetus on the part of

the individual to be political "consistent" (Stimson, 2004). The desire for consistency is a

projection on the part of the political researcher who we can reasonably assume has a deep

interest in the study of politics, and is therefore much more inclined to see political consistency

as an essential virtue where others not so politically-inclined might dismiss it as merely a complication.

Though drawing heavily on the work of Stimson, it is important to note an important difference in the idea of regime fatigue if it is to act effectively as a supplement to Stimson's ideas. The idea of regime fatigue places a much greater emphasis on the quality of entropy than the "tides of consent" metaphor. Regime fatigue argues that while public opinion may ebb and flow that there will be a continued and perpetual trend towards the degradation of public support of the controlling regime from election to election when the governing regime has a candidate on the ballot that does not enjoy the benefits of incumbency until such time that said regime loses power.

A potential critique of the logic behind this project needs to be addressed early on. If the starting premise of this study is that the majority of voters are not rational and calculating actors then it might be hard to understand how they could grow increasingly dissatisfied with a status quo to which they pay very little, if any, attention on a day to day basis. Again, Stimson's work helps to provide the logical bridge in the argumentation. The mere willingness to express a view does not mean that it is deeply held (Stimson, 2004). Furthermore, the lack of salience to everyday political issues does not mean that an individual does not have an opinion about that same subject. There is the calculating and low-cost alternative of adopting the view of someone that you admire and respect (Stimson, 2004). Additionally, as Stimson has the prescience to point out, if the view you adopt was based on a reasoned response to events of the day then your own opinion to the subject (even though it was not self-generated) is still "orderly and responsive to what really happened". In other words, it would be possible for this regime fatigue to permeate throughout society without requiring the prerequisite of a rational or informed electorate. This idea is in full agreement with Stimson's assertion that opinion

movements are almost wholly dominated by those who pay attention but emphasizes the essential entropy of the process between regime changes. Extending the wave analogy, unfavorable public opinion may come in waves but the governing regime will continue to find itself swimming against an ever-increasing "larger" tide until regime change occurs. This theory of regime fatigue's contribution to the study of voting *patterns is not to assert itself as a wholly new or complete theory of voting*. Instead, this project hopes to establish an over-arching trend to the waves of public opinion themselves.

Crucial to understanding this trend is the acknowledgement of the work of John Zaller and Stanley Feldman regarding the "competing considerations" that the average interview subject in a political survey holds because it can also be applied to the voting public. Zaller and Feldman argue that if political considerations do not occupy a position of primacy in most individual's hierarchy of values then they are free from any pressure to "resolve value conflicts into one consistent position" (Zaller and Feldman, 1992; Stimson, 2004). To say it another way, the same individual can hold many competing political viewpoints that if placed on the usual one-dimensional continuum of Liberal/Conservative (or for our purposes here: Republican/Democrat or Controlling/Opposing Party) would appear to be in sharp contrast with one another. Furthermore, if pressed, an individual may find himself or herself answering a survey question with either a typically liberal or conservative response depending on the day and context in which they are asked.

Evidence for this seems to be underscored by the work of Phillip Converse who found that most people hold very few consistent political opinions over a long period of time when asked the exact same questions in consecutive surveys occurring every two years (Converse, 1964). Disturbingly, Converse found that any evidence towards a consistency of opinion was not only statistically insignificant, but also only slightly less so than if decided by random chance.

Therefore, this research project wishes to start with the premise that the majority of voters are uninformed but calculating *and that they hold political opinions*. A valid critique level against my previous research into U.S. gubernatorial races was that the work of Phillip Converse was still highly controversial and evidence existed that ideological constraint was increasing and thus political opinions were becoming more stable since 1964 (Nie and Anderson, 1974; Nie et al., 1976). So in an effort to address some of this criticism, I wish to reference some opposing literature that makes a powerful argument that critiques the proponents of increasing ideological constraint for flawed methodology (Sullivan et al. 1978).

Those political opinions are subject to "competing considerations", and in most cases, are held with very little degree of the passion or commitment of an individual who is politically engaged. In fact, the political opinion is most often influenced and shaped by the most recent information resource that the calculating individual has consulted (either actively in the case of a trusted friend, or passively in the case of the news media, for example) for their opinion. These premises based on past empirical research form the epistemological basis for this project's focus on establishing an element of entropy or fatigue to the process. This idea rests in part on an assumption similar to the old business adage that if you please one customer someone might hear about it, but if you treat a customer poorly then *everyone* hears about it. Negative experiences or perceptions of government (e.g. what government is not doing properly as opposed to what it is doing "right") has a much greater salience with the politically interested than satisfactory or positive experiences and perceptions.

The Negativity Effect

This idea of a greater salience to negative experience is based largely on research into the "negativity effect" in the field of cognitive psychology. The two leading complementary theories in cognitive psychology regarding memory are the schema model and the script model.

Both models actually work in tandem and in a mutually-reinforcing manner. The schema model claims that individuals tend to organize their memories around certain schema or "constructs" (e.g. memories associated with high school). The schema model is in opposition to the total recall theory, which claims that there is one central repository for memories that is accessed by the individual. Without conducting a full review of the schema model here, the most important difference between the two theories for the purpose of the project is that the schema model argues that individuals do not recall events as insular, chronological units, but instead tend to recall events and associations contextually in relation to other similar events that the individual has filed under the same cognitive schema. Similarly, political regimes can be thought of as constructs in their own right. Furthermore, the script model of cognitive psychology builds on the schema model by claiming that individuals (especially cognitive misers) tend not to recall specific details about specific events (such as what they had to eat yesterday), but instead tend to think in scripts especially in reference to subjects that are of little interest to them (e.g. food might be essential to survival, but keeping a running tally of what you had to eat each day is far too mundane for any individual who is not obsessive-compulsive or on a diet to concern themselves with). Therefore, voters can find themselves attributing negative and positive information regarding a particular schema to individual subjects that possibly had very little, if anything, to do with forming those impressions. Studies by researchers interested in the question have shown how impressions of political candidates are formed by voters through the use of the "impression-forming" model. The "impression-forming" approach says that individuals keep a running tab of their net impressions that are updated as they absorb new negative or positive information about that individual. This is in opposition to the total recall approach to candidates where the candidates are considered in "total" from the first time a voter was made aware of the candidate's existence up to the present moment (Lodge, Milton,

Kathleen McGraw, and Patrick Stroh, 1989). The end result of this impression-driven model is

an electorate who is increasingly apt to ascribe negative characteristics to individuals associated

with the status quo while simultaneously placing a diminished value on considering that

individual in "totality" precisely because their association with said regime allows even a rational

and informed voter to be a cognitive miser (who are then tapped for their net impression by the

calculating and the uninformed).

Regime fatigue theory then is based on this idea that positive and negative associations

with a particular political construct (for our purposes here: the "status quo regime") can be

conferred upon a new candidate simply by their placement within a particular mental schema in

the individual's mind. Moreover, the negative associations within that schema will outweigh the

positive associations because of the "negativity effect". In essence, when a new candidate runs

for office from a regime that currently holds power, two paradoxical events occur at the same

time. In most cases, the individual is either a new comer to the field, or (more likely) running for

a higher-profile office than ever before. This means that your average voter's "impression" of

this individual will be for all intents and purposes a "first impression". However, this first

impression is also occurring within the schema of the ruling regime so paradoxically, the

impression can be, to a large extent, pre-formed before it is attached to any individual's name

through the use of cognitive scripting and a primacy placed on negative information. Research

into the negativity effect has shown that people who are shown six traits about an individual,

and then asked to describe their overall impression, for all five traits beyond the first, "there

was a tendency for participants to be influenced more by the negative adjectives than the

positive" (Levin and Schmidt, 1969).

Negativity Effect and the Media

This same effect is also systemic for those who consult resources passively for their

political information (such as the news media) because the media tends to only reports on

instances where the government has failed in some way as there is nothing particularly

newsworthy about "functioning government".   A properly functioning government then is the

(unrealistic?) baseline expectation. As Stimson points out, government is "always the bad guy"

when it comes to the media because the media has assigned itself the role of watchdog

(Stimson, 2004). Therefore, those who utilize low cost cues to form their political opinions will

be faced with an increasingly negative rising tide of dissatisfaction with the status quo from the

politically informed that acts as a catalyst to propagate the negativity effect until regime change

occurs. Pre-television media was thought by many social scientists to have minimal political

effects in that they largely reinforced existing attitudes and commitments (Berelson, Lazarsfeld,

and McPhee, 1954). The reality of that is debatable but the intentional decision was made to

begin the data set in 1968, after television had become an integral part of the political process.

The literature on the effects of mass media on the political process is vast and

contradictory. Suffice it to say, no clear cut consensus exists as to the potential effects that

media has on the political process though the preponderance of evidence seems to lean in the

direction that fears about a 1984-style thought police state are overblown. Kellstedt makes the

argument in his study of race that the media does not tell the people what to think, but what to

think about (Stimson, 2004; Kellstedt, 2003). This research project concerns itself only with

mass media as an explanatory factor to operationalize how and why the regime stage of an

incumbent party could lead to vote entropy.   To this end, one must only establish that media

coverage tends to be negative in its coverage of governmental affairs. Additionally, if Kellstedt

is correct and the media does play a role in setting agenda by providing the topics of public discourse, then it only logically follows that those topics that will be discussed in relation to the government will be areas in which the government may seem to be remiss (e.g. the lead story on the nightly news is never going to be "everything is fine").

Negative Campaigning

In addition to the possible influences of mass media on public dissatisfaction, it is also necessary to study the potential influence of negative campaigning on public attitudes. While arguably high-profile contests in their own state, governors and senators rarely enjoy continuous media coverage except during major scandals, or if the politician is playing a key role in a major public policy debate.   If the last few elections are any indication, the best strategy that a self-interested senator could arguably employ is to fly under the radar as much as possible as those Senators who have sought to define their public persona along extreme partisan lines have tended to go down in electoral defeat (e.g. Santorum, Daschle, and aspiring candidate, Christine O'Donnell). With the exception of the political scandal, it is during the election campaign season, where depending on the strategy and war chest of one's opponent, the most potential exists for a negative characterization of one's policies and person to be put on display for the world to see. As with the literature on mass media, a whole book could be written on the subject of negative campaigning (and indeed many have been). Our immediate concerns to this study come down to three central questions. First, is negative campaigning on the rise or the decline? This is important because the potential exists here for reinforcement of the hypothesis. For example, some scientists (Jamieson, Waldman, and Sherr, 1998) argue that negative campaigning has been on the rise since the 1980s. If this is true, then the data dovetails nicely with the accelerating regime fatigue effects that I noted in the last twenty years in my earlier research into gubernatorial elections. Second, if negative campaigning is on the

rise or at least holding constant, does it achieve its desired effect? That is, does negative

campaigning (at best) help the attacking candidate's perception while hurting their opponent's,

or (at worst) does it at least hurt their opponent's perception amongst the public? The two

most recent books that attempt to answer this question, Ansolabehere and Iyengar's *Going*

Negative and more recently, Lau and Pomper's *Negative Campaigning: An Analysis of U.S.*

Senate Elections, reached the same conclusion: that fears of negative campaigning having

harmful effects on the democratic process are overblown, and that there is little to no evidence

that exists that quantifiably argues that negative political advertisements are any more effective

than positive political ads (Lau and Pomper, 2004). Lau and Pomper's argument is a nuanced

one though, and it is often mischaracterized when their conclusions are repeated by other

authors.   At first, one might interpret this as a potential blow against this project's hypothesis.

If negative campaigning doesn't work during the course of targeted media campaigns to

influence public opinion against a particular individual, then how are we to believe that the

more passive, but still adversarial, media coverage between elections will have any detrimental

effect? Two important points need to be made about Lau and Pomper's research. First, they

study negative advertising in a context vis-à-vis campaign strategy (e.g.. can one strip more

votes from his/her opponent by using negative campaigning than they can earn for themselves

through positive campaigning?). In answer to this question, Lau and Pomper argue that "no",

positive campaigning is just as effective if not more so. This does not mean in any way however

that a negativity effect does not occur. On the contrary, Lau and Pomper's evidence shows that

there is statistically significant effect that is seen with the use of negative campaigning at a .38

significance rate. (Lau and Pomper, 2004) However, they also find that the negativity effect

extends to the sponsor of the attack ad as well. Their conclusion warrants a direct quote at

length, "It does appear that the sponsoring candidate's opponent is liked less when he or she is

attacked by political advertising. Even so, this intended effect is counterbalanced by an even

stronger and highly significant decrease in the liking of (i.e. a "backlash" against) the sponsor- an

effect the sponsor of the ad certainly does not want to achieve." (Lau and Pomper, 2004) So

yes, Lau and Pomper are correct when they argue that from a candidate's perspective, negative

campaigning does not "work", but the criteria is defined through the prism of the candidate's

electoral success and not through the observation of a quantifiable negative effect on voter

sentiment towards the candidates (which does "work" and is measured). What goes unsaid

here is that if negative campaigning is on the rise and if both candidates are using negative

campaigning as a strategy (since the odds of a candidate "going negative" increases greatly once

his or her opponent goes negative), then what we are really seeing is an application of the

negativity effect to both candidates however this effect only matters to retrospective voters

across elections in a way that hurts the candidate from the status quo (i.e. the victor in the

previous contest) since they are the only candidate with a previous record to stand on. In other

words, negative campaigning will always tend to be a Pyrrhic victory over the long term for the

incumbent regime. Therefore, far from being a criticism, the work of Lau and Pomper actually

lends credence to the idea of a negativity effect and the possibility of regime fatigue by proving

through a meta-analysis that negative campaigning leads to negative perceptions amongst the

public. Regime fatigue could in fact be a lagging indicator when you control for the incumbent

advantage.

Operationalizing Negative Emotion

The most difficult obstacle faced during the development of regime fatigue theory

(other than there not being a centralized repository for gubernatorial election data on the state

level that was easily accessible) was the development of a reasonable framework to

operationalize the effect of emotional affect in a quantitative model. There is a large body of

literature on the subject dedicated to the whole range of human emotion. A clinical definition

of *affect* widely accepted in the burgeoning field of neuro-economics is "an episode of massive

synchronous recruitment of mental and somatic resources to adapt and cope with a stimulus

event that is subjectively appraised as being highly pertinent to needs, goals and values of the

individual" (Scherer, 2005). This definition, however, seems unnecessary obtuse. A more

reasonable definition is the "evolved cognitive response to the detection of personal

significance" (Neuman et al., 2007). Affect should be seen as different from, but related to,

cognition. The question of whether cognition drives emotional response or the visceral

emotional response to an outside event helps to channel an individual's cognitive processing is

an interesting one but also outside the scope of what can reasonably be addressed here. There

has been psychological research to support both the primacy of affect (Zajonc, 1982, 1990) and

later emerging research that views cognition as catalyst (Lazarus, 1999). For the purposes of

regime fatigue theory, finding an answer to this chicken and the egg question does not really

matter since it is mainly a bridge theory concerned primarily with establishing the existence or

non-existence of a very specific effect (proportional incumbent party vote deterioration).   Still,

it should be noted that there is enormous controversy about the proper emphasis that should

be attributed to affect in political modeling. The reality is probably something closer to a

recursive feedback loop where affect and cognition mutually influence each other.

There are three prevailing models that are used to characterize "the dimensionality of

affect: discrete models, valence models, and multidimensional models" (Neuman et al., 2007).

Historically, discrete models are the oldest, tracing their roots back to the great Scientific

Revolution of the early 17th century. A discrete model divides emotions along (presumably

universal) "human" categorical lines. The universally recognized emotions in psychology have

traditionally been anger, fear, disgust, sadness, happiness, and surprise. The tradition in

political science circles, largely driven by research in the National Election Studies tradition, has

been to focus on hope, pride, sympathy, disgust, anger, fear, and uneasiness (Kinder, Abelson,

and Fisk, 1979; Abelson et al., 1982; Neuman et al., 2007).

Proponents of the discrete and multi-dimensional analytic models will argue, more than

likely correctly, that the use of such models can measure the dynamics of human emotional

responses with greater accuracy and nuance. On the surface, this seems fairly self-evident.

Implicit in the use of these models are two very large assumptions however: first, in studies that

do not involve human surveys for an appropriately large randomly-sampled human population,

it becomes the chore of researchers to identify, sort, and operationalize nuanced emotions into

categories that can be used to test for presumably distinct and different effects. For example,

was low voter turnout in a particular election due to voter *anger* at the incumbent or *disgust*

with the status quo (or their perception of the whole democratic system)? As the number of

emotional categories increase, so does the margin of error that the emotional affects in play are

being properly attributed. This problem is only magnified in multidimensional models, most of

which use some form of a model originally developed by Descartes called a "circumplex".

An example of the Emotion Circumplex by Prof. Robert Plutchik can be seen in Figure 1.

This circumplex illustrates the interrelation between primary emotions and their related feelings

between emotional groups. The notion that any researcher in the absence of survey data could

accurately assign affects to discrete categories with any degree of accuracy especially across

multiple dimensions seems to test the bounds of plausibility.
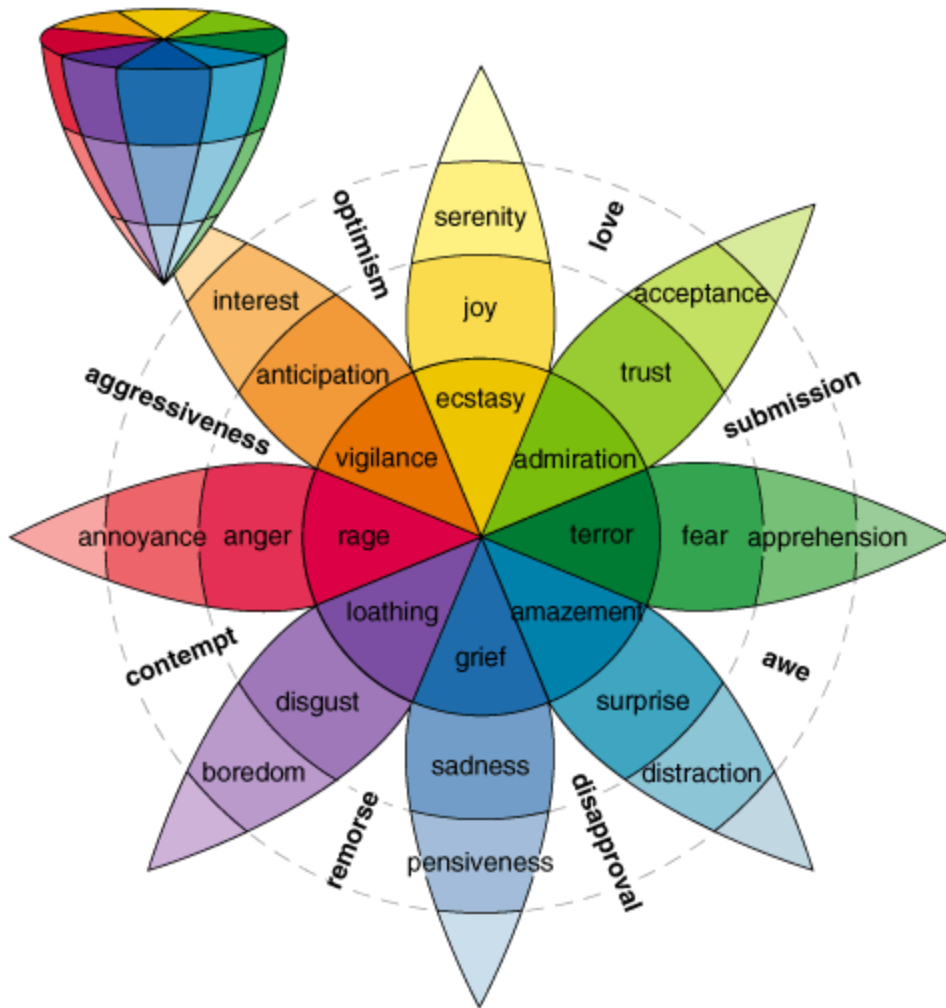
Figure 3. Plutchik's Emotion Circumplex. (1997)

Survey method approaches to discrete and multi-dimensional affect models have their own unique challenges. Surveys are not only premised on the assumption that the individual possesses a level of introspection capable of distinguishing between *anger* and *disgust* (in the best possible scenario on the negative end of the emotional continuum), but also between *sadness* and *grief* in a multidimensional model like the one shown.

Furthermore, the inaccuracy of a respondent's answer will increase as the time between events occurring and the individual being surveyed increases. Where one might have been

angry at a particular candidate at the time of a particular event, as that anger fades they might

report their emotional affect inaccurately as disgust because that is the predominate emotion in

regards to the subject now when viewed retrospectively. Even more troubling, if the outcome

of a political event that initially evoked a negative response by an individual had unintended

positive results for them in the interim, the possibility exists that they might not recall ever

being angry about anything at all (or at least downgrade their emotion to *unease* or *apathy*).

It is for this reason that this experiment was designed to use a valence model of positive

and negative sentiment to operational negative emotion through the variable of proportional

vote. A valence model is a binary-model that organizes affect along a single bipolar dimension,

in this case, positive and negative emotions toward the incumbent regime with a particular

interest in the negative. Such a simplistic model opens the design up to accusations of

oversimplification. Even so, this experimental approach can be defended for two reasons. First,

the existence of distinct positive and negative dimensions in studies of self-reported emotions is

well-established (Cacioppo et al., 1999; Watson and Tellegen, 1985; Watson and Clark, 1992). It

is also within the ability of widely disparate and randomly-sampled individuals to assign self-

reported emotions consistently across a valence model even when the results are analyzed

using varying types of controlled measurement (Watson and Clark, 1992). In short, the valence

model is easily understood and works. Future research in this arena will probably have to

depend heavily on survey research and the valence model has shown itself to work particular

well when tracking negative sentiment. Additionally, this is an exploratory mid-range theory

that is primarily concerned with looking for an aggregate significant effect so it seems prudent

to keep the initial modeling simple before moving to a more complex and nuanced approach.

Finally, the point should be made that a more complex model utilizing multidimensional and

nuanced negative emotions and the differing individual responses to those emotions can still achieve the same effect in a binary election.

For example, there has been a large amount of research conducted into the negative effects of anger and anxiety on individual responses and preferences. While both negative emotions, the responses to anger and anxiety are very different. "Clinical and cognitive psychologists regard anxiety as a response to an external threat…over which the threatened person has little control" (Neuman et al., 2007; Eysenck, 1992), while anger "arises in response to a negative event that frustrates a personally relevant or desired goal" (Neuman et al., 2007; Carver, 2004). The subtle difference here is in the perception (or reality) of some degree of control in the outcome. For example, an individual is likely to be more *anxious* about a candidate with whom they disagree political as to the uncertainty of the future if they are elected. However, a candidate that ignores or votes against the policy positions of his/her political base too many times is likely to provoke *anger* and ire because individuals who supported that candidate feel some sort of initial influence in that political regime. The expectation of voting for a political candidate is that your policy preferences will be considered and in most cases, supported.

Unfortunately, most political science research into anxiety has occurred on the national level but it has shown that individuals who feel anxious about a presidential candidate exhibit "slightly greater interest in campaigns, care more who wins, and follow campaigns more closely in newspapers and magazines even when controlling for political interest" (Neuman et al., 2007; Marcus and MacKuen, 1993; Marcus et al., 2000). Pratto and John (1991) show that those self-reporting negative emotions produce greater vigilance and attention to negative stimuli and the individuals who categorize their prevailing mood as "negative" tend to possess deepened levels of cognitive processing (Bless et al., 1992). This increased emphasis on cognition has also been

extended to political information processing (Marcus and MacKuen, 1993; Marcus et al., 2000).

When an individual's perceived candidate is out of power and there is a great deal of anxiety

about the opposition candidate in the next election, then individuals tend to place a higher

emphasis on calculated cognitive processing (in other words, they start to vote their rational

interest). Anger has a distinctly different effect. "Anger is often associated with lower levels of

cognitive effort and less thorough cognitive processing than anxiety" (Neuman et al., 2007;

Bodenhausen et al., 1994; Tiedens and Linton, 2001). While outside of the scope of this thesis,

the psychological research hints at an ironic and paradoxical human foible. An individual who is

angry that things are not going his/her way may be more likely to vote against their own interest

(or more likely just not participate in an election) even though they have in some measure more

control or influence over the outcome of a situation than an individual experiencing anxiety.

Simultaneously, anxious individuals will be more motivated to vote for an opposition candidate.

In other words, two distinct negative reactions can both contribute in their own way to a

diminished proportional vote for the incumbent regime.

Incumbent Advantage

Incumbency advantage is a well-established concept in political science literature

though the sources of this attributed advantage can range from a consciously designed

institutional advantage as discussed by David Mayhew in his seminal work, *Congress: The

Electoral Connection*, or something as seemingly innocuous as the advantage of a greater name

recognition being utilized as a voting cue by low-information voters (Hawley, 1973). The specific

source or sources of incumbent advantage are not of relevance to this study. No fountainhead

of incumbent advantage needs to be identified only the existence of incumbent advantage as an

effect needs to be acknowledged so that it can adequately be controlled for in the study itself.

Additionally, it is important to note that incumbent advantage appears to be increasing in the

U.S. states at least in regards to legislative bodies (Cox and Morgenstern, 1993), but this

increase reasonably could extend to the executive branch as well though more study is needed.

While incumbent advantage is a relatively uncontroversial topic in terms of its actual existence

there is still extensive debate clustering around issues of a methodology for accurately

measuring its influence (Gelman, 1990). Accordingly, the question of whether this incumbent

advantage extends to the candidate's party is a much more controversial topic. In relation to

executive branch elections, parties as a whole seem to incur a "third-term penalty"

(Abramowitz, 1988). In other words, incumbent advantage, at least in regards to the executive

branch, seems to be associated with the outgoing individual candidate and does not extend (and

possibly even harms) that candidate's party. This adds further credence to the idea of regime

fatigue growing in succession which each election.

Existing Predictive Presidential Models

A number of different models for predicting national elections currently exist and some

variation of "party fatigue" or a "third-term penalty" is present in many of them. This review is

merely a cursory examination of some of the different approaches that have been taken to

predict national elections results with a special emphasis on the "Time-for-Change Model" since

it appears to have incorporated the idea of some form of party fatigue to the greatest extent

and thus has the most bearing on this specific research proposal. Acknowledging the grossness

of the generality, presidential prediction models fall into four broad categories: economic

performance, presidential approval, primary performance and a hybrid approach. Some

forecasting models place the emphasis on the economic performance of the country as a whole

(Campbell and Garand, 2000) while others stress the approval rating of the President (Lewis-

Beck and Rice, 1992). A more recent approach has to been to use the primary performance of

the candidate as the key predictor (Norpoth, 2001). The most methodologically-complex model

(and the one chiefly discussed in relation to this research project) is the Time-for-Change Model,

which utilizes a hybrid approach of three different variables: the incumbent President's approval

rating; the change in Real GDP; and, a dummy variable based on whether the President's party

has controlled the White House for only one term or for more than one term (Abramowitz,

2004). All of these models are specific to Presidential elections and their inadequacy for

accurately explaining, more broadly, gubernatorial elections and, more specifically, the effect of

regime fatigue in those elections will be discussed later under project methodology. As noted

above, a full review of the literature concerning governors is beyond the scope of this proposal.

However, it is pursuant to this project to acknowledge and synthesize a few items. Building on

our knowledge of incumbency advantage, studies have shown that this advantage extends to

governors and increased exponentially starting in the 1960s up until at least until the early-

1980s (Tompkins, 1984). The press coverage of Gubernatorial races tends to focus on issues

specific to that particular state (and subsequently that particular regime) while coverage of state

Senate races tend to tie those races in with national issues concerning the current Presidential

administration (Tidmarch, Hyman, and Sorkin, 1984)[4]. Simon found that individuals tend to alter

their vote for governor based on their evaluation of the president's performance in office, yet

this trickledown effect of good or bad "will" did not seem to be limited to party identification

(e.g. all incumbent governors benefit from a popular President) (Simon, 1989). Research

conducted in the late 1980s argued that a voter's evaluation of the overall national economy

does not seem to influence their preferences in relation to selecting a Governor and that

Gubernatorial races do not display any clear signs of economic voting in aggregate (Chubb,

1988). These studies, aside from being dated, did not look at institutional factors such as

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[4] It should be noted that this particular study was a case study of only one election year (1982)
and is not necessarily indicative of a larger trend. More comprehensive study is needed before
broad conclusions can be drawn.

incumbency or social demographics such as population density. The perceived lack of economic

voting and preference ordering could be a result of other systemic factors. In point of fact,

incumbent candidates across the board demonstrate a remarkable amount of insulation from

high rates of unemployment and inflation as shown in a study of fourteen states by Kenney

(Kenney, 1983). Last but not least, split-ticket voting tends to be higher in state elections, which

can be attributed to either a variation in the salience of issues with voters on a state level versus

a national level, or as others have argued, senate and gubernatorial races tend to emphasize

highly visible candidates with weak party identifiers (Beck, Baum, Clausen, and Smith, 1992).

This is crucial because taken in whole, the ideas of Stimson, Converse, Zaller, and Feldman offer

a third explanation not found in Beck et. al.'s study. As noted above, the number of individuals

truly interested in politics to the extent that they are willing to self-identify consistently with a

political label (and the pressure for political consistency that comes with it) is very small. This

number can be assumed to decrease as the importance of the contested political decreases

(e.g., very few individuals have a passionate political interest in the county coroner race).

Therefore, the information costs associated with becoming an informed voter increase as the

level of office decreases (it is an inversely proportional relationship). As the contested political

office becomes less important, the number of voters who act as a traditional rational and

calculating voter (who were never a large number to begin with) begins to decrease dramatically

as more and more individuals find the information cost of being "informed" too high and instead

look for their voting cues from other trusted sources (whether active or passive). This idea

offers a concise and empirically consistent third explanation to Beck et. al.'s study that finds an

increase in split ticket voting in gubernatorial elections.

Social Networks, Homophily and Downsian Modeling

Much of the emerging current literature dealing with social networks and their effects on political preferences seems very promising if it can be adequately integrated parsimoniously into a regime fatigue effect framework. The research of Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague seems to be particularly relevant here. In a 2004 study of political preferences, they found that those individuals surveyed who are willing to express and discuss openly their political preferences would be seen as a more persuasive individual if they lived within a social network where their preferences were widely shared by their fellow members. (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague, 2004) Individuals also tend to engage in social clustering: where Republicans are more likely to talk politics with Republicans, etc. and Huckfeldt cites several studies to this effect. (Huckfeldt, Ikeda, and Pappi, 2005; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995; Huckfeldt et al., 2004). While this phenomenon is known primarily in political science circles as "social clustering", it has been studied more extensively in the field of Sociology under the label of "homophily". Whether the area of study was adolescent friendships (Kandel, 1978), voluntary social organizations (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987), racial lines (Mollica and Gray, 2003) or even online dating (Fiore, 2005); the tendency for individuals to segregate themselves along lines of shared characteristics or preferences was quantifiably observable at a statistically significant level.

As it relates to politics, the existence of political parties with stated ideological platforms seems to be an obvious manifestation of social clustering. Political parties are really an institutionally-driven system of social clusters that facilitate homophily though organizing individuals along the most rudimentary lines defined by the lowest common ideological denominators. The "first past the post" voting system still practiced on the state and national level in the U.S. necessitates organization around a single-dimensional axis popularized by Anthony Downs in *An Economic Theory of Voting* (Downs, 1957). Generalized agreement on broad and nebulous issues (e.g. the size of government) exists within a party but the amount of

preference diversity within an American party is enormous. For example, a Northeast

Republican will often share more in common with a western Democrat at first glance. As

sociological research has shown, even in groups that are organized along ostensibly

homogenous characteristics (religion, racial lines, etc.), the majority of individuals will still

engage in the practice of further homophily, engaging in continued segregation of themselves

along lines of shared perceived interest or goals. (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987;

McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 2001)

There is a dark side to homophily as well. In "closed" systems where similar individuals

only associate with one another, their views become more extreme over time (Wojcieszak,

2008; Zahra, 2009) and evidence of a "false consciousness" effect (Wojcieszak and Price, 2009)

has been shown to occur. This "false consciousness" manifests as a highly selective world-view

characterized by group-think, a polarization of ideological viewpoints and an inhibited-ability to

order preferences. This is still an emerging field and admittedly the subjects of study have

tended to be outlier groups in the first place (religious fundamentalists, neo-nazis, etc.) so a

strong enough case has not yet been made for a universal application. Nor is the implication

that the end result of relative homogeneity and shared preferences always an extreme or anti-

social end result over time. What is established and observable however is a push towards

homophily occurs even in similar groups and already relatively extreme views tend to become

magnified and the boundaries expanded in social networks as homogeneity increases. Back to

the political science literature, Druckman and Nelson show that in heterogeneous social

networks where there is a wide diversity of opinion across the network that the group becomes

more resistant to issue framing by political elites. (Druckman and Nelson, 2003). The literature

from the field of political science seems to mutually reinforce the studies done in the fields of

sociology, communication and cognitive psychology. Diversity in social networks seems to

moderate extreme views and help to mitigate the effects of false consciousness. This

generalized statement should not be read without an important caveat. At the risk of moving

outside the scope of this thesis but in the interest of clarification, it seems that what the

research really suggests is the possibility of beneficial moderating effects within certain non-

zero sum parameters. Additionally, institutional influence and demographics cannot be denied.

In situations where much of diversity arises from zero-sum social cleavages (like religion for

example), the outcomes could be very different. All of the current research cited here applies to

the United States specifically.

All of this research has relevance to hypothesis formation for regime fatigue theory

when considered alongside a Downsian voting model. Anthony Downs expanded on Duncan

Black's theorem, the median voter theorem, that a candidate whose policy position is closest to

that of the median voter will be successful in a general election. Downs argued that this results

in candidates taking very extreme conservative/liberal positions in a primary election (closer to

the median voter of a highly partisan population) and then move towards the center in a general

election. The Downsian model, featured in *Figure 4*, only considers elections in a vacuum

however (which is part of the reason for its durability).
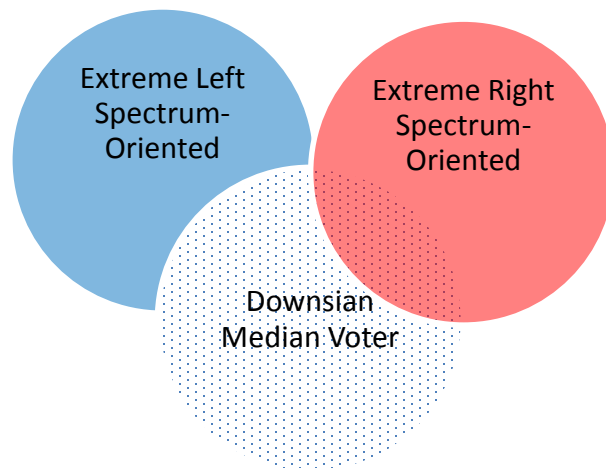
Figure 4. A Typical Downsian Election.

If the negativity effect is real then the potential for the development of a more robust and complex theory exists if elections can be considered across time. Furthermore, ancillary research into the field of Social Networks and social clustering provides the means in which this negativity effect permeates throughout a population. This paper hypothesizes that in addition to the existence of a regime fatigue effect that this effect will be exacerbated by population density because exposure to socially clustered viewpoints will systemically move away from the position of the median voter in a general population and since negative information is prioritized higher and has a higher psychological priority then it logically follows that even the Downsian model must break down over time for an incumbent regime unless some form of "reset" occurs (in this case, regime change).

This research has two additional implications for regime fatigue theory and hypothesis formation. First and foremost, research into social clustering by individuals who share general preferences seems to lend credence to Stimson's idea that the calculating but uninformed voter will consult trusted sources of information within their social network when forming their voting preferences. More importantly, however, if all individuals in a social network on subject to the

negativity effect on a personal level then even these political "tastemakers" are subject to its

effects. Therefore, dissatisfaction with a current regime can manifest in various forms ranging

from simple non-participation to crossing the party line. Furthermore, this dissatisfaction then

can spread almost virally throughout those tastemakers' own social networks. This could have a

"double whammy" effect on the typical Downsian continuum as lingering negative sentiment

remains across the board, non-participation of incumbent supporters (or defection to more

extreme opposition parties/candidates), and increased participation by the supporters of the

party not in power could actually lead to a shift in the make-up of the median voter.

Remember, the median voter is merely the lowest common denominator of the preferences of

the individuals *participating* in the election. In other words, the median voter in the Presidential

election of 2008 was arguably different than the median voter of the mid-term elections of

2010. *Figure 5* shows an example of how a Downsian model could be changed after a

Conservative incumbent regime at the next open election.
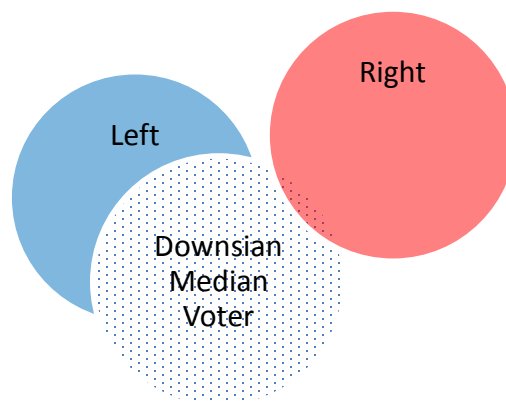
Figure 5. The Downsian Median Voter under severe regime fatigue.

The Left and Right-label circles represent *eligible* voters in that particular state not

actual voters. The Downsian Median Voter represents the policy positions that fall within the

acceptable parameters to be accepted as concurrent with the policy position of the theoretical

median voter. The regime fatigue effect does not require that political party affiliation (or

individual policy positions) change over time nor does it even presuppose that majority of individuals need to be able to express their political policy positions in an order of preference or across multiple dimensions. Instead it offers a window into explaining why so often in elections here in the United States, individuals paradoxically seem to vote *against* their own interests. This idea is further expanded upon and tested in the experiment's hypothesis.

A secondary implication that might have some merit in further studies is the idea of resistance to issue framing in relation to demographic heterogeneity. If the research is correct and political elites have more difficult framing issues in their preferred terms in diverse societies, then it logically follows that more negative or oppositional information about salient political issues will be available to the voting public. Furthermore, a more diverse society would necessarily engage in a wider range of social clustering across a greater range of social dimensions. Both of these characteristics (greater availability of contradictory information, greater social clustering across greater dimensions) should serve to exacerbate regime fatigue. This hypothesis is tested in this thesis and the results appear later in the paper.

Existing Literature on Gubernatorial and Senatorial Contests

As noted above, a full review of the literature concerning senators is beyond the scope of this proposal. However, it is pursuant to this project to acknowledge and synthesize a few items. The press coverage of Gubernatorial races tends to focus on issues specific to that particular state (and subsequently that particular regime) while coverage of state Senate races tend to tie those races in with national issues concerning the current Presidential administration. (Tidmarch, Hyman, and Sorkin, 1984)[5] In point of fact, incumbent candidates demonstrate a remarkable amount of insulation from high rates of unemployment and inflation

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[5] It should be noted that this particular study was a case study of only one election year (1982), and is not necessarily indicative of a larger trend. More comprehensive study is needed before broad conclusions can be drawn.

as shown in a study of fourteen states by Kenney. (Kenney, 1983) Last but not least, split-ticket

voting tends to be higher in state elections which can be attributed to either a variation in the

salience of issues with voters on a state level versus a national level or as others have argued,

senate and gubernatorial races tend to emphasize highly visible candidates with weak party

identifiers. (Beck, Baum, Clausen, and Smith, 1992) This is crucial because taken in whole, the

ideas of Stimson, Converse, Zaller, and Feldman offer a third explanation not found in Beck et

al.'s study. As noted above, the number of individuals truly interested in politics to the extent

that they are willing to self-identify consistently with a political label (and the pressure for

political consistency that comes with it) is very small. This number can be assumed to decrease

as the importance of the contested political decreases (i.e., very few individuals have a

passionate political interest in the county coroner race). Therefore the information costs

associated with becoming an informed voter increase as the level of office decreases, it is an

inversely proportional relationship. As the contested political office becomes less important,

the number of voters who act as a traditional rational and calculating voter (who were never a

large number to begin with) begins to decrease dramatically as more and more individuals find

the information cost of being "informed" too high and instead look for their voting cues from

other trusted sources (whether active or passive). This idea offers a concise and empirically

consistent third explanation to Beck et al.'s study that finds an increase in split ticket voting in

gubernatorial elections.

Deficiencies in the Literature

As Malcolm Jewell noted in a classic essay, research of state government has received a

low priority in the political science community (Jewell, 1982), and oftentimes studies on a

national level must be retrofitted to fit into a state or local paradigm with various degrees of

success. The attempt to study the possible influence of regime fatigue on a state level is beset

by similar problems. While the literature regarding issues of incumbent advantage and
gubernatorial elections, vis-à-vis elections for state-wide positions as a whole, is relatively
robust, no predictive models *specific to Senatorial or Gubernatorial elections* could be found.
The pioneering research of Stimson has begun to explore the idea of rising and falling waves of
voter consent for regimes and Stimson's contributions are numerous. Literature that seeks to
examine Stimson's ideas or complementary notions of regime fatigue much less literature that
attempts to isolate the effect of regime fatigue as a single independent variable does not exist.
Stimson does mention as a brief aside in his own research that the patterns present in his idea
of tides of consent on the national level also seem to be present in gubernatorial races, but the
subject is not discussed in depth. (Stimson, 2004) As this hopefully demonstrates, not only is
there a dire need to examine if there is any legitimacy to a theory of regime fatigue as a whole
but if regime fatigue can be shown to be real then the potential for applying this theory to the
very specific realm of state elections is vast.

Hypothesis and Methodology

As the literature review has shown, there are literally hundreds of research papers examining the dynamics of emotion in political thinking and preference formation. "There are 23 named theories, models, or central concepts used to explicate the interaction of affect and cognition at various points…" (Neuman, et al., 2007). In order for a theory to rise to the level of warranting its own name as a model, it must say something substantially "new" or never argued before. The end goal of political scientists in an ideal world then is to combine, fine tune and synthetize various disparate theories into consolidated ones that have predictive value to the social scientist. Randall Collins in his book *The Sociology of Philosophies* (1998) tracked the waxing and waning of literally hundreds of different schools of philosophy (both religious and political) from ancient Greece to modern times. He developed the notion of limited attention space for researchers also known as his "law of small numbers". Since scholars can only manage the debate about a handful of theories or models at any given time, it becomes necessary for theories to blend and incorporate their specific ideas into a larger framework. It is as if in effect, they were one larger single-celled organism enveloping another smaller prey. The authors of *The Affect Effect* point out that Miller's work in political and religious philosophy could also apply to other field of the social sciences. "We may at least have stumbled onto a useful and possibly achievable goal: to move from 23 to 6 or 7 key concepts and models that attempt to capture the essence of the interaction of political passion and cognition." (Neuman, et al., 2007) The academic need now has moved beyond the staking of theoretical claims and into the more tedious realm of parsing over two dozen divergent theories down into something that is practical and applicable in the real world. There is a mandate to move from the realm of the theoretical political science to applied political science.

The creation of a new theory for the sake of a new theory is an exercise in academic hubris that this paper hopes to avoid. What I tentatively called Regime Fatigue theory in earlier research is at best a mid-level theory that attempts to statistically quantify a specific phenomenon under certain conditions (in this case a non-incumbent election). A more accurate term then might be that of the "regime fatigue effect". This effect could neatly fold or be incorporated into a number of the currently existing theories and models from a Heuristic/Systemic Model (Chaiken, 1980) to something more cognitively-oriented like Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991). Therefore, the emphasis of my hypothesis is focused on quantifying regime fatigue effect and supporting or disproving the notion that this effect is rooted in psychological processes permeating through a social network. If social networks have no influence and the manifestation of negative emotion is an isolated psychological process on the level of the individual then external factors such as population density should not have a significantly pronounced influence. By design, the theoretical foundations of the regime fatigue effect have been left broad enough to be integrated into several of the existing models dealing with affect and political thinking.

The decision was made to isolate the number of elections past the original incumbent regime as the sole independent variable of consequence for three reasons. First and foremost, the principle intention of this study is the hope of quantifying, in some meaningful way, the effect of regime fatigue on voter preferences. The only way to do so is to isolate the variable. Secondly, none of the pre-existing national voting models adequately address voter preferences in Senatorial races. An approval rating model could be applicable to a Gubernatorial or Senatorial contest but its value largely applies to an individual who has already served a previous term. This would make little sense in regards to an open seat election. The methodology of this experiment is purposely trying to control against the incumbent advantage

by excluding incumbents from the data set, and simultaneously arguing for the evidence of a transfer of the negativity effect through social networks and conceptualized in schema-based memory recall. The election model that emphasizes the incumbent's performance in a primary is similarly inapplicable since not only are there no incumbent candidates in the data set, but the primary process differs widely across the states. This leaves the Time-For-Change model as the only pre-existing model that incorporates some aspect of regime fatigue in its calculations. Why not use the Time-For-Change model? First, the Time-For-Change model was essentially designed under the assumption that an election is a referendum on the performance of the incumbent president. (Abramowitz, 2004) Additionally, it is chiefly utilized as a predictive tool not as a way to measure the effect of one independent variable in isolation. Most importantly, however, the Time-For-Change theory treats the idea of "party fatigue" as a dummy value of either a "1" or a "0" depending on whether the President's party (in this case, the Senator or Governor if we attempting to import the theory to the state level) has controlled the White House for more than one term. This is problematic to our methodology for a number of reasons. The model does not distinguish between individual candidates. If it is the same candidate in an election, they might enjoy the "incumbent advantage". If it is another candidate from the same party attempting to win their first term as an individual but their party's third term in power then they might incur the "third term penalty". Simply treating Time-For-Change as a binary variable provides a blanket and static penalty for terms in succession without controlling for incumbent advantage. In addition, the parameters of the regime fatigue theory call for a dynamic variable in order to demonstrate a real usefulness since a critical component of the theory is the ultimately cyclical nature of American politics. This influence cannot be adequately quantified utilizing a dummy variable. Lastly, on the philosophical front, the

selection of successive terms past original incumbency is used as the sole independent variable in an attempt to keep the theory of regime fatigue as parsimonious as possible.

This experiment hypothesizes that the proportional vote (defined as the variable *Prop_Vote* and consisting of the incumbent vote *Incumbent_Vote* divided by the opposition vote *Opp_Vote*) will decrease with each successive election (defined as *Fatigue_Stage).* *Fatigue_Stage* consists of values from 0 to infinity with each successive value of 1 representing each additional open seat election after the incumbent regime candidate serves out his/her term limit and/or elects not to run again (or is otherwise incapacitated). Opposition vote will be considered to include both the rival partisan party and any votes garnered by third party candidates since it is expected that vote entropy will occur on both sides of a particular regime's "bell curve" since each action by a regime simultaneously alienates those who think the actions goes "too far" as well as those who feels that it does not go "far enough". "Regime" in this experiment will be defined as partisan affiliation since by choosing to examine Gubernatorial and Senatorial races, the experiment is inherently attempting to control for the effect of any nonpartisan ballot design on the aggregate results (e.g. every Gubernatorial and Senatorial race is a partisan race as opposed to a Mayoral race for example). Furthermore, it is important to note that this project's primary intention is not to act as a forecast model for potential winners of state-wide contests only as a forecasting instrument for an ever increasing opposition voting bloc against the prevailing regime which each successive election. This model recognizes that some states are intensely more competitive than others so the standard for falsifiability of the theory is not a failure to predict electoral outcomes, but a failure to show a meaningful and successive increase in the opposition vote in aggregate to a regime after the initial incumbent. Discontent will not be transferred by the population on the whole since public opinion is highly fluid but the idea is that it will be carried over between elections by actors with an active

political interest and identification (e.g. political "tastemakers"). This discontent will then

permeate throughout the larger (majority) percentage of voters each election that fit the

category of a Zaller-Feldman voter through individual social networks (Huckfeldt and Mendez,

2004).

The data set (discussed in detailed below) was then taken through a compared means

analysis both on an individual case level (to test for a consistent deterioration of voter support)

and on a gross means comparison grouped by fatigue levels in an attempt to measure an

expectation of voter entropy with each successive regime generation after the original. The

dummy variables of *Incumbent_Running* and *Pres_Elect* were utilized to exclude elections in

which the incumbent candidate was participating (only elections with a value of "1" indicating

an open seat election were considered) and to control and measure for any effects of holding an

election in a presidential election year with "0" equaling a year in which an election occurred

and "1" equaling a year in which it did not. Two additional mean comparisons were made called

My_Pres and *Not_My_Pres* were used only in those cases where elections occurred in a

Presidential election year to separate the mean proportional vote in those open elections where

the incumbent party's president won the election as opposed to those elections where he did

not to see if the Presidential coat tail effect (if any) was related to partisan labels.

Additionally, the number of candidates in the election that actually appeared on the

ballot was tracked under a variable of *Num_Can*. Write-in votes were still counted towards the

opposition vote totals under the general category of "scattered" while all other individual

candidate votes were attached to an individual candidate's name that ran on the ballot. The

opposition vote variable consisted of every vote not for the incumbent candidate with the

exception of blank votes (which are tabulated on New York ballots under the category of

Scattered). Votes were organized and tracked by individual and not by party. On the rare

instances in which one individual ran on multiple tickets, their votes across party tickets were totaled together under that individual's name. Elections in which only one candidate appeared on the ballot (both incumbent and open seat elections) were excluded from the data set so as to not disproportionately skew the proportional vote of the incumbent party.[6]

Last but not least, it must be acknowledged that some elections are won or lost based on single "game-changing" events such as a political scandal. These elections could presumably overcome the normal voter entropy associated with regime fatigue because such events would be extensively covered and the press and the information costs of becoming an informed and calculating voter would drop significantly. Therefore, this project will utilize the same methodology and definition used by Ferguson in her study modeling chief executive success. (Ferguson, 2003) For the purposes of this project, scandal will be defined as "significant, numerous, or persistent legal or financial questions" (ethical questions that are not legal in nature have been excluded due to their subjectivity). A dummy variable of *scandal* was utilized to exclude votes (utilizing a value of "1") where a notable scandal occurred in the run-up to the election that would have skewed the results of the election by providing a lower cost voting cue for a Zaller-Feldman voter through intensive media coverage than the default assumed calculation of consulting a trusted source. The scandal variable was only given a value of "1" in the case of a scandal occurring to one of the two major party candidates since there were several instances of scandals involving third party candidates who received less than 1% of the general vote historically so their inclusion should not dramatically affect the final results. [7]

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[6] Additionally, some states like Louisiana have state laws which state that votes do not have to even be counted in elections where a candidate runs unopposed.
[7] A list of excluded Senatorial elections appears in the Appendix A.

The Southern Exception

While a regime fatigue effect was able to be measured across all of the states in aggregate in regards to gubernatorial elections with my last data set, the effect was tempered by the inclusion of the Southern states. The Southern states in generally have traditionally been dominated by the Democratic Party (except on the Presidential level). In fact, the Democratic Party is so entrenched in the state and local politics of many Southern states to the extent that for much of the 20th century, as V.O. Key noted, the states of the South could almost be considered a de facto one-party state. Since regime fatigue theory rests on the assumption that all Americans are similarly affected by the negativity effect as described in cognitive psychology, an explanation is necessary to explain why the Southern states seem to be more resistant to regime fatigue than other states in the Union. Kenneth Greene's book, *Why Dominant Parties Lose*, provides some insight into this phenomenon. Greene argues that one-party states turn traditional public resources into patronage goods to bias electoral competition in their favor. Opposition parties fail in these states not because of limited voter demand but because their resource disadvantage forces them to form as niche parties with appeals that are out of step with the average voter. Because my previous data seems to show that regime fatigue becomes more pronounced in the last twenty years (as opposed to the last forty) and brings the Southern states more in line with the national average, Greene provides an explanatory model that could suggest how the expansion of Federal powers served to erode the traditional patronage system of the South moving the regime fatigue effect out of an intra-party contest to that of a traditional interparty contest.

However, for the purposes of this experiment, all of the Southern state elections were included in the data set to be considered (except those already excluded by scandal or because a candidate was running unopposed). The decision was made however to start the counting of

regime fatigue levels at the first election in the data set in 1968. I see this as my most

controversial decision because it could be argued that the Democratic party enjoyed a

stranglehold on the political landscape of the South until the 1960s. This is true, but the Sixties

also gave us the rise of television and other forms of mass media. It has never been my

intention to argue that regime fatigue as described here is a phenomenon for all times and all

places; it is decidedly a mid-level theory at best that attempts to describe incumbent party vote

entropy in the United States alone in an age of mass media and ever-increasing social networks.[8]

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[8] Though I would contend that regime fatigue effect can also be seen within primary elections in the South during the first half of the 20th century.

Data Set

The data set for this research project was every U.S. Senatorial election in every state of

the United States and every Gubernatorial election in every state for the past forty years (1968-

2008). The source of the Senatorial data sets? were PDF files available on the webpage of the

Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives.[9] The data was then hand-entered into the IBM SPSS

Statistics computer program for analysis. Each case utilized an ordinal variable, *Sen_Class*, that

ranged from one to three to distinguish what class the Senator fell into as provided by the

United States Constitution. Regimes were considered to be insulated within successive elections

within the same Senatorial class (e.g. Class I elections were considered separately from Class II

elections, etc.) An additional ordinal variable, *Per_Capita_Level*, was assigned to each case

ranging from one to three as well with "1" representing the bottom one-third of states with the

lowest number of people per capita for that election year, and "3" representing the top third of

states.

The Gubernatorial election data was collected when available online from available

state government resources. The overwhelming amount of election data that was not available

online (64.8% of the elections) was gathered and hand-coded into a spreadsheet from *The Book

of States* for that year published by the Council of State Governments. The online sources were

also fact-checked against the numbers published by *The Book of States*. While no major voting

discrepancies existed between the two sources, minor differences were found (usually taking

the form of minor candidates' votes being lumped under a category of *scattered*, or not noted

altogether online when less than 10-15 votes cast). Whenever a discrepancy did exist, the

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[9] http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/electionInfo/

voting numbers from *The Book of States* was used as it appeared to be more consistently and uniformly accurate.

The numbers for population density were taken from the U.S. Census starting in 1970 to 2010. For the years falling in between the decades, the difference between populations was divided by ten and increased/decreased by that proportional amount (e.g. a state with a population of 1 million people in 1970 and 1.1 million in 1980 would, for the purposes of this experiment, have an estimated population of 1.02 in 1972).

The diversity measurements were taken from a Census 2000 Fact Sheet (based on the 2000 Census), which was published by the Center for Regional Policy Studies in 2001. More current numbers based on the 2010 Census will no doubt be out very soon (if not already), but the U.S. Census had not yet begun when this research project started almost two years ago. The data set used represented the most comprehensive and methodologically sound data set that I could find that covered all fifty states.

The information on minimum and maximum personal income tax rates was also taken from *The Book of States* for the relevant year needed. This data set only provided a macro-level view of personal income tax increases and provided on minimum, mean, and maximum tax rates for the state so there was no easy way to see what percentage of the population fell under which particular rate. Only qualifying elections that occurred right after a personal income tax increases were included. The thought was that out of events that could be easily quantified and tracked across a forty year period from the secondary data available that personal income tax increases would be the event that would prove most uniformly unpopular across the states. Further, explanations of my concerns about this experimental dimension are noted in my results.

Results

Proportional Voting Results in Aggregate- U.S. Senatorial Elections

U.S. Senatorial Elections		
Proportion of Vote		
Regime Fatigue Level	Mean	N
Incumbent Generation	2.869399	511
First Generation	1.057947518	129
Second Generation	1.022116617	40
Third Generation	0.863041728	5
Total		703

Figure 6. Proportional vote by regime generation, senatorial elections 1968-2008.

The mean proportional vote for all races in which an incumbent took part in the dataset (511 cases) was 2.869399 and is likely a more accurate reflection of the true proportional vote an incumbent candidate should expect to receive in a Senatorial election all other things being equal. The incumbent generation in the compared means table above represents those cases starting in 1968 where an incumbent Senator was already in office and previous data was not available.
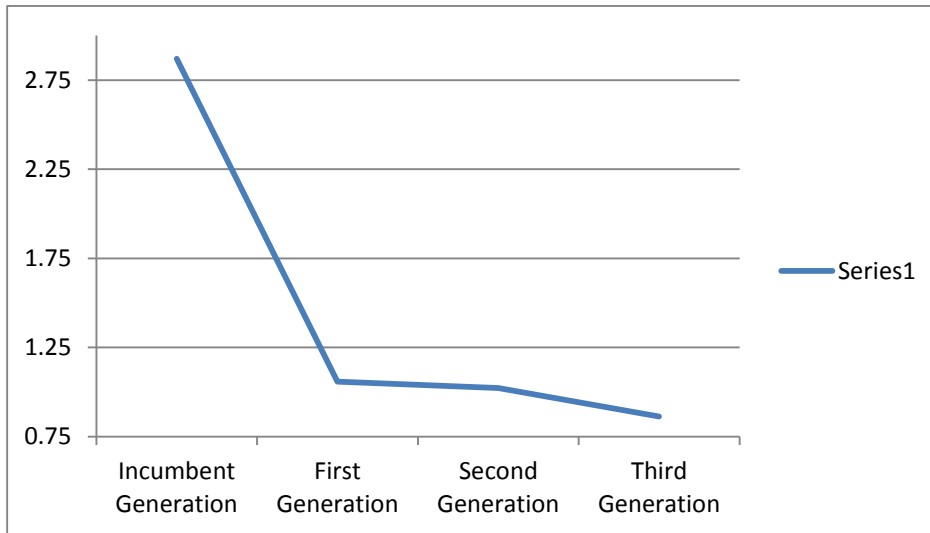
Figure 7. Proportional vote expressed graphically, senatorial elections 1968-2008.

The most precipitous drop-off in regime support is between the original election after the initial regime change occurred (the true incumbent candidate) and the first election after which the original incumbent is no longer on the electoral ticket. This sheer drop-off is a bit over-exaggerated by the nature of the experiment design and is probably in reality a little less dramatic. Since every election beyond the original elections that occurred necessitated the existence of an incumbent candidate (with rare exceptions), the effect of incumbent advantage has existed. Couple the bias for the incumbent with the existing literature that argues that potential candidates are also calculating individuals resulting in the most qualified candidates tending to enter races for open seats where they have the best chances of winning instead of choosing the uphill battle of running against an incumbent candidate (Bonneau and Hall, 2003), and you have a mean proportional vote value for the original incumbent that is inflated by two additional variables (institutionalized incumbent advantage and less instances of quality challengers). Furthermore, this is compounded by the fact that if regime theory has merit then it becomes problematic in the original election in which a regime is overturned to assess how many of those votes were truly cast "for" the victor and not "against" the now deposed incumbent. For these reasons, the mean proportional vote for all races in which the original incumbent was running was used.

It should also be pointed out that the number of cases in which a regime fatigue level of 3 was reached was very small (N=5). This might seem like too small of a number of cases to make an accurate pronouncement on any general downward trend, but the reality of most Senatorial elections in the United States in modern times is that each election is highly competitive when two qualified candidates exist. The small number of cases at fatigue level 3 and beyond may be more an indication of the inevitability of regime change in the modern

American system than an indication of scarcity of data. If the original hypothesis is accurate at all, then one would expect an extremely small number of *n* cases as one increases the regime fatigue level (and a mathematical inevitability since the number of cases can never increase between stages).

Proportional Voting Results in Aggregate- U.S. Gubernatorial Elections

U.S. Gubernatorial Elections		
Proportion of Vote		
Regime Fatigue Level	Mean	N
Incumbent Generation	1.823821	324
First Generation	.987147	154
Second Generation	.942116	68
Third Generation	.879634	6
Total		552

Figure 8. Proportional vote by regime generation, gubernatorial elections 1968-2008.

The secondary data analysis from the Gubernatorial races with the new expanded data set yielded largely with the same results as before. Because the same size (N=552) was significantly larger than the original data set (N=82), the effect of large outliers was minimized. There is remarkably little difference between the Senatorial and the Gubernatorial elections. While incumbent Senators capture a higher proportional vote total in aggregate than Governors, all bets appear to be off once there is an open election.
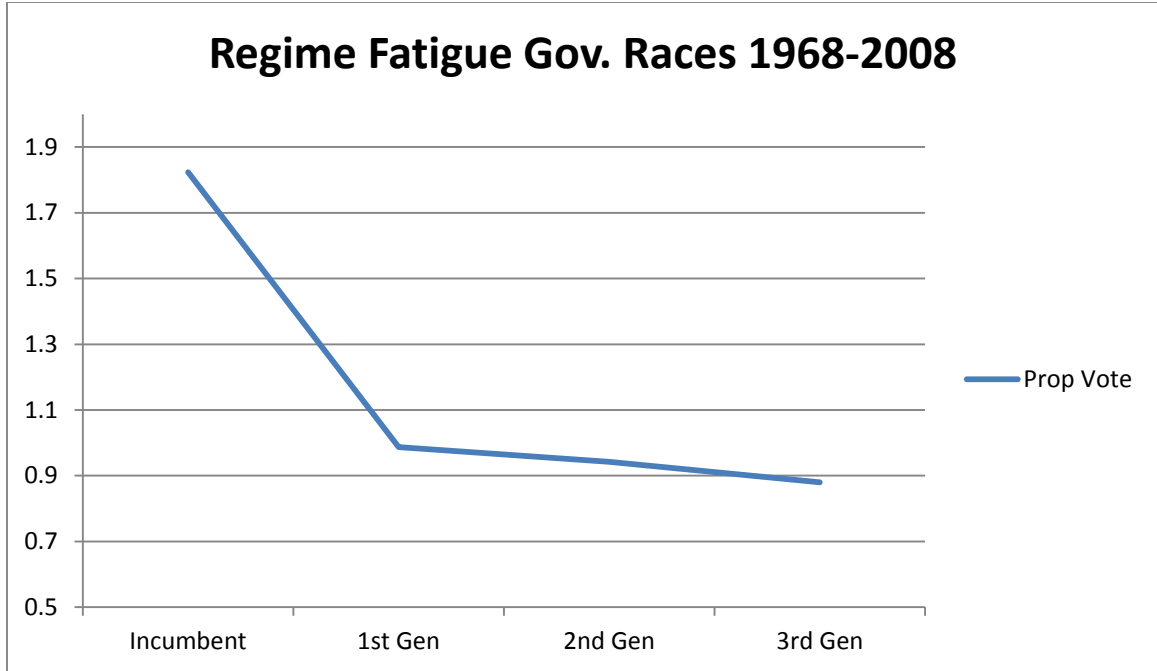
Regime Fatigue Gov. Races 1968-2008

Figure 9. Proportional vote expressed graphically, gubernatorial elections 1968-2008.

Also, like the Senatorial contests, there was a very small number of Third Generation

regimes. But again, this seems logically consistent with a regime fatigue effect.

Per Capita Analysis

Even more interesting was the analysis of the data results for U.S. Senatorial elections

when considered alongside the categorical variable for state populations per capita.[10]

Per Capita Pop	Low	Middle	High	Total
1st Fatigue Stage	1.271	1.062	1.041	1.058
2nd Fatigue Stage	1.101	1.061	.684	1.022
3rd Fatigue Stage	1.015	.928	.648	.863

Figure 10. Regime fatigue stages across population densities, senatorial elections 1968-2008.

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[10] The decision to use only the Senatorial data was purely a utilitarian one. The initial data entry was done in such a way that this data was easily extractable and sortable. Since the Gubernatorial data was collected first with a very specific single-minded purpose, it was a little harder to retroactively parse out for this particular dimension. Still with a pool of N=703 cases, I felt this was a large enough sample to prove an exploratory point.

Or expressed graphically:
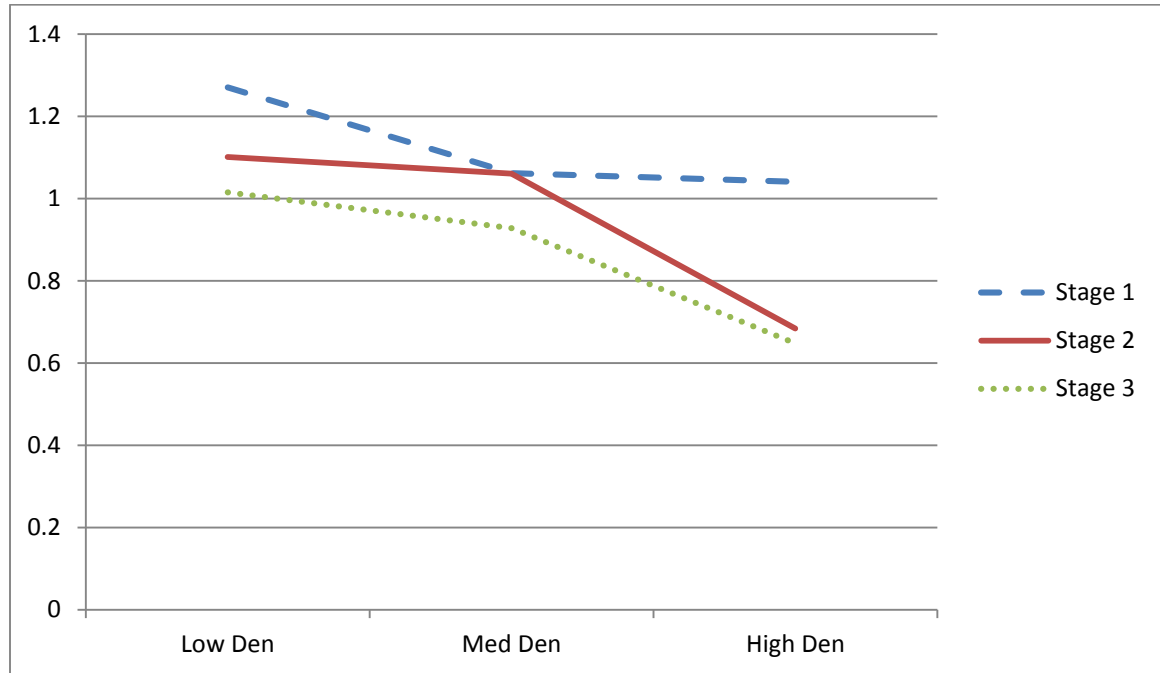
Figure 11. Regime fatigue stages across population densities, senatorial elections 1968-2008.

As the population density of the state increases, so does the subsequent regime fatigue effect. If it is reasonable to assume that as a state become more densely populated that the level of interpersonal communication or socialization increases (or if one is not willing to go that far then one must at least acknowledge that the net potential social network available increases), it also appears that, as hypothesized, the negativity effect permeates the social network of the state more easily and regime fatigue increases.

It should be noted that the dividing of the states into three categories of high, mid, and low for per capita ratings was done fairly arbitrarily, and seemed the most logical way of doing things given finite time and resources. However, often a very small margin separated a state from falling into one category or the other and many states alternated between categories from year to year. This data analysis method was just a first rudimentary stab at trying to apply some

of Huckfeldt's ideas of social networks to regime fatigue theory, and it should be noted that the author acknowledges that this is probably far from the ideal conditions for testing this variable.

The *Pres_Elect* dummy variable also yielded some interesting results (again for Senatorial elections only). The proportional vote for the incumbent regime also consistently decreased across regime stages when only elections occurring in non-Presidential election years were considered. The proportional vote actually increased (though only negligibly) across the regime stages when only Presidential election years were considered.

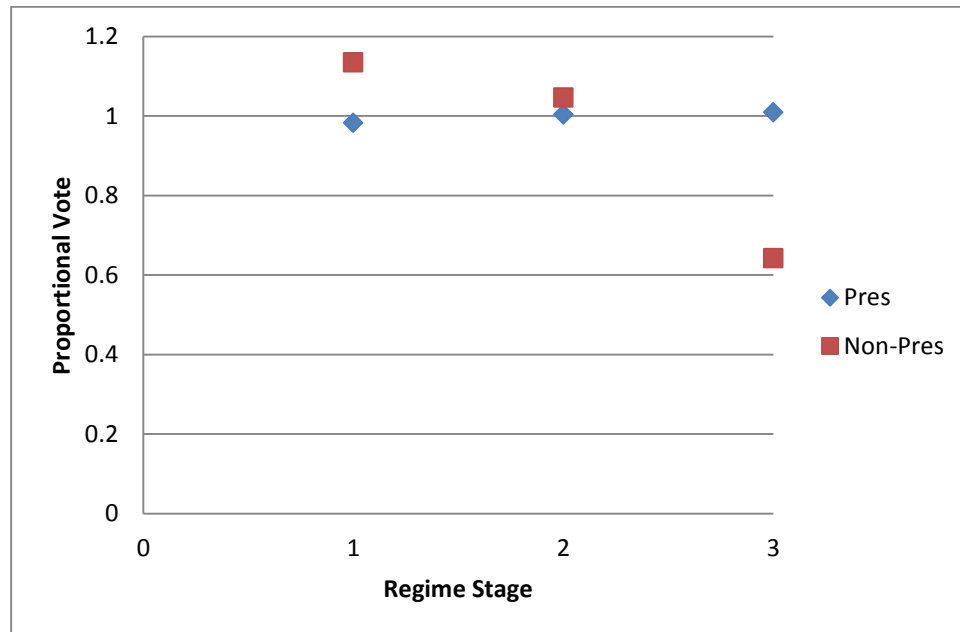|	Pres	Non-Pres
Stage 1	0.983697	1.135734
Stage 2	1.004516	1.046964
Stage 3	1.009905	0.642747

Figure 12. Regime fatigue stages for Presidential election years, senatorial elections 1968-2008.

While not enough time existed to explore the *My_Pres* and *Not_My_Pres* variables across all three regime fatigue stages, there seemed to be relatively little correlation between the party of the incumbent regime and the party of the Presidential victor when the variables were calculated for level three regimes. Perhaps the variable should be modified in the future

to not measure the Presidential victor, but to consider whether or not the sitting incumbent

President was from the same party as the incumbent Senatorial regime seeking re-election.

Racial Ethnic Diversity By State and Proportional Voting

The second dimension across which regime fatigue was measured was that of

racial/ethnic diversity. By comparing the rate regime fatigue in the top ten most

ethnically/racially diverse states[11] and the top ten least ethnically/racially diverse states[12], the

intent was to test the earlier hypothesis formation that more ethnically diverse states would

possess more inherent social cleavages which would accelerate a social clustering effect and in

turn, accelerate regime fatigue. Analysis was done across both the Senatorial and Gubernatorial

data sets.

	Top Ten Diverse States	**Top Ten Homogeneous States**
Incumbent Regime (Senators)	1.8432 (N=48)	3.8956 (N=32)
Fatigue Stage 1 (Senators)	.8408 (N=30)	1.277 (N=21)
Fatigue Stage 2 (Senators)	.9715 (N=7)	.8048 (N=7)
Incumbent Regime (Governors)	1.1278 (N=56)	1.48 (N=40)
Fatigue Stage 1 (Governors)	.7751 (N=12)	.8012 (N=14)

Figure 13. Effect of diversity on proportional vote, senatorial/gubernatorial elections 1968-2008.

The preliminary results seemed promising. In both the incumbent and first fatigue

stages in both races, the diverse states showed an accelerated regime fatigue over the

homogeneous states. In most cases, the homogeneous states also showed greater resilience to

regime fatigue when compared to the aggregate mean. For example, the average proportional

vote for the initial incumbent regime senators was 3.8956 as opposed to the aggregate mean of

2.8693 for the entire data set for that first elected generation after a regime change. Including

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[11] California, New Mexico, Texas, New York, Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, Arizona, New Jersey, Florida. Source: U.S. Census 2000 Fact Sheet.

[12] Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, West Virginia, Iowa, North Dakota, Montana, Kentucky, Wyoming, South Dakota. Source: U.S. Census 2000 Fact Sheet.

and past regime stage 2, however, the results become more statistically suspect. There were

only seven cases each in the Senatorial races from these top ten states which represent less

than 1% of the total population sampled additionally the cases were only spread across two

states in the diverse category and three states in the non-diverse category. The Gubernatorial

data set was even more limited with only two cases in the diverse category and only four cases

from the same state in the homogeneous category rendering any data statistically insignificant

for analysis.

Proportional Voting and Personal Income Tax

The effort to track regime fatigue across some form of financial dimension in the hopes

of operationalizing a negativity effect proved significantly less successful. While the results did

show a slight decrease in the mean proportional vote, it was, for all intents and purposes, next

to insignificant.

	After Tax Increase	Aggregate
Incumbent Regime (Senators)	2.8211	2.869399
First Generation (Senators)	.98142	.987147

Figure 14. Effect of income tax increases on proportional vote, senatorial elections 1968-2008.

Since conducting this experiment, other alternative methods that would probably have

been reliable (such as tracking the outstanding debt of a state, opinion polls, or unemployment

rates) and that would probably have served as a better method for operationalizing negative

sentiment in a voting populace have been considered. It is my intent to develop a more robust

model in the future that could track the permeation of negative sentiment throughout a state.

It would probably be best to start with a state or regional model first and then expand the area

of observation from there.

Alternative Explanations

The most likely competing explanation that would also largely mirror the results obtained by this hypothesis is that of the calculating qualified candidate explanation (Bonneau and Hall, 2003). While the previous literature concentrated on state Supreme Court elections, the idea of a calculating, rational candidate is an attractive one. If qualified candidates tend to run for offices when they can maximize their chances of winning, either through an open seat election or when a candidate appears particularly vulnerable, and less qualified candidates will tend to run in elections against incumbents where they have more of a chance of securing their party's nomination in a primary battle, then we could also expect to see the opposition vote to increase on elections where the regime fatigue state increases in this experiment (because they are by necessity and definition "open" elections). It should be noted that the qualified candidate explanation would not explain the continuous decline of proportional incumbent votes across elections, because the qualified challenger would change with every election that the regime maintains its hold over the office. However, the possibility does exist that the existence of a qualified challenger could act as an intervening variable or an additive variable that could serve to increase the rate of vote entropy across fatigue regime generations. More research would be needed before any accurate determinations could be made.

More research is definitely needed in examination of the mitigating effects of increased oppositional funding and higher quality candidates entering the race during years where open seat elections are held. The effort was made in the beginning to gather a data set where Pearson's *r* correlation coefficient could be used to measure the strength and relationship of these effects. Measuring the "quality" of a candidate is inherently subject to the charge of subjectivity but even developing a rubric for measuring campaign financing (which should lend itself to quantitative measurement a bit easier) proved to be a Sisyphean task. Campaign

finance laws vary widely from state to state, change frequently, and are deliberately obtuse. Even in instances where increases in funding for open seat elections can be seen on a macro-level (such as in the instance of Republican funding in the Southern states in the 1980s), there is no easy mechanism for clearly delineating how much money was spent on a particular candidate or how that money was used.

Even still, these two variables seem to be the most obvious competing candidates to explain the observed regime fatigue effect. It should be noted though that even if it can be demonstrated that opposition campaigns in open seat elections are better funded than those where an incumbent is running, that this would seem to be a logical outgrowth of the negativity effect and growing voter dissatisfaction. Rationally, these would seem to be interactive variables, but, as things stand currently, the relationship needs to be explored with further statistical inquiry. Furthermore, while the explanatory processes that produce the regime fatigue effect are rooted here in the realm of human psychology as the initial catalyst, the regime fatigue effect as an observable and quantifiable phenomenon would not diminished necessarily by the ascendancy of an explanation that minimizes affection and cognition. From the research available, it is my opinion that a psychological model that considers how individual cognitive and emotional processes on an individual level can transmit and permeate itself through a social network offers the most robust and compelling explanation for the observed regime fatigue effect, but I tend to be biased against purely economic rational choice models that attempt to distill human political action down to an equation. At the end of the day, the only item that can be established with any real certainty is that there is a quantifiable and observable regime fatigue effect which appears to have varying levels of effect across three demographic dimensions.

Areas for Further Study

It should also be noted that the implications stemming from the results of this research project are far reaching across several disciplines in the field of Political Science and could potentially provide many opportunities for additional avenues of research. Unlike predictive models that start top-down, this study provides a baseline for assigning value to party fatigue in those same models so that a dummy variable no longer needs to be used (though ultimately, if regime fatigue is shown to be a real phenomenon through additional experiments, then the rationale behind these predictive models would be subsequently called into question).

This theory also has implications for municipal elections and the study of progressive voting institutions, such as nonpartisan elections since the demarcation of a particular "regime", is much fuzzier in that particular political setting. For example, if regime fatigue can be shown to occur in an intra-party context in the primary elections of the southern states pre-1968, then one could reasonably expect a similar phenomenon to manifest itself in the area of modern non-partisan elections. My expectation is that regimes in non-partisan contexts, as in one-party contexts, would come to be characterized under a different low-cost psychological schema (such as ethnicity in the widely-studied Los Angeles Mayoral elections of the late 1990s and early 2000s), but that the presence of regime fatigue will still be measurable and existent once the proper organizing schema is identified the separates the "Self" from the "Other" in voters' minds.

Potential also exists in the emerging field of social network research as it applies to political science. The next logical step for this experiment would be to systematically gather demographic data for the states and develop a "heterogeneity index" to test the theory of whether the existence of a diverse population really insulates the population against issue

framing by elites and its effect on regime fatigue. If the preliminary results are accurate, regime fatigue should increase as social cleavages increase in a particular state.

The most exciting aspect however is the theory's potential for the field of comparative political modeling. The possibility exists from the results of this experiment that regime fatigue is largely an American phenomenon that is a result of our (for all intents and purposes) two party system. For example, the American first-past-the-post voting system is a zero-sum political model. There is no way for an individual's vote to "count" for something if it is not a vote for the winning candidate. Thus, the American system is essentially a two party system of the "status quo" versus the "opposition". Alternative proportional representation systems like one would find in Europe still provide an avenue for the minority rational and informed voter to express their political identity even with a minority candidate. If "regime fatigue" is indeed demonstrated to grow exponentially as a "opposition vote" or a referendum on the status quo as a whole, then it would be interesting to see if some proportional representation model would seem to provide some form of a safety valve by still allowing individuals to express their political identity within the context of another party holding power that does not share their own political outlook. On the other hand, the presence of more candidates that more closely mirror one's own individual outlook might have the opposite effect of exacerbating regime fatigue by encouraging more individuals who otherwise would have not participated in an election to engage in the political process. Further study is needed to study the way in which the number of viable candidates and the existence of proportional representation could affect these results as the American system does not allow in most cases the existence of true third-party opposition candidates and the institutional arrangements discourages voting for them as "wasted votes".

The normative implications of regime fatigue theory will be left largely to the political philosophers. On one hand, the portrait of the overwhelming majority of voters as capricious, largely non-ideological, and motivated primarily by very short memories and immediate political benefits might seem distasteful to many. However, those same individuals can also take solace in the fact that a secondary implication of regime fatigue theory is that every regime (even the most cravenly-Machiavellian ones) will inevitably fall with time.

Appendix A

Senatorial Elections excluded from the data set:

Alabama 1978 Class 2 (No opponent on the ballot)
Alabama 1978 Class 3 (special election)
Arkansas 1990 Class 2 (No opponent)
Georgia 1990 Class 2 (No opponent)
Hawaii 1990 Class 1 (special election, previous senator died)
Indiana 1990 Class 3 (special election, Quayle becomes VP)
Louisiana 1978, 1984, 1990 Class 2 (No opponent on the ballot)
Louisiana 1968, 1974, 1992 Class 3 (No opponent on the ballot)
Mississippi 1976 Class 1 (No opponent on the ballot)
Mississippi 1990 Class 2 (No opponent on the ballot)
New Jersey 2006 Class 1 (special election)

Appendix B

Figure 3:Racial/Ethnic Diversity by State, 2000
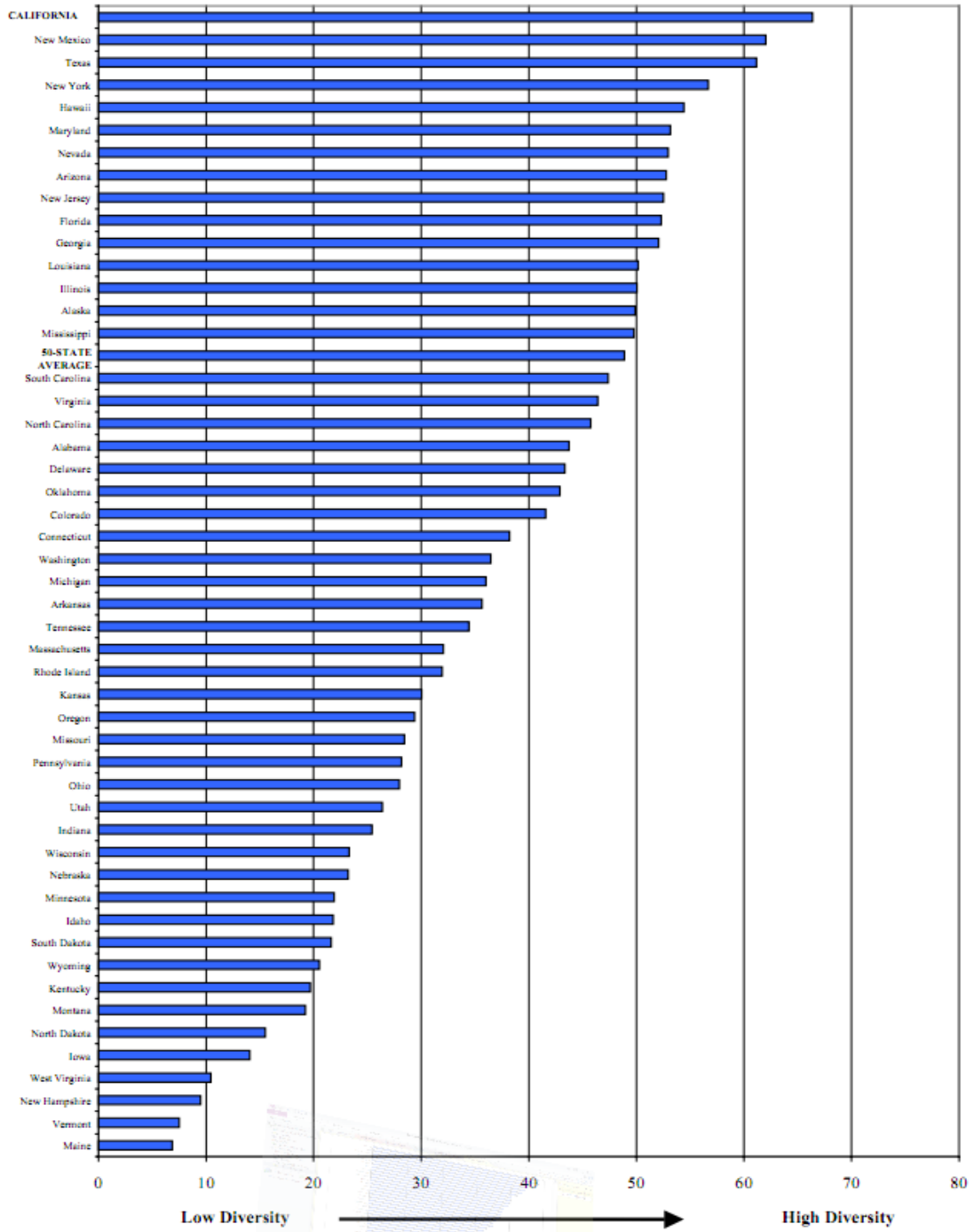
Source: Census 2000 Fact Sheet. Center for Regional Policy Studies.

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