Shirking in the Contemporary Congress Redux

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Rothenberg and Sanders argue that when Congress-specific fixed effects are incorporated "properly", then evidence of shirking for exiting members is present. Their new results are based on the same set of explanatory variables, *except* that they combine the two measures of member departure into a single variable, *Exiting*. We believe this is theoretically questionable, hearkening back to Rothenberg and Sanders' (2000: 320) former admission: "… the incentives for retirees to change their behavior may be less overtly electoral than for current political aspirants, making the pooling of these two types of shirkers potentially inappropriate." Additionally, we argue that it may be methodologically problematic given the low correlation between the two exiting variables (r = -0.074), and the small Cronbach's alpha scale-reliability coefficient (α = 0.138).[1]

When we proceed with the same heteroskedastic regression incorporated by Rothenberg and Sanders, using the original exiting variables, the results are substantively similar to our initial extended model: significant change for members pursuing statewide office (z = 1.94, p = .026, one-tailed test), but a *lack* of significant change for retirees (z = 1.42, p = .078, one-tailed test). This suggests that while there is some evidence of shirking between the 102nd and 104th Congresses, it is far more limited than that first suggested by Rothenberg and Sanders.

Bland, J., and Douglas Altman. 1997. "Statistics Notes: Cronbach's Alpha." *British Medical Journal* 314: 572.

Cronbach, L. J. 1951. "Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests." *Psychometrika* 16: 297-333.

Nunnaly, Jum C. 1978. *Psychometric Theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rothenberg, Lawrence S., and Mitchell S. Sanders. 2000. "Severing the Electoral Connection: Shirking in the Contemporary Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 316-25.

[1] Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient for assessing internal consistency when items are used to form a scale (Cronbach 1951). Generally, $\alpha > .7$ is considered acceptable for comparing groups (Nunnaly 1978; Bland and Altman 1997).

Table 1 – Summary Table of Replication Models

Variable	Coefficient (Standard Error)		
	Heteroskedastic		Fixed Effects
	Single Exiting Type	Dual Exiting Types	
Regression Component			
Constant	0.075**	0.074**	0.076**
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Exiting	0.019*	---	---
	(0.011)		
Retiring	---	0.017	0.016
		(0.012)	(0.012)
Pursuing Statewide Office	---	0.028*	0.027*
		(0.0144)	(0.015)
District Political Change	0.078	0.073	0.076
	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.084)
Electoral Slack	0.007	0.007	0.006
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Seniority	-0.000075	-0.00004	-0.00002
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
102nd Congress	0.046**	0.047**	0.047**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
103rd Congress	-0.013**	-0.014**	-0.014**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Variance Component			
Constant	-5.46**	-5.46**	---
	(0.078)	(0.079)	
102nd Congress	-0.234**	-0.245**	---
	(-0.109)	(0.109)	
103 Congress	-0.44**	-0.445**	---
	(0.112)	(0.113)	
N	998	998	998
R^2	0.198	0.198	0.186

*p<.05, one-tailed **p<.05, two-tailed