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Member Visibility and Member Images

Visibility is the cornerstone of an effective district strategy. Without visibility, representatives cannot have independent standing in the electorate's collective mind, and without independent standing they cannot anticipate personal success in otherwise unfavorable political circumstances.

The conventional wisdom about congressional elections accords candidate visibility an importance second only to party identification. The 1958 SRC election study and the 1978 NES/CPS study show that visibility carries a significant electoral advantage. There are few comparable analyses of MP visibility in Great Britain, though surveys typically show that MPs enjoy a higher level of name recall than congressmen.[1] Several factors may underlie this difference. For one thing, the British ballot is much simpler than the American. Rather than decide on every office from president to prothonotary, with congressmen, judges, and coroners in between, the British voter makes a single choice. Fewer decisions presumably entail less confusion and interference for the British voter than for the American facing a laundry list of choices. In addition to such cognitive explanations, there once was a good institutional reason for higher name recall of MPs. Until a statutory change in 1969, the candidates' parties were not listed with their names on the ballot. Thus, the

ability to cast a sensible vote for the national government was predicated on the ability to match proper names with parties. Perhaps such an emphasis on who stands for each party lingers on after its objective basis has disappeared.

Name Recall and Recognition

The visibility of American and British representatives is measured by the recall and recognition of candidates' names (Table 1.1). The figures on recall in both countries were generated from the simple survey questions, "Do you happen to remember the names of the candidates for Congress (Parliament) who ran in this district (constituency) last fall (on May 3)?" Name recognition is harder to measure. The feeling thermometer was used to elicit recognition in the United States, on the assumption that any response other than

Table 1.1. Comparative visibility of congressmen and MPs

	Name	
Status of member	Recall	Recognition
United States[a]		
Incumbents	32%	82%
Democrats	31	81
Republicans	32	83
Challengers	12	43
Democrats	12	43
Republicans	12	43
Great Britain		
Incumbents	65	—
Labour	64	—
Conservative	65	—
Liberal	78	—
Nationalists	67	—
Challengers	48	—
Labour	48	—
Conservative	42	—

a. Averages of 1978 and 1980.

"Don't know anything about this person" is tantamount to recognition. Since budget constraints in Britain prevented use of the feeling thermometer there, no recognition figures were gathered for MPs.

The recall of congressional candidates is less than half as high as recognition. Only about a third of all citizens recall the incumbent candidate, but four-fifths recognize the name when presented with it. The disparity is even greater for challengers, with almost four times as many people recognizing the names of challengers as recalling them. Members of Congress have a wide edge over their challengers by either measure. Republican challengers had recognition levels 10 percent higher than Democrats in 1980 and 10 percent lower in 1978. Jacobson's observations probably account for some part of these differences. The districts surveyed in 1978 had weaker challengers compared to all districts. Moreover, these weaker challengers received less of the sample vote than the totals objectively recorded for them. Of course, the majority of challengers were Republican. In 1980 a well-organized and well-financed Republican effort probably accounted for the higher visibility of Republican challengers.[2]

Name recall in Britain is much higher than in the United States—twice as high for incumbents and four times as high for challengers (where multiple challengers are present in a constituency, the challenger recall figure is that of the one who is best known). There are partisan differences in recall, with MPs of the two major parties trailing Liberals by a significant amount. This difference accords nicely with the Liberals' self-conscious emphasis on grass-roots campaign tactics and diligent service to the constituency.[3]

To promote cross-national comparability, succeeding analyses rely on name recall as the principal measure of visibility. Although recall underestimates visibility, it has the compensating advantage of possessing much more variance than name recognition. Recognition levels among American voters are so high that there is virtually no variation to analyze. Sole reliance on recall would be problematic if it led to conclusions different from those obtained by using name recognition, but in all subsequent analyses use of a recall rather than a recognition measure of visibility makes almost no difference for either coefficient estimates or goodness-of-fit statistics.

Representatives clear the perceptual thresholds of some constituents and not others for a variety of reasons. Individual character-

istics predispose citizens to be more or less attentive to politics. Sociodemographic factors, such as education and occupation, and psychological factors, such as political interest and civic concern, influence what and how much particular voters know. In our studies visibility increases dramatically with self-described political attentiveness, a relationship that probably explains a tendency for self-identified independents to have lower recall levels than partisans. While visibility also shows the expected relationship with education and occupation, detailed statistical analysis indicates that the citizen's self-assessed attentiveness to public affairs is the single most important correlate of name recall (Table 1.2). Increases in attentiveness move the probability of recall dramatically upward. With attentiveness taken into account, none of the standard demographic indicators, such as education and occupation, have any independent impact on visibility, although they are themselves associated with attention to public affairs. These findings confirm the conclusions of other studies that demographic characteristics have no significant effects on the visibility of congressmen once the effects of attentiveness or interest are taken into account. One additional finding deserves brief mention. Affiliates of the congressman's party are significantly more likely to recall his or her name in the 1978 NES/CPS data, but a comparable relationship does not emerge in the 1980 NES/CPS data.

The patterns for British recall are similar (Table 1.3). Political attention is strongly connected to recall, though the British measure differs from the American. Partisans of an MP's party are more likely to recall the MP's name than are partisans of another stripe. The expected associations with occupational status and education also emerge, but in contrast to the United States, occupation retains a significant relationship with recall levels even when political attentiveness is controlled.[4]

These patterns comport with other findings on political capacity and interest. No matter how little some representatives do in office, some constituents will recall their names, just as some constituents will forget representatives' names no matter how much they do.

Over and above constituent characteristics, various characteristics of representatives themselves may increase their salience to constituents. Serving as prime minister is an extreme example, but less extreme possibilities are holding committee positions in the United States and serving on the ministerial ladder in Britain. Even

Table 1.2. Correlates of member visibility in United States (probit estimates)

	Name recall	
Variables	1978[a]	1980[b]
Constituent characteristics		
Party identification		
Independent	−.22*	−.53**
Same as member	.23*	−.02
Attention to public affairs		
Low	.37**	.41*
Medium	.47**	.75**
High	.90**	1.11**
Incumbent characteristics		
Committee chair	—	−.16
Subcommittee chair	.09	.02
Year elected	.00	.02**
Incumbent contacts		
Met personally	.19*	.50**
Heard speak	.33**	.21
Talked to staff	.01	.24
Mail	.52**	.39**
Newspaper/magazines	.28**	.39**
Radio	.19*	.10
TV	.17*	.07
Hearsay	.26**	.12
Constant	−1.58**	−3.37**
Chi-square/df	365/15**	246/16**

a. n = 1483. *$p < .05$.
b. n = 1022. **$p < .01$.

the representative's tenure in office may have an effect in that past activities and publicity could accumulate and result in currently higher visibility. Additionally, visibility in the United States may be purchased more or less directly by the expenditure of campaign funds.

The findings on each of these possibilities, however, are weak and inconsistent. Newer members are more visible in both countries.

Table 1.3. Correlates of member visibility in Great Britain (probit estimates)

Variables	Name recall[a]
Constituent characteristics	
Party identification	
None	−.11
Same as MP	.22**
Occupation	
Manual	.30*
White collar	.48**
Attention to campaign	.13**
Incumbent characteristics	
Ministerial ladder	.01
Opposition spokesman	−.03
Year elected	.01*
Incumbent contacts	
Met personally	.49**
Heard speak	.27*
Talked to agent/secretary	.21
Received mail	.44**
Newspaper/magazine	.40**
Radio	.10
TV	.45**
Hearsay	.10
Constant	−1.44**
Chi-square/df	220/16**

a. $n = 1267$.
*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.

There is no significant relationship between recall levels and formal position in either country, although simple cross-tabulations suggest that subcommittee chairs and holders of party committee positions are more visible in the United States. Finally, name recall of congressmen increases with campaign spending, but the magnitude of the relationship is weak and not especially linear.[5]

The most interesting correlates of visibility are those under the control of the representative: his or her personal activities, behavior, and allocation of available resources. Representatives can try to influence their level of visibility by spending time in their geographic districts, providing services for and assuming responsibilities in their

constituencies, and publicizing their activities and accomplishments. Measuring the personal characteristics of constituents and representatives is a relatively straightforward task; measuring the impact of representatives' activities is less so. There are two types of data, each of which presents a partial picture: what constituents report and what representatives report.

A battery of survey questions address the issue of activities. In particular, there is the so-called contact question which reads:

> "There are many ways in which U.S. representatives (MPs) can have contact with the people from their district (constituency). On this page are some of these ways. Think of (name) who has been the U.S. representative (MP) from this district (constituency). Have you come into contact with or learned anything about (him/her) in any of these ways? Which ones?"

Citizens were asked to choose from the list of possibilities (Table 1.4). Despite the MPs' higher level of name recall, they do not have contact levels nearly as high as those reported for congressmen. On almost every count congressmen have figures twice as high as MPs. The exception is personal meetings, which may reflect the much smaller size of British constituencies.[6]

Although the level of reported contacts in Britain is lower than in the United States, the relationship between contacts and visibility is equally strong. The levels of name recall in both countries are

Table 1.4. Citizen contact with incumbent representatives

Type of contact	United States[a]	Great Britain
Met personally	14%	12%
Attended meeting where he/she spoke	12	7
Talked to staffer	9	4
Received mail	54	25
Read about in newspaper or magazine	52	32
Heard on radio	25	7
Saw on TV	43	16
Second-hand[b]	29	15
None whatsoever	21	44

a. Averages of 1978 and 1980.

b. Response to question, "Do you know anyone, any of your family, friends, or people at work, who have had some contact with (name)?"

significantly higher among individuals who report some kind of contact with their representative (Table 1.5). In Britain, a 20 percent gap in recall emerges between those who report any contact with the MP and those who do not. In the United States, the gap is on average close to 30 percent. The associations between contacts and recall are substantively strong and statistically significant (Tables 1.2–1.3). Personal meetings, the receipt of mail, reading about the member in newspapers or magazines, and seeing him or her on TV all relate to recall. In both Britain and the United States radio and staff contact appear to be less efficacious than other means of building visibility, though in Britain few MPs have much that would strike an American as staff.

These findings are consistent with the argument that incumbent behavior affects constituent awareness, although it is curious that

Table 1.5. Association of member visibility with reported contacts

	Recall	
Type of contact	United States[a]	Great Britain
Met member	62%	87%
Not met	30	62
Heard member speak	66	88
Not heard	30	63
Talked to staff	59	92
Not talked	32	64
Received mail	49	82
No mail	17	60
Read about member	48	81
Not read	18	57
Heard on radio	52	84
Not heard	28	63
Saw on TV	47	83
Not seen	25	61
Second-hand	55	79
No second-hand	26	63
No contact at all	8	46

a. 1978.

nearly half of British constituents recall the names of representatives they deny having met, heard, heard about, read about, or seen on TV. Of course, the reported contacts must themselves be explained, and the explanations draw on the same sorts of factors that arose in connection with recall and recognition. In the United States political attentiveness relates most strongly to reported contact, with the relationships stronger for the impersonal or media categories. The same structure of relationships holds for educational level, though the magnitudes of the relationship are weaker. Only reports of hearsay and receipt of mail show significant relationships with occupational status. Self-professed political independents are least likely to report contacts.

In Britain the picture is less clear-cut than in the United States. Reading about the MP is strongly related to education, but five of the eight contact types show no relationship whatsoever with education. The relationships between contacts and attention to the campaign are consistent but not as strong as those for name recall. Finally, constituents with no party identification are the least likely to report contacts, and those sharing the MP's affiliation are the most likely.

As for representatives' characteristics, in the United States reported contacts are marginally related to seniority level: the more senior the congressman, the greater the likelihood of contacts, especially of the secondhand variety. This pattern is the reverse of the negative relation between seniority and name recall. In Britain, however, there is no relationship between tenure in office and reported contacts except that the most senior MPs are most likely to have been heard on the radio and seen on TV, perhaps reflecting their somewhat greater likelihood of holding or having held important positions in the parliamentary party.

Finally, the relationships between position in the Congress and contacts are neither strong nor consistent and thus provide little basis for generalization. Constituents of American subcommittee chairs consistently report a higher level of contact—19 percent higher in the case of TV. Constituents of congressmen who hold Democratic leadership posts are 20 percent more likely to report meeting or hearing their congressmen personally but are no more likely to report the more passive forms of contact. The pattern is the reverse for constituents of Republican leaders. Such relationships are linked to those for seniority; later chapters will attempt to disentangle the

common influences. In Britain, parliamentary position bears no discernible relationship with contact levels, consistent with the previous lack of association with name recall.

In short, more educated and more politically attentive constituents are more likely to know their representatives' names, as they are more likely to know many other things about politics and government. But name recall also is strongly related to constituents' reports about the ways in which they have come into contact with their representatives. This suggests that representatives have it within their power to make an impact on constituents by the activities they undertake.

National Expectations

Being known per se is not enough for most incumbents; few would trade obscurity for a widespread but unfavorable image. U.S. congressmen with image problems may have difficulty raising funds or finding campaign volunteers and may attract strong challengers. British MPs with poor images may create morale problems among local activists or provoke a fight over their readoption. Negative images ultimately contribute to electoral defeat. Consequently, representatives who want to stay in office try to create positive images of themselves. Richard Fenno called the array of activities directed at producing these images the representative's "home style."[7]

Home style is in part a unique, individualized response of members to their districts and the natural inclinations of their personalities, but the public also holds stylized perceptions of representatives and their responsibilities, including expectations about how representatives should behave in office. These expectations derive in part from the common wisdom about how a country's political system works but also from the class, ethnic, age, and social-economic background of constituents. To the extent that role expectations differ across districts, representatives will tailor their home styles accordingly. If representatives satisfy constituent expectations, their images will benefit and their electoral bases will be more secure. Conversely, failure to satisfy constituent expectations can adversely affect the representatives' images and weaken their electoral bases.

Conceptions of a representative's duties traditionally arise from

conceptions of the state's responsibilities. Thus, the Benthamite representative makes laws that maximize the greatest happiness for the greatest number; the Lockean representative legislates in order to eliminate the inconveniences of property and personal insecurity in the state of nature; and the Hegelian representative represents one of the major interests in civil society.[8] In the real world, legislative duties do not always match so neatly with the state's responsibilities. Part of the representative's job in contemporary British and American government has a direct constitutional source, but other parts have developed as representatives responded to constituent demands. Since representatives may find it advantageous to encourage these demands, the role of the representative can evolve as representatives and their constituents discover complementary interests.

Because perceptions of appropriate legislative roles can affect how constituents evaluate representatives, it is useful to know how the citizens of Great Britain and the United States perceive legislative responsibilities. But creating a survey question that is comparable and yet sensitive to important differences in the American and British political systems is no simple matter. The 1978 NES/CPS survey of American voters showed them a list of "activities that occupy members of the U.S. House of Representatives as part of their job" and asked them to "rank the activities in order of importance." The same procedure was followed as far as possible in the British survey, but it was necessary to change the wording of the alternatives that British voters were asked to rank. The activities listed for the two countries were:

United States	*United Kingdom*
1. Helping people in the district who have personal problems with the government (abbreviated as "helping people").	1. Helping people in the constituency who have personal problems with the government.
2. Making sure the district gets its fair share of government money and projects ("protecting the district").	2. Protecting the interests of the constituency.
3. Keeping track of the way government agencies are carrying out laws passed by Congress ("oversight").	3. Keeping track of civil servants.

United States	*United Kingdom*
4. Keeping in touch with the people about what the government is doing ("keeping in touch").	4. Keeping in touch with the people about what the government is doing.
5. Working in Congress on bills concerning national issues ("policy").	5. Debating and voting in Parliament.

In cross-national surveys the interests of comparability frequently conflict with those of sensitivity to intercountry differences. This conflict is nowhere more evident than in the third activity listed, keeping track of government agencies. Members of Parliament traditionally have not had access to civil servants, nor have committees in Parliament enjoyed the subpoena and investigatory powers of congressional committees. MPs can question a minister who is responsible for a particular department of the civil service, but for the most part investigations of administrative abuse are handled by the national ombudsman. Still, MPs have retained their right to refer cases directly to the ombudsman, and they can use the threat of adverse publicity and hostile questions in the Commons as well as their informal contacts with ministers to put pressure on offending bureaucrats.[9] So while administrative oversight has more meaning in the context of the American system than in the British, it is sufficiently meaningful in Britain to warrant inclusion.

When asked the question, "Which of these activities is the most important," the voters in each country differed in their responses (Table 1.6). Americans ranked these activities from the most important: keeping in touch, policy, protecting the district and oversight (tied), and helping people. British respondents ranked the

Table 1.6. Most important representative role

Role	United States	Great Britain
Helping people	11%	19%
Protecting district	15	26
Oversight	15	4
Keeping in touch	30	24
Policy	19	11
Don't know, all, none	10	16

alternatives in the order: protecting the district, keeping in touch, helping people, policy, and oversight.[10] As anticipated, a major difference between the rankings in the two countries is that oversight is rated a distant last by the British but tied for third among the Americans. It is reassuring to find that mass surveys reflect to a considerable degree objective differences in the operation of political systems.

Institutional differences also undoubtedly underlie the lesser importance of the policy role in Great Britain. The backbench MP is virtually irrelevant to the policy-making process. Individual MPs cannot change legislation in committee—if they are fortunate enough to sit on one—and are severely constrained by the norms of party discipline. Much of the discussion about Parliamentary reform in the 1960s and 1970s centered on how to give backbench MPs a more meaningful role in legislation. Ironically, while MPs have been pushing to increase their policy-making responsibilities, American congressmen have sometimes appeared to be avoiding such responsibilities. Indeed, some have argued that congressmen have accentuated their casework and pork barrel roles precisely because these entail less electoral risk than the advocacy of controversial policies.[11]

The constituency service roles, protecting the district and helping people, were ranked highest by one-quarter of the American respondents and by nearly half of the British. Indeed, protecting the district was the highest-ranking role in Britain. Objectively, the weaker party system and the power of committees make this role more realistic in the United States than in the United Kingdom. In the American context, securing projects and other advantages for the district is the traditional pork barrel function of the congressman, a function that would seem altogether absent in Britain. Most of the MPs, however, mentioned many specific things they did for their constituencies, such as leading a campaign to prevent the closing of a local hospital, urging the government to construct a road, helping to raise funds for the local football team, and helping to organize a job fair in areas of high unemployment. Moreover, the discovery that British constituents regard the protection of constituency interests as very important comports with evidence that selection committees value a candidate with a feel for local concerns.[12]

The helping people or social worker role was ranked by nearly a fifth of the British constituents as the single most important activity

undertaken by an MP. In fact, 40 percent of the British ranked helping people who have personal problems with the government as one of the two most important activities an MP undertakes. This is surprising, since the growth of congressmen's casework responsibilities and of the resources to accommodate them have received far more attention than have the responsibilities and meager resources of MPs.[13]

Constituents in both countries assign high importance to the simple matter of the representative's keeping in touch. This partly reflects the fact that constituents want their representatives to have a good sense of their district's particular concerns. But concern for close contact also relates to such broader concerns as whether people think their representatives should act as trustees or as delegates for them.[14] Delegates adopt the views of those who elect them, whereas trustees exercise their own independent judgment of the best interest of their constituents. In the United States the keeping-in-touch function and the delegate role are popularly connected. Those Americans who thought that keeping in touch was most important were inclined to prefer the delegate role to the trustee role, 64 percent to 25 percent. In contrast, those who said that policy making was most important preferred the delegate role over the trustee role by a less striking 51 percent to 33 percent. Unfortunately, there is no comparable data in Britain to show whether a relationship exists there as well.

Group Expectations

Not only are there significant cross-national differences in the rankings of preferred legislator activities but there also are significant differences among groups within countries. Specifically, there are discernible educational, class, ethnic, and party variations in the expectations held by British and American constituents. Such differences in group rankings are more pronounced in the United States than in Britain. In the United Kingdom there are variations in the relative percentages of those who think that a given role is most important, but only a few differences in the actual rankings across the various groups. In the United States, however, there are marked differences in group rankings as well as in the relative percentages. Discussion of these differences relies on multivariate models (Tables 1.7–1.8). In each of these models whether the respondent ranked the

particular role as most important is the judgment we seek to explain.

The better-educated, middle-class individuals in both countries favor a more policy-oriented role for their representatives, whereas the less well educated, working-class individuals favor a more ser-

Table 1.7. Correlates of role importance in United States (probit estimates)[a]

Constituent characteristics	Keeping track of civil servants	Protect district	Helping people	Keeping in touch	Policy
Union	.059	.105†	−.099	−.055	.000
Age	.010*	−.003	.004*	−.011*	.004*
High school	−.076	−.143*	−.067	.002	.330*
Some college	.016	−.328*	−.280*	−.038	.578*
College	−.227*	−.526*	−.245*	−.211*	.987*
Male	−.057	−.076	−.011	−.020	.150*
Middle class	.109†	−.053	.051	−.102†	.108†
Same party as incumbent	−.006	.031	.062	−.038	−.015
Democrat	−.112†	.198*	−.000	−.049	−.004
Republican	−.070	.203*	−.220*	.023	−.005
Black	−.079	.246*	.230*	−.210*	−.173†
Chi-square/df = 11	38**	54**	29**	53**	133*

a. $n = 1944$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{*}p < .05$. $\dagger p < .10$.

Table 1.8. Correlates of role importance in Great Britain (probit estimates)

Constituent characteristics	Keeping track of civil servants	Protect constituency	Helping people	Keeping in touch	Policy
Union	−.122	.001	−.129	.062	.149
Left school < 14	.270	−.104	.277*	.308*	−.542*
Middle class	−.090	−.052	−.126	.067	.203*
Age < 20	−.262*	−.110	−.032	.198*	.203*
Male	.242*	.020	−.097	−.128*	.205*
Conservative	−.082	.083	−.085	−.150	.251*
Labour	−.114	−.176†	.069	.104	.054
Liberal	−.171	.219*	−.023	−.332*	.212
Same party as incumbent	−.048	.062	.096	−.079	−.087
Constant	−1.760	−.370	−.880	−.840	−1.010
Chi-square/df = 9	13	22**	24**	39**	63**

a. $n = 1703$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{*}p < .05$. $\dagger p < .10$.

vice-oriented role. The education effect is particularly striking. In the United States 40 percent of the college educated thought that the policy role was the congressman's most important function, whereas only 17 percent of those with less than a high-school education thought so. The college educated ranked policy number one, whereas the high-school educated ranked it third, behind keeping in touch and protecting the interests of the district. The effect is equally strong in Great Britain. Those who left school at the age of fourteen or less ranked policy fourth, whereas those who stayed in school beyond the age of eighteen ranked policy a close second. The least well educated individuals in both countries ranked keeping in touch first and protecting the interests of the district second. Helping people, which most closely proxies the casework role, was also more heavily favored by the least-educated group, although its ranking did not change in either instance.

Over and above education, social class is significantly related to the ranking of policy and service functions. Characteristically, the rankings of the working class and middle class were identical in Britain, but the percentages varied somewhat. Ten percent of the working class indicated that policy was the most important role of the MP, whereas 17 percent of the middle class felt this way. Conversely, 26 percent of the working class felt that helping people was the most important role, whereas 20 percent of the middle class said so. As with education, Americans showed both a percentage and a ranking difference: the middle class ranked policy second, while the working class ranked it tied for third.

Race is a major continuing feature of American politics. Blacks ranked the roles of representatives very differently from the rest of the groups. They regarded policy as the least important activity and considered protecting the interests of the district and helping people as, respectively, second and third most important. As a group, blacks placed a higher priority on helping people than did any other group. To some extent this racial difference arises from educational and class differences, but even when such factors are taken into account, racial differences in representative priorities remain.

Sociodemographic differences like these parallel differences in political knowledge, interest, and participation. A study of political participation in America found that better-educated, higher-income individuals are more likely to participate in all ways, such as voting, particularized contact, community participation, and campaign ac-

tivity. The gap in participation is smallest, however, with respect to particularized contact or casework.[15]

Other differences in the priorities of groups are less significant. Age differences are stronger in the United States than in the United Kingdom. Younger constituents in both countries seem more inclined to think that keeping in touch is important. Older constituents, however, think that helping people and, in the United States, oversight are more important. Union membership matters more in Great Britain, with union members in both countries emphasizing policy more and helping people less. Finally, there are scattered party effects. Liberals emphasize protecting the interests of the constituency more than do supporters of other parties, which is consistent with the "parish pump politics" image they projected in the 1960s and 1970s. Conservatives place greater emphasis on policy. In the United States, Republicans attach less importance to the helping people role and surprisingly more importance to protecting the district.

The finding of a class, educational, and racial preference for district service reinforces the fact that a representative's home style is influenced by the kind of district he or she represents.[16] The choice of an issue-oriented home style rather than a more service-oriented style is shaped in part by the expectations that constituents hold. Representatives probably can affect the expectations of constituents as well, but a representative who wants to be issue oriented in a working-class, low-education district probably receives less appreciation from his or her constituents than someone who adopts an issue orientation in a middle-class, high-education district.

Party Discipline

Another expectation that influences constituent evaluations of representatives is the extent to which congressmen and MPs adhere to the party line rather than exercise their own judgment when voting on legislation. *A priori,* one would expect differences in the attitudes of the British and American publics on this question. The postwar British party system has been characterized by high levels of party discipline, particularly when compared to the party system in the United States. Support for the president by members of the administration party in the House of Representatives ranged from 61 percent in 1977–1978 to 72 percent in 1953–1954; by comparison, the

percentage of divisions in Parliament witnessing any dissenting votes ranged from less than 1 percent in 1964–1966 to 28 percent in 1974–1979. The situation in Great Britain has thus changed in recent years. Indeed, backbench rebellions have increased to such an extent as to alter traditional notions about motions of confidence and the customs surrounding resignations.[17] In the 1978 NES/CPS and 1979 Gallup studies people were asked whether representatives should "support the position their parties take when something comes up for a vote, or should they make up their own minds regardless of how their parties want them to vote." There were three alternatives from which to choose: "support the party," "it depends," and "make up their own minds." Although the views had significant and predictable cross-national differences, these were not nearly so large as might have been expected. The British were 15 percent less inclined to say that representatives should make up their own mind and 5 percent more inclined to say that representatives should support their party, as is consistent with the character of the British party system. Nonetheless, a majority in both countries felt that representatives should make up their own minds. On its face this finding suggests a surprising lack of public support for parliamentary discipline. Perhaps the unpopularity of recent governments, the trend away from the two major parties, and the growing unhappiness of voters, journalists, and academics with the British political system are reflected in people's desire to see their MPs act more independently. Thus, the new patterns of backbench rebellion appear to be consistent with the public's role expectations.[18]

Various groups view the "party or conscience" question differently in both countries. Again, education is an important factor, although its effect differs in the two countries. Eighty percent of college-educated individuals in the United States said that representatives should make up their own minds, whereas 68 percent of those with less than a high school education said so. In contrast, better-educated individuals in Britain were less likely (49 percent) to say that the representative should make up his or her own mind than were less well educated ones (60 percent). Education seemingly produces a better understanding of the operation of the parliamentary system. Again, surveys mirror institutional realities.

Finally, one might expect class differences in Britain to be significant, especially in light of H. M. Drucker's contention that loyalty is crucial to the working-class, Labour ethos.[19] As it turns out,

however, the evidence for this presumption is slight and statistically insignificant. Moreover, it is stronger for Democrats in the United States than for Labour in Britain.

In sum, the public has three expectations of British and American representatives. First, in both countries constituents expect their members to play an active part in constituency affairs. Second, although there are predictable sociodemographic differences, even the most educated middle-class constituents expect their representatives to be accessible, to do casework, and to further the interests of their district. Third, although support for party loyalty is stronger in Britain, a majority in both countries would prefer their representatives to make up their own minds and not simply follow the lead of the parties.

National Evaluations

Incumbents who wish to make their positions more secure need to develop favorable images. But such images can be developed more easily in some types of political systems than in others. Given the important differences between the disciplined and nationalized British party system and the undisciplined and individualized American party system, MPs inevitably differ from congressmen in building favorable evaluations among constituents.

Evidence of this comes from a battery of questions asking British and American constituents whether there is anything in particular that they like about their incumbents. Congressmen have been more successful than their parliamentary counterparts in developing positive images. Whereas 43 percent of Americans claimed that they liked something about the incumbent, only 25 percent of the British said so. And whereas Americans had four times as many good things as bad things to say about their representatives, the British had only twice as many good things to say. Liberal MPs resembled American congressmen in the heavy preponderance of their positive remarks (56 percent) over their negative (15 percent). Perhaps this illustrates the efficacy of the "parish pump" tactics of the Liberal party.

Since MPs are closely associated with their parties, that fewer British respondents make positive comments about their representatives may reflect popular dissatisfaction with the party system (Table 1.9). British respondents were considerably more likely to mention the MP's party or policy views than were respondents in

Table 1.9. Substance of member evaluations

Content of constituent evaluation	United States		Great Britain	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Constituency attentiveness	32%	11%	46%	35%
Personal/general	45	59	31	30
Party/policy	15	25	23	35
Other	8	5	—	—

the United States, and more than one-third of the negative references in Britain fell into the party or policy category, as compared to 25 percent in the United States. The greater prominence of party and policy issues in Great Britain is clearly apparent in the responses. Had British constituents made fewer remarks about party or policy, and more about constituency attentiveness and personal qualities, they would have evaluated their MPs relatively more positively.

A more important implication of Table 1.9 is the relatively greater risk of a policy strategy than the risk of constituency strategy. The ratios of positive to negative references for issues of party and policy were lower than those for constituency attentiveness and personal characteristics. In other words, people were more likely to say something bad about policy and party than about the other two categories. As a result, incumbents run fewer risks by emphasizing their personality and constituency service than by touting their views on policies.[20] Incumbents presumably need no advice from political scientists on this point.

The role expectations held by constituents may constitute a frame of reference for constituents if the abstract expectations they hold shape the way that they evaluate their incumbents. Thus people who believe that the policy-making role of the representative is most important could be more inclined to evaluate their incumbents in terms of policy positions, while people who think that the district service role is most important could be more inclined to evaluate their incumbents in terms of their constituency activity. In the United States the relationships are rather weak. Americans made almost twice as many positive references to constituency service as to policy, regardless of their abstract beliefs about the comparative importance of policy and constituency roles. Although the negative references in the constituency realm were too few to analyze, Amer-

icans who considered the policy role most important were ever so slightly more likely to make negative references to policy than were those who considered the constituency role most important. The relationships are weak but more consistent in Britain. There were too few positive references to the policy stands of the incumbent MPs to analyze, but negative references to policy were marginally more frequent when the policy-making role was ranked highest. Both positive and negative references to constituency tended to increase when the constituency service roles were rated highest.

Thus, there is slight evidence of a connection between what people consider the most important representative role and their evaluation of representatives. More exact tests would probably reveal a stronger connection. How representatives are judged varies to some degree with the role that their constituents think they should play, and certain activities are more or less politically rewarded in some kinds of districts than in others.

Implications for Member Images

U.S. congressmen present themselves to their constituents in a manner that is consistent with the makeup of their districts and their personalities. The incumbent's "presentation" is based on what he or she says or does in the course of meeting and dealing with district residents. Thus, by their choice of activities, incumbents can to some degree control the images that constituents have of them. In order to establish or improve their images, incumbents try to increase the number of favorable contacts they have with constituents through more personal visits, staff presence, casework solicitation, mailings, media appearances, and whatever else seems appropriate to particular districts.

To say that incumbents have some control over their images through their activities is far from asserting that they have complete control. The ease of communicating a message to constituents varies with education, class, and inherent political interest. Better-educated, middle-class, and highly active individuals assimilate the incumbent's message more quickly than less-educated, working-class, and politically indifferent ones. Moreover, the kind of appeal that succeeds with those who assimilate information quickly may be less appropriate to other constituents. For instance, middle-class, higher-educated whites have a relative preference for policy-oriented rep-

resentation, whereas working-class, lower-educated minorities prefer service-oriented representation. Even more fundamentally, the message the incumbents try to convey to their constituents is colored by their partisan predispositions. So representatives' control over how they are evaluated is by no means complete.

Caveats aside, incumbents' activities do affect the tendency of constituents to form positive or negative images of them. This issue can be explored in two ways. First, those constituents who report various forms of contact with their representatives are more likely to say something positive or negative about them. Reported contacts of all varieties are significantly related to the formation of incumbent images. For instance, whereas 43 percent of the Americans and 25 percent of the British could mention something they liked about the incumbent, that percentage approximately doubled to 80 percent in the United States and 55 percent in Britain among those who had personally met the incumbent. Similarly, knowing someone else who had had some form of contact with the representative, contacting the representative for help, and knowing someone else who had requested help significantly increased the percentage of those who could say what they liked or disliked about their representative.

Self-reported contact may be biased by existing impressions of the representative. If people like their representatives, they may be more likely to get in contact with them. This would not explain why dislikes also increase with incumbent contact, but the probability of simultaneous causation cannot be casually dismissed. Therefore, a second way to look at the relationship between incumbent activity and images—a way which gets around the issue of a potentially biased contact response—is to see whether constituent opinions favoring or disapproving the incumbent relate to independent estimates of incumbent activity, the subject of Chapters 5 and 6.

In summary, only about a third of the American public and a sixth of the British regard policy making and administrative oversight as the most important jobs a representative should undertake. Constituents in both countries favor a strong district orientation and some degree of party independence from their representatives. There are clear class, educational, and racial differences in these role expectations, suggesting that representatives in different districts are rewarded for different mixes of activities.

Constituents have favorable images of their representatives, though these images are considerably more positive in the United States than in Britain. These images are in some degree related to expectations, particularly in Britain, so that members are not entirely free to cultivate any image they might wish. The effect of contact with the member upon constituent evaluations is quite strong in both countries. Thus, taking an active role in constituency affairs and communicating these efforts widely would appear to be an effective way for representatives to create a favorable image among constituents.