

# DISSERTATION PART 1

## Representing the Under-Privileged: Trade-offs Between Constituent Service and Legislation

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## **Abstract**

It has been well established that the preferences of the affluent are disproportionately represented in policy. Yet meaningful political representation comes not only from policy congruence but through constituent service. Socioeconomically privileged people are more engaged with policy, while the less privileged prefer constituent service. It is also clear that representatives from privileged areas respond more effectively to policy requests, while representatives from less privileged areas respond more effectively to constituent service. I show national legislative outcomes reflect these patterns. Republican representatives from privileged districts engage in policy creation more than their counterparts from less privileged areas. Conversely, they devote relatively more resources to constituent service when they represent less privileged areas. This trade-off between constituent service and policy translates into a 23% increase in legislation by members' of Congress when they represent socioeconomically privileged districts. I also demonstrate that Democrats make a different trade-off between policy and constituent service: representatives of highly educated districts disproportionately publicize policy related activities over constituent. Evidence comes from three novel datasets covering 2013 and 2014: staffing resources, legislative activity, and Twitter.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

“We hold these truths to be self-evident. All men are created equal.” This core ideal is deeply baked into the American ethos. We know it to be more aspirational than true, but it still captures the imagination. Our increasingly evident failure has led to the creation of task forces, research grants, and a large quota of news articles. The goal, presumably, is to identify the causes of these inequities, particularly those related to income. This paper will argue that some of these political inequities are created because representatives from less privileged communities choose to disproportionately focus on constituent service relative to their counterparts in more privileged communities.

Our failure to meet this aspiration shows up in the kinds of policy representatives create. Our aspirations dictate that the policy preferences of all citizens should be treated equally (Dahl, 1972, p. 1), but (Gilens & Page, 2014) and Bartels (2008) have shown that the policy preferences of the rich are more likely to be enacted into law than those of the poor. The reasons why this is true have been less well specified. One natural explanation involves the connections between lobbying, campaign contributions, and policy. Evidence has been found to support this theory, but it is not consistent across all governing bodies (Powell, 2013) or all time periods (Canes-Wrone & Gibson, 2016). Other pieces of evidence point to the personal biases of politicians that favor the rich (Butler, 2014). It is also true that politicians have more insight into the preferences of the rich because they themselves come from high income backgrounds (Carnes, 2012). Yet none of these theories fully point to the cause of this policy inequity. Nor do any address how other kinds of representation, such as constituent service, could compete with a legislator’s ability to create policy.

I will argue that evidence has emerged over the past ten years to support a com-

elling story about the origin of this inequity in policy creation. It starts, not with elite corruption, but with the preferences and needs of the less rich and less educated. Representatives from high income and educated districts have more constituents who are know and care about policy (Butler, 2014; Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Harden, 2013; McLeod & Perse, 1994; Butler, 2014; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995b). Representatives from poor and less educated districts have more constituents who want or need constituent service (Serra & Moon, 1994). Constituent service refers to helping individual constituents with the federal bureaucracy. The bulk of this bureaucracy revolves around the social safety net, which disproportionately impacts the lives of poor people. Because of their low political knowledge, their approval is less defined by policy. They are more easily swayed by seeing their representative engage with the needs of people in their community (Fenno, 1978; Parker & Goodman, 2009). Thus, representatives from high income and educated districts are more responsive to policy requests, while those from less privileged districts are more responsive to constituent service requests (Harden, 2013; Butler, 2014). I show that this trade-off appears in the choices representatives make to represent their districts, as well as in legislative activity. Representatives from privileged districts devote more resources and verbal communication to policy, while those from less privileged districts devote resources to constituent service. Meanwhile, representatives from privileged districts focus on policy that aids the rich (Carnes, 2016b). This paper pulls together these strands of evidence to highlight the following theory: the trade-off between policy creation and constituent service inevitably leads to policy that favors the rich.

It has been clear for decades that income and education are correlated with political activity (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987; Verba et al., 1995b; Verba & Nie, 1972). Recent evidence shows that they also disproportionately prefer policy

over other forms of representation, such as constituent service. Conversely, those with less income and education disproportionately prefer constituent service (Griffin & Flavin, 2011; Harden, 2015; Lapinski, Levendusky, Winneg, & Jamieson, 2016; Verba & Nie, 1972).<sup>1</sup> This tends to focus on requests for assistance with the social safety net; for example, Veterans' Affairs benefits and social security checks (Serra & Moon, 1994). Representatives strategically respond to constituent preferences (Ellickson & Whistler, 2001). Those from more socioeconomically privileged areas are disproportionately responsive to individual policy requests. Those from less privileged areas are disproportionately responsive to constituent service requests (Harden, 2015; Butler, 2014). Less has been shown about how this connects to legislative output, partisanship, and the allocation of district wide resources.

Republicans in particular are likely to benefit from constituent service. There is strong evidence that Republicans are more likely to support policies and candidates that are congruent with their rich base (Barker & Carman, 2012; Butler & Dynes, 2016; Broockman & Skovron, 2018; Carnes, 2016b; Rigby & Maks-Solomon, 2018; Lax, Phillips, & Zelizer, 2018), but not with their other, less rich, constituents. Thus, they have a particular need to appeal to their constituents through alternate modes of representation when they represent less privileged districts. I argue that constituent service is uniquely suited to fill that need. Most citizens value constituent service. It demonstrates a desire to help the people they serve in a very tangible, easily understood manner. Republican constituents in particular value a trusteeship version of representation (Barker & Carman, 2012) that lends itself to

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<sup>1</sup>Note the reference from 1972. Scholars from the 1960s and 1970s regularly highlighted the importance of constituent service and other forms of policy representation, although the disproportionate preference from the poor was rarely mentioned (Eulau & Karp, 1977; Fenno, 1978; Fiorina, 1977; Johannes, 1980; Johannes & McAdams, 1981; Miller & Stokes, 1963; Pitkin, 1967; Verba & Nie, 1972). From the mid-1980s to around 2010, the predominant focus was on policy congruence.

valuing actions that induce trust in their representative. Between the Republican failure to represent the policy preferences of poor constituents and the desire of Republican constituents to hold on to representatives they trust regardless of policy, constituent service should hold additional appeal to those representatives who find themselves representing poor districts.

I show that these trade-offs are reflected in communication style, resource allocation, and overall legislative output. Less socioeconomically privileged districts are represented by politicians who expend fewer resources and deliver less legislation because they are distracted by constituent service. Representatives from privileged districts disproportionately expend resources on legislation relative to constituent service.<sup>2</sup> Representatives, particularly Republicans, from privileged districts are more legislatively successful and they disproportionately support laws that favor the interests of the rich. This is key to the final outcome: policy disproportionately created by Republican legislators with privileged constituents will disproportionately favor the interests of the privileged.

To examine the district level trade-offs legislators make between constituent service and policy, I built three novel datasets covering 2013 and 2014. These trade-offs are key to understanding how representatives respond to individual requests and how policy changes at the national level. The three datasets comprise (1) staffing allocations, (2) tweets by members of Congress, and (3) congressional legislative

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<sup>2</sup>The relationship here may be inverted with no impact on my theory. That is, it may be that districts with a lot of people who are rich and educated will elect representatives who naturally care about policy. Similarly, districts with a lot of poor and poorly educated constituents may elect those who will care about constituent service. The work by Carnes (2012) implies that poor districts may elect working class politicians who are more in tune with the needs of working class constituents. But my theory holds whether representative change their behavior based on district preferences, or districts elect compatible representative. No matter the reason, less privileged districts will be under-served if their representatives focus on constituent service at the expense of policy.

activity.

Republicans who represent socioeconomically privileged districts allocate more salary resources to staffers focused on policy, and Republicans who represent privileged districts allocate more resource to constituent service staffers. The magnitudes of the differences are substantial. The yearly staffing budget for a members of Congress is around one million dollars. When Republicans represent privileged districts, they devote an average of \$15,453 more of their yearly budget to all policy staffers, and \$18,128 less to constituent service staffers. Congressional staffers make around \$40,000 per year (CSPAN, 2015), so this is a substantial portion of an entire staffer’s salary. Republicans saw their staffing allocations pay off when they represented privileged districts. They sponsored a 0.42 additional bills that successfully passed the House of Representatives than Republicans from less privileged districts. This is 23% of the average of 1.75 bills that each member of Congress successfully sponsored. This provides one explanation for why the privileged are overrepresented in policy outcomes: representatives, particularly Republicans, for the less privileged are focused on non-policy considerations.

Democrats also show a trade-off between constituent service and policy, but only in their public communications. I used a semisupervised classification algorithm categorize tweets according to policy and constituent service focuses. Examples of the categorization scheme are included in the body of the paper. Democratic members of Congress averaged 12 more constituent service announcements when representing less privileged constituents, and 18 fewer policy tweets. There is no evidence of concrete resources, like staffers or legislation, being disproportionately deployed in privileged districts. This is not unexpected. Republicans face a unique pressure to compensate for policy shortcomings with less privileged constituents, and an unusu-



ally receptive audience for constituent service.<sup>3</sup> Democrats could still benefit from their less privileged constituents knowing they care about constituent service, but the pressure to invest their resources was lower. Additionally, Democrats were the minority party. Their ability to succeed legislatively in the first place was minimal. On average, Democratic representatives sponsored 65% fewer successful pieces of legislation than their Republican counterparts. Thus, Democrats representing poor and poorly educated districts faced minimal incentives to invest in disproportionate concrete resources for constituent service, but still benefited from publicizing their activities.

At no point does this story justify the fact that the rich are more likely to prevail in policy under Republican management. Instead, it redirects our attention away from corruption toward how our system handles differences between the demands of socioeconomically privileged citizens and those who are not.

## **2 BUILDING upon THEORIES of REPRESENTATION**

A decade ago, Bartels (2008) noted the paucity of empirical analyses connecting economic inequality to policy representation. Around the same time, the American Political Science Association created a task force to study this issue. Out of the renewed interest came pieces that combine to develop a theory that systematic forces induce politicians from poor districts to sacrifice policy efforts in favor of

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<sup>3</sup>While Republicans report equivalent rates of appreciating concrete examples of constituent service, there is some evidence that they do not value the general idea of constituent service. It goes against the Republican small government, self-help ethos. It is not surprising that Republicans did not have a substantial trade-off between policy and constituent service in their tweeting patterns. Democrats, on the other hand, tend to appreciate positive government interventions in daily life.

constituent service. Although legislators from poor districts by no means cease legislative efforts, my findings indicate this distraction appears directly connected to policies that favor the rich.

Over the last decade clear evidence has been laid out to show that policies disproportionately favor the interests of the rich. Bartels (2008), Gilens (2012), and Gilens and Page (2014), demonstrate a general lack of representation for the poor in policy congruence. The policy stances of the rich are overrepresented overall (Bartels, 2008, p. 259), in abortion policy (Bartels, 2008, p. 267), foreign policy, economic policy, religious issues, and much of social welfare (Gilens, 2012, p. 101). This is especially true for Republican representatives (Rhodes & Schaffner, 2017). There are a few significant areas in which the less privileged hold their own, such as Social Security, Medicare, school vouchers, and public works (Gilens, 2012, p. 122). Overall, there is a strong overall bias toward the privileged for the policy congruence aspect of representation.

Carnes (2016b) provided additional evidence that legislators from rich districts support policies that promote economic inequality.<sup>4</sup> Increased economic inequality tends to favor the monetary interests of the rich. This is a key piece of evidence. If members of Congress from rich districts represent the interests of the rich, then it is possible to use district characteristics to connect legislative outcomes with the interests of rich constituents. Imagine that legislators from socioeconomically privileged districts produced the same kind of legislation as those from less privileged districts. In this case it would not matter if representatives of privileged areas achieve more than others. The policy outcomes reflect the policy agenda of an average legislator. Now imagine that legislators from privileged districts produce

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<sup>4</sup>Two working papers also support this argument: Rigby and Maks-Solomon (2018) and Grossman and Isaac (2018).

legislation that favors the rich, while legislators from less privileged areas produce legislation that is less likely to favor the rich. If legislators from privileged districts produce more legislation, their policy preferences will outweigh the policy preferences of the other legislators, and policies that favors the interests of the rich dominate the overall policy agenda.

Carnes and others also highlight the fact that this effect is much stronger for Republicans (Brunner, Ross, & Washington, 2013; Carnes, 2016b; Ellis, 2016, 2013; Rigby & Hatch, 2017). There appears to be some element of ideology at play. The interests of the more and less privileged diverge similarly whether constituents are Democrats or Republicans, yet only Republicans are more likely to support the interests of their privileged copartisans over those of less privileged constituents. This is consistent with a general pattern that Republicans tend to represent the interests of the rich in a host of ways: non-copartisan policy congruence (Clinton, 2006), candidate nominations (Broockman, Carnes, Crowder-Meyer, & Skovron, 2017), responding to changing policy preferences (Barker & Carman, 2012; Cayton, 2017), even knowledge of constituent preferences (Broockman & Skovron, 2018; Butler & Dynes, 2016). Republican ideology incentivizes representing the privileged.

In order to adequately address the inequity in policy creation, we need to pinpoint the causes. Chief among them are the conflicting demands of multidimensional representation, such as the conflict between policy development and constituent service representation. This competition is at least as relevant as corruption, personal biases against the poor, or the class background of legislators. Multidimensional representation encompasses the 65% of a representatives time occupied by constituent service, pork, communication, education, bureaucratic oversight, and descriptive representation (Cain et al., 1987; Eulau & Karps, 1977; Fiorina, 1977; Fenno, 1978;

Harden, 2013, 2015; Johannes, 1980; Johannes & McAdams, 1981; Miller & Stokes, 1963; Tucker, 2017; Verba & Nie, 1972). The remaining 35% is occupied by legislative activity (Foundation, 2013). That is, there are more dimensions to representation than policy creation. When representatives talk about representation, they consistently mention these activities (Christman, 2011; Buchanan, 2015; Chu, 2015; Carney, 2012; Wright, 1965). Of them, constituent service appears to be a high priority for politicians and citizens. I will show that representatives' constituent service activities directly relate to policy inequities according to variations in socioeconomic status.

Politicians and citizens alike prioritize constituent service at similar levels to legislative activity. Representatives spend the plurality of their time on constituent services while they are in their district.<sup>5</sup> Time spent on constituent services is second only to policy work while they are in the capital (Foundation, 2013).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the plurality of time of all congressional staffers' time is spent on constituent service (Foundation, 2013).

Politicians are diligent in responding to most direct service requests (Butler, 2014; Broockman, 2014; Carnes, 2015), presumably realizing that providing poor constituent service is a good way to get negative media attention. In 2015 two of the most frequently viewed news stories about Gerry Connolly, who represented the richest district in 2012, were about his inadequate responses to constituent service requests. In one case, he reportedly threatened to arrest a constituent who sought him out for help with a personal request because that constituent touched

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<sup>5</sup>While in their districts, representatives spend 32% of their time on constituent service and 12% of their time on policy. Note that this study obtained responses from only 25 representatives.

<sup>6</sup>While in D.C., representatives who responded to the survey spent 35% of their time on policy, and 17% of their time on constituent service. The remainder of their time was devoted to campaign work, media relations, family/friends, administrative work, and personal time.

Connolly’s arm (Freire, 2009). In another incident, an angry citizen posted a blank form letter nominally “responding” to a request (Williams, 2009). Of course, failing to deliver reasonable policy is also a good way to attract critiques from the media and constituents.

Politicians are not the only ones who prioritize constituent service. Citizens think politicians should focus on constituent service about as much as they focus on policy. This is clear in their response to surveys (Griffin & Flavin, 2011) and to survey experiments (Harden, 2015). They reward increased constituent service with higher approval ratings, especially for members of the House of Representatives. They also respond positively to legislative activity (Butler, Karpowitz, & Pope, 2017; Lapinski et al., 2016; Serra & Moon, 1994; Serra & Cover, 1992; Sulkin, Testa, & Usry, 2015; Tucker, 2017; Wolak, 2017).

Both constituent service and legislation are treated as a substantial component of a representative’s job, but constituent service is a higher priority for the less socioeconomically privileged. Common requests for personal help include assistance navigating “social security benefits, veterans’ benefits, civil service pensions, Medicare, immigration, the IRS, and other federal bureaucracies” (Serra & Moon, 1994, p. 202-3). Requests from private groups and local governments include help for the implementation of public projects and small business loans (Fenno, 1978, p. 101). Most of these particularized requests are more likely to impact those of low socioeconomic status, as many requests concern the social safety net on which the disadvantaged rely.<sup>7</sup> There is clear experimental and survey evidence that the poor and less

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<sup>7</sup>Indeed, these problems are remarkably congruent with policy areas where the poor are equally represented. Fenno has theorized that the personal constituencies of Congressmen have an outsized impact on their policy preferences because members of Congress regularly discuss policy concerns with these constituents. Constituent service provides another way that members of Congress regularly confront the policy needs of their constituents. This suggests that part of the reason that certain social welfare programs favor the preferences of the poor is because representatives learn

educated disproportionately prioritize constituent service over legislation (Griffin & Flavin, 2011; Lapinski et al., 2016; Verba & Nie, 1972). The poor are also more likely than the rich to express approval of a representative who focuses on constituent service instead of policy (Harden, 2015).

The converse of this finding is that the rich and educated disproportionately prefer policy returns over constituent service (Harden, 2015). They also engage in policy related activities at a higher rate overall. They have clearer knowledge of policy (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; McLeod & Perse, 1994), and are more likely to vote, contribute financially to campaigns, and volunteer (Verba et al., 1995b).

Both education and income regularly appear as significant factors in how citizens engage with policy and constituent services. The educated have the knowledge required to influence policy and legislators are the most responsive to constituents who know and care about certain policies (Sulkin et al., 2015). The rich have resources that help them engage with policy and legislators, including money, time, and connections. On the other hand, the poor are more likely to need constituent service. They certainly are disproportionately likely to prefer it. It is also plausible that the less well-educated may be swayed by constituent service more than policy representation. Constituent service is supposed to provide legislators with more flexibility on policy representation (Fenno, 1978, p. 244), especially for the poor. People who are poorly informed are less likely to respond to the policies their representatives support (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2011). However, receiving help from a member of Congress, or knowing someone who was helped, should be widely approved. Thus, the good will created by constituent service may allow a legislator the ability to create less congruent policy, especially for the poor

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about the need for the programs through constituent service.

and poorly educated.

This should be an additive effect. Those who are both high income and educated should strongly engage with policy, those who are high income and less educated should be somewhat more swayed by constituent service, and those who are neither should be primarily swayed by constituent service.

Liberals appear to be more amenable to constituent service than conservatives. For constituents, liberals are more likely to prefer constituent service over policy in surveys (Lapinski et al., 2016). For legislators, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to respond to their constituent service requests (Butler, Karpowitz, & Pope, 2012). However, there is little evidence to suggest that conservatives dislike politicians who provide such representation. In a survey experiment, conservatives were no more likely than liberals to approve of representatives who provide constituent service (Harden, 2015). Indeed, there is evidence that even people who identify with the opposing party respond very well to receiving constituent service (Sulkin et al., 2015; Butler et al., 2017).<sup>8</sup>

Citizens' preferences are reflected in how representatives respond to individual policy requests. Politicians are more likely to prioritize policy requests over constituent service requests when they represent a high income area (Harden, 2013). Politicians are more likely to give serious thought to policy requests when they represent socioeconomically privileged constituents (Butler, 2014). Butler argues that this is due to personal bias, but as Barker and Carman (2012) note<sup>9</sup> it could also be a strategic response to the preferences of their constituents. Representatives from privileged areas are likely to be more practiced at responding to policy requests

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<sup>8</sup>In fact, they are more likely than copartisans to improve their opinion of a politician.

<sup>9</sup>"... in the face of widespread constituent indifference coupled with ideological intransigence by activists, the art of pandering may have evolved into one that is more about appeasing constituent's representation preferences than their policy preferences." (Barker & Carman, 2012, p. 153)

because they get more of them. Either way, politicians from high income districts are more likely to seriously consider the views of their constituents.

These studies have also shown that representatives are more likely to prioritize constituent service requests when they represent poorer constituents. Legislators from poor areas are more likely to respond effectively to needs specific to low-income constituents, such as free lunches for students (Butler, 2014). Legislators from high income areas are less likely to prioritize constituent service requests involving drivers licenses (Harden, 2015).<sup>10</sup>

There should be a strong connection between constituent preferences, representational activity, and, ultimately, policy outcomes. The remainder of this paper demonstrates empirical evidence for this connection. Representatives are rewarded for constituent service and policy activities. The poor and less educated need and prefer constituent service. Their representatives disproportionately respond to individual constituent service requests. The rich and educated are more engaged with policy. Their representatives are more likely to respond favorably to policy related requests.

The piece that has not been clearly shown is whether privileged districts have representatives who focus on and are more successful with legislation overall because they are not distracted by providing constituent service.<sup>11</sup> If true, we would expect to see larger effects for conservatives, as they value policy more highly than constituent service. Since legislators from privileged areas are more likely to support policies that favor the interests of the rich, this will ultimately result in policy that favors the interests of those who are already privileged.

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<sup>10</sup>Presumably this effect would be even stronger for a request that involved issues specific to low income constituents.

<sup>11</sup>As a useful auxiliary piece of evidence, politicians modify their behavior based on what they think their constituent want (Ellickson & Whistler, 2001).



Two pieces of evidence stand out to connect the emphasis on policy from the rich, and the constituent service preferences from the poor, to the kinds of representation legislators provide the entire district. Both are related to constituent service. The first is that poor districts tend to have more district offices than do rich districts (Griffin & Flavin, 2011). The second is that politicians from poor districts are somewhat more likely to discuss constituent services on their websites (Harden, 2015). This paper will demonstrate that representatives who allocate more staffing resources to providing constituent service also allocate fewer to policy. The socioeconomic characteristics of their districts strongly influence how these resources are allocated. Less socioeconomically privileged districts have more constituent service resources, while the privileged have more policy resources. This translates directly to legislative success: representatives, particularly Republicans, who represent socioeconomically privileged districts are more successful legislatively.

### **3 THEORY and PREDICTIONS**

I predict a trade-off between constituent service and policy representation. Representatives are judged by how they provide both policy and constituent service (Fiorina, 1981; Cain et al., 1987; Serra & Cover, 1992; Serra & Moon, 1994; Sulkin et al., 2015; Butler et al., 2017; Tucker, 2017). Less income and less education are connected with a disproportionate preference for constituent service. Meanwhile, the rich and educated are more likely both to participate in policy related advocacy (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995a; Verba et al., 1995b) and to disproportionately prefer policy representation (Verba & Nie, 1972; Griffin & Flavin, 2011; Harden, 2015; Lapinski et al., 2016). Thus, we expect representatives from rich areas to provide more policy, and to see more constituent service provision in poor areas.

Harden (2015) and Butler (2014) show this at the individual level. Legislators are more likely to address individual constituent service requests when they represent less high income and less educated districts. Conversely, they are more likely to address individual policy requests in high income and educated districts.

In this paper I examine one last crucial piece of this puzzle: how do members of Congress allocate district-level resources between policy and constituent service? I pinpoint a clear trade-off. At the staffing level, at the legislative level, and in the kinds of activities they discuss publicly, representatives from less privileged districts devote disproportionate resources to constituent service, while those from privileged districts devote disproportionate resources to policy. This result is the strongest for Republicans, who were the majority party members at the time of data collection. They are also more likely need to use non-policy means to represent poor constituents because Republican ideology tends to line up with the interests of the rich. Ultimately, Republican representatives from socioeconomically privileged districts are more legislatively successful than Democrats or Republicans from less socioeconomically privileged districts.

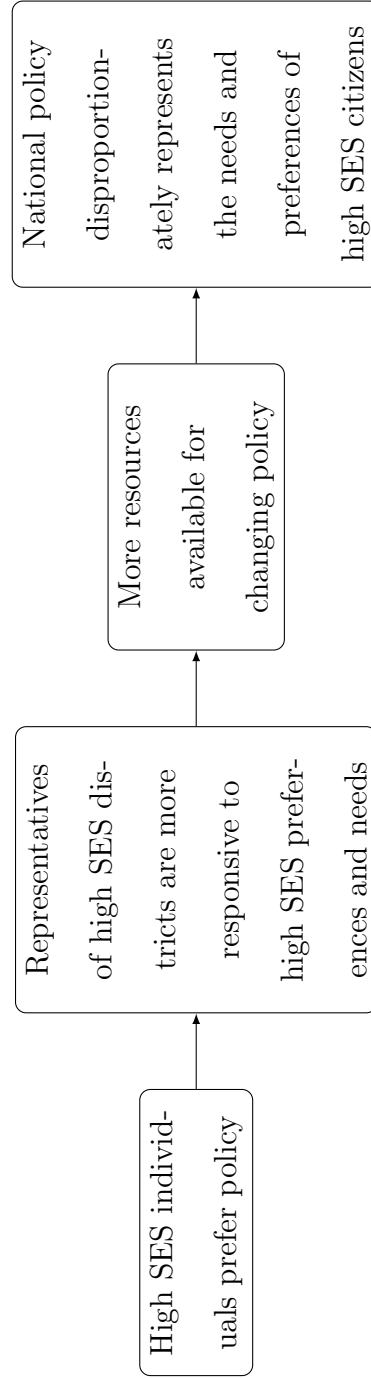
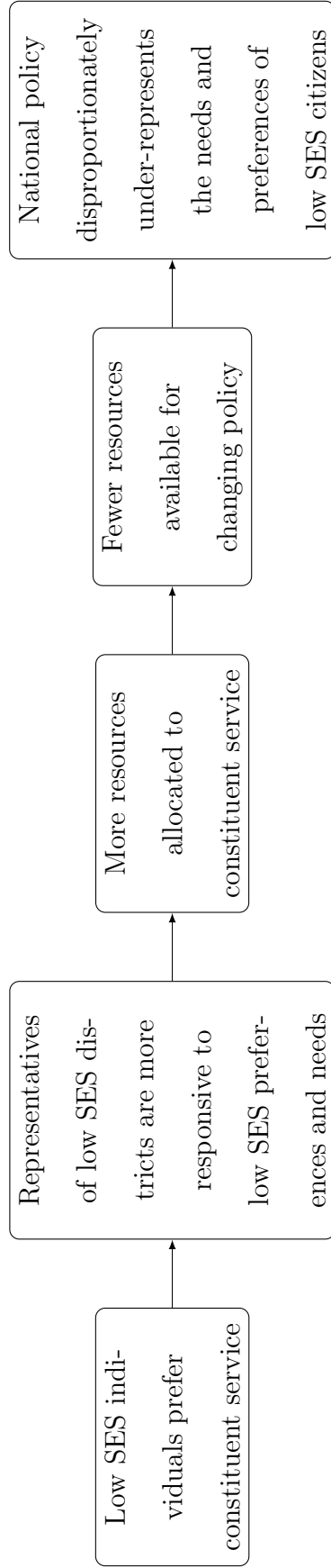
This theory relies on two kinds of actors and their motivations. The actors are the potential voters and those who represent the voters. Citizens are motivated to vote based on their representational needs and preferences. Representatives are single-minded seekers of reelection (Mayhew, 2004). In response to these motivations, voters can express preferences and representatives can change their behavior to court voters. This courting process must be efficient, as representatives are constrained by time. Privileged citizens disproportionately prefer that their representative focus on legislative activity, while less privileged citizens disproportionately prefer constituent service. Thus, representatives from districts dominated by priv-

ileged constituents will devote a larger share of their time and resources to create legislation, while representatives from districts with fewer privileged constituents will be more involved in constituent service.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Note that my theory does not require that politicians ignore constituent service requests in rich districts. Indeed, the best evidence we have is that it is rare for politicians to ignore constituent service requests. Recent studies have shown high response rates to constituent service requests (Carnes 2015, Butler and Broockman 2011, Broockman 2014). My theory instead requires that constituents request more constituent service in disadvantaged areas, and/or that politicians solicit and advertise constituent service activity more often.

# Connecting Preferences to Policy



## **Research Design**

Previous analyses have used experimental designs to pinpoint the causal mechanisms at play. We know that politicians who provide constituent service have higher approval ratings among the poor than politicians who provide policy congruence. We also know that politicians who represent poor areas are better at providing constituent service regarding free lunch programs in schools. Previous studies have provided excellent evidence that the causal mechanism is real and substantial. Being poor and less educated causes people to prefer constituent service over policy representation, and being from a poor area or responding to poor constituents causes politicians to be better at providing constituent service. We have not yet seen how this translates to actions at the district and national levels.

This study expands away from the causal mechanism to look at the district-level and national outcomes. I show that the causal mechanism found in previous studies directly affects district level representation: representatives of poor areas devote more resources to constituent service while representatives of rich areas have a stronger policy focus. Additionally, the connection to policy outcomes is strong: Republicans who represented poor, less educated districts sponsored 23% fewer successful bills when compared to their counterparts who represented rich and educated districts.

## **Hypotheses**

I make the following predictions:

Hypothesis 1: Representatives of less socioeconomically privileged districts devote disproportionate resources to constituent service.

Hypothesis 2: Representatives of more socioeconomically privileged districts devote disproportionate resources to policy.

Hypothesis 3a: Democrats focus on constituent service more than Republicans.

Hypothesis 3b: Republicans focus on policy more than Democrats.

Evidence that confirms each hypothesis supports the theory that representatives modify their behavior to accommodate the needs of their constituents.<sup>13</sup> In particular, privileged constituents representatives' provide more legislation, while less privileged constituents representatives' are provide more constituent service. I address each hypothesis in turn in the remainder of this paper.

### **Robustness Checks**

My theory requires that when socioeconomically privileged districts demand legislation, their representatives will be motivated to provide more legislation. The empirical tests described in this paper demonstrate that less privileged constituents receive more constituent service resources while the privileged receive more policy representation. However, it is important to rule out plausible alternative explanations. There are a number of alternatives that might confound my analysis.

First, a representative who sits on a powerful committee or in a powerful position on committees may be more likely to provide policy-related representation. Second, the overall ideology of the member of Congress could affect representational style. Third, the racial makeup of a district or the race of the member of Congress could influence their legislative and constituent service activities. Controlling for

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<sup>13</sup>Because I have not identified the causal mechanism for this level of analysis, it could also be the case that districts elect the kinds of politicians who will accommodate the needs and preferences of their constituents. Regardless, privileged districts are more likely to be represented by legislators who devote resources to changing national policy.

each of these, I find that the impact of district socioeconomic privilege remains strong after accounting for the potentially confounding factors. Additionally, each of these controls meaningfully impacts the model on its own, providing additional context without nullifying the main findings.

There are a number of other possible confounding factors that only add noise to my model, without substantially changing the findings concerning socioeconomic privilege. First, drawing from theories of the median voter, it could be that the relative ideal point of the legislator to the median legislator of his or her party could drive the amount of legislation produced. That is, someone close to the party median in terms of ideal points should have a better chance of getting party support behind sponsored bills. Second, representatives from geographically large rural districts could need to devote more resources to constituent services as a result of district size. Third, it could be the case that representatives who face minimal competition will not focus on legislation as much. Fourth, it could be that education and income each have meaningfully different effects on representational style.

None of variables examined in the previous paragraph have statistical significance on their own or change the direction of my main findings. Because are highly correlated with other variables in the model, they increase the overall noise in the model. As is standard, I omit these non-explanatory yet noise-inducing variables from the model. Because of they are collinear with the main variables, the standard errors of both the controls and the explanatory variables are artificially inflated, obscuring the statistically valid relationships in the data.

Finally, it could be that the seniority of the member of Congress, which is correlated to district income, is the driving factor behind representational style. I include regression results and a discussion of this in the appendix. Seniority has

sufficient collinearity with representation and district education and income to create some mild, albeit statistically insignificant, changes in predicted policy and service tweets made by Republicans. These inconsistencies do not affect any of the main results presented.

## 4 DATA SOURCE SUMMARY

I use three novel datasets that capture resource allocation at the district level to demonstrate the trade-off between constituent service and policy. First is the salary paid to Congressional staffers, divided into the following roles based on their job titles: policy, constituent service, and communications positions.<sup>14</sup> The second source is tweets from members of Congress, divided according to their focus on policy or constituent service. The third dataset comes from the legislative records of members of Congress.<sup>15</sup> Each of these sources is matched with a variety of district level and legislator level variables that measure demographics, legislative experience and power, and ideology.

Below I discuss how I collected and merged the data used to create the dependent variables. I discuss data collection for independent variables in the sections discussing each of the three sets of independent variables.

### **Dependent Variables: District Demographics and Controls**

Demographic data on the economic, educational, and ethnic characteristics of each Congressional district 2013 and 2014 comes from the U.S. Census website.<sup>16</sup> Rep-

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<sup>14</sup>Others have collected data on whether staff live in the district or in Washington, D.C. (Parker & Goodman, 2009).

<sup>15</sup>Volden and Wiseman have a similar dataset they present in Volden and Wiseman (2014). I collected mine independently.

<sup>16</sup>Located at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml> accessed January 2014.



representatives' party information is collected from the government website for the House of Representatives, and representatives' affiliations with the Congressional Black Caucus are collected from the CBC website. I use DW-Nominate scores to control for a legislator's ideology, as well whether they are on powerful committees or are the chair of a committee. As part of robustness checks, I control for a variety of other factors, such as district safety and other demographic variables, but I exclude them from the final model because they do not add to the overall explanatory power or change the main effects.<sup>17</sup>

The main independent measure I use is the socioeconomic privilege in a district. This captures the overall effect of education and income, both of which have been clearly shown to impact constituent preferences over representation. While it would be preferable to capture the independent impacts of each, the strong correlation between income and education renders this impossible in almost all cases in this part of the dissertation.<sup>18</sup> A strong correlation is not problematic when statistical significance is achieved (Belsley, 1991, p. 73), but it can dramatically inflate the standard errors of the model. Such inflation occurs in my regressions, obscuring the effect of either. A standard solution for highly correlated variables is to use factor analysis to create a latent variable (Belsley, 1991; Montgomery, Peck, & Vining, 2012).<sup>19</sup> Both income and education combined can be expected to magnify political effectiveness, yet only the magnitude of their effect can only be accurately captured

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<sup>17</sup>The one exception is seniority, which I omit from the models in the body of the paper but discuss in the appendix. Seniority has some complicated effects on how Republicans tweet. This does not change the main effects found in the models. To satisfy the curious, seniority significantly increases the success of Republicans in legislation, as well as how much members of both parties tweet about policy.

<sup>18</sup>The correlation coefficient is 0.6755.

<sup>19</sup>Different kinds of data lend themselves to different measures of socioeconomic status. A factor analysis approach is appropriate when the dimensionality of the data is substantially reduced in a factor analysis, at least one component captures a large fraction of the variance, and the geographic level makes sense (Krieger et al., 2002; Shavers, 2007). This is the case for my data.

by using a joint measure.

The one key exception to this is in the analysis of Democratic tweets. For all the other regressions, I use the combined socioeconomic status because the independent effects of each variable are obscured by multicollinearity. Yet it is preferable to capture the independent effects of each. This is possible to do in the case of how Democrats tweets based on the educational attainment and income of their districts. This model selection decision is further explained in Part 2 of this dissertation.

I measure socioeconomic status by calculating the latent variable underlying both district education and income. This new variable will be large when education and income are both high, and small when they are both low. A district with moderate income and high education will be scored similarly to a district with high income and moderate education. To create this new variable, I use the percent of a district's households earning over \$75,000 per year to measure district income. District education is measured as the percent of a district that has a bachelor's degree. Factor analysis takes these two variables and found that one latent variable captures the combination of the two with over 91% accuracy.<sup>20</sup> I use this latent variable to create a new variable for the socioeconomic privilege of a district. This is effectively a linear combination of both variables, weighted by factor analysis to capture a common element. I normalize this latent variable to be between 0 and 100 in order to correspond with the fact that the measure is based on the percent of a district that is high income and educated.

I use this measure of socio-economic status as the primary dependent variable throughout, with one key exception. The primary reason to use the

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<sup>20</sup>This is speaking somewhat loosely. The first factor accounts for over 91% of the variation between the two variables. The second factor accounts for less than 8%, so I simply use the first factor as the latent variable that captures district socioeconomic status.

## 5 EVIDENCE for TRADE-OFFS in STAFFING TYPES

This section captures the trade-offs between policy and constituent service as seen in legislators' Twitter feeds and staffing budgets. The next section will examine how these trade-offs translate into legislation, as seen through the number of bills sponsored by a representative which then pass a full House floor vote.

### Data Source: Salaries of Congressional Staffers

To capture clear monetary trade-offs, I use data from the House's budgetary report for 2013. I analyze any differences in Congressional staffing allocation between privileged and underprivileged districts. Members of Congress are allotted an annual allowance for a variety of needs, including franked mail, travel, rent, printing, and personnel compensation. The amount varies slightly between individuals, but averages \$1,243,560 per year. Representatives spend the bulk of this sum on personnel compensation (Brudnick, 2017)– around \$916,000 each year for the 2013-2014 congressional session.

Data from documents published by the House of Representatives describes how money was spent in each quarter of each year.<sup>21</sup> From each of the eight documents covering 2013 and 2014, I scrape information on the staffers, their titles and salaries, for each member of Congress.<sup>22</sup> I categorize each staffer into one of four categories by job title: legislative, constituent, communication, and other.<sup>23</sup> I then add together the salaries for each category of staffer for each member of Congress.<sup>24</sup> Because the

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<sup>21</sup>Available at [house.gov](http://house.gov).

<sup>22</sup>This was an encrypted pdf document, so text parsing was necessary to turn the document into a data source that contained each member of Congress and how much they paid each staffer.

<sup>23</sup>Many job titles were misspelled or abbreviated, as were the names of many members of Congress. All errors were corrected with the help of Python.

<sup>24</sup>The category of “other” included job titles like IT Staffer and Employee, Part Time. On

budget for personnel compensation varies slightly between representatives, I use the percentage of their budget devoted to each category. Legislative staffers account for the bulk of personnel compensation, at around 50% or \$497,607 per member of Congress per year. Constituent service staffers are allocated the next largest chunk, at 31% or \$283,956 per member of Congress per year.

## Staffing Results

Now that the staffing resources of all representatives have been scraped, it is possible to begin testing Hypotheses 1-3. The results for how members of Congress allocate their budget to different staffing roles are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. As the socioeconomic privilege of a district increases, we expect to see increased total salary for policy staffers and decreased total salary for constituent service staffers.

Figure 1: SES and staff compensation by role

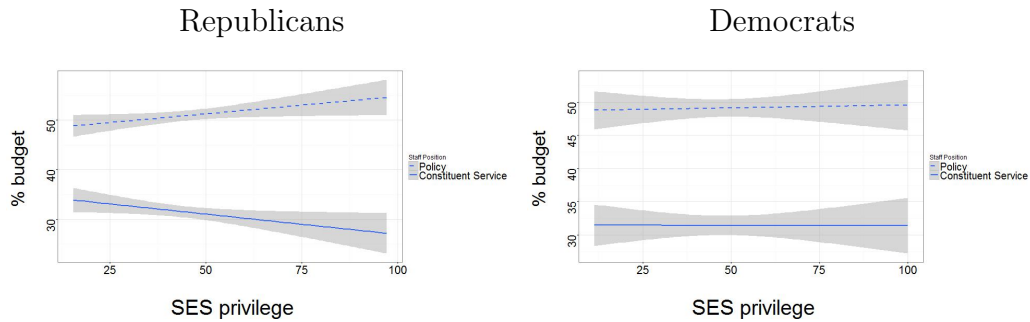


Table 1 provides interesting and highly significant results for many of the variables. I will focus on socioeconomic privilege and the representative's party identification. The results for committees, race, and ideology will be discussed at the end of this section.

The main results support Hypotheses 1 and 2, but only for Republicans. Dis-  


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average, it accounted for 20% of a representative's staffing budget.

Table 1. Percent staffing budget

	all			Republicans		Democrats	
	% service Staff Salary	% policy Staff Salary	% service Staff Salary	% policy Staff Salary	% service Staff Salary	% policy Staff Salary	
SES	-1.113* (0.035)	0.739 (0.126)	-1.609* (0.029)	1.511* (0.021)	-0.504 (0.522)	-0.020 (0.978)	
conservativeness	0.374 (0.906)	-1.668 (0.564)	-2.231 (0.516)	-2.128 (0.486)	9.641 (0.163)	-2.787 (0.664)	
% black pop.	0.061 (0.902)	-0.319 (0.481)	0.305 (0.618)	0.231 (0.671)	-0.125 (0.879)	-1.073 (0.160)	
Black caucus	-6.027 (0.002)	0.883 (0.624)			-4.436 (0.078)	1.615 (0.490)	
comm. chair	4.990* (0.024)	-2.800 (0.166)	5.110* (0.014)	-2.701 (0.142)			
powerful comm.	-0.442 (0.690)	-1.655 (0.103)	0.006 (0.996)	-1.205 (0.330)	-0.532 (0.769)	-2.470 (0.144)	
Republican	-2.166 (0.546)	4.117 (0.210)					
intercept	33.637*** (0.000)	48.747*** (0.000)	33.125*** (0.000)	51.612*** (0.000)	36.742*** (0.000)	50.614*** (0.000)	
observations	371	371	203	203	168	168	

OLS, p-values in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

trict socioeconomic privilege has a substantial negative effect on constituent service. That is, Republicans from privileged districts will devote fewer staffers to constituent service than Republicans from less privileged districts. Inversely, Republicans from privileged districts devote more resources to policy staffers. District privilege does not seem to affect how Democratic representatives allocate their staffing resources. The sign of the coefficient for total salary of constituent service staff is in the correct direction, but the magnitude of the effect is extremely small while the statistical significance is low. The statistical significance for the coefficient for socioeconomic privilege as it relates to policy staff for Democrats is effectively null.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the slopes for Democrats in Figure 1 are clearly flat.

It is an open question why Democrats appear to be less strategic than Republicans about their policy and constituent service staff. The first explanation is simply that they are the minority party at the time. The minority party has little chance of legislative success, so Democrats may have decided to avoid allocating extra money to policy staffers who could not be effective. I provide evidence for this theory in parts 2 and 3 of this dissertation. It could also be that Democrats and Republicans have different representational preferences. Few studies have separated constituents' representational preferences by party. Theoretically, conservatives should be less likely to prefer constituent service (Harden, 2015; Lapinski et al., 2016; Butler et al., 2012).<sup>26</sup> However, conservatives also tend to reside in rural and less privileged districts. These areas have a greater need for constituent service than do privileged areas. Residents tend to be further from facilities that provide aid, and when they face a problem it is more likely to impact their ability to pay bills. Democrats, on the other hand, tend live in urban areas with many centralized locations to help

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<sup>25</sup>P-values cannot exceed 1, and this p-value is .978.

<sup>26</sup>Also see the appendix for results from 1978 that show the same.

citizens interact with the government. It is possible that Republican representatives have to devote more resources to creating access to governmental services than do Democrats. For Democrats, the reduced demand for constituent service staff in less privileged urban districts would free resources for policy staffers.

In Table 1 I include results for the entire chamber of Congress as well as results for each party separately. This highlights the fact that simply controlling for the party affiliation of the member of Congress does not account for the differences.<sup>27</sup> Instead, it appears that the strength of the effect of socioeconomic privilege on staffing allocations in the full model is being driven by Republicans, not Democrats. Republicans have a much stronger relationship between district privilege and socioeconomic status for staffing allocations. A similar result holds for how each party tweets about policy and constituent service.<sup>28</sup>

Table 1 reveals two additional findings of interest, both slightly unexpected. The first is that black representatives spend less on constituent service staffers, but they do not spend more on policy. I control for district income, education, and racial composition, all of which are tightly correlated with districts choosing to elect a black representative. However, from similar districts, a black representative is less likely than a white representative to focus their staff on constituent service. This too could be explained by the theory that black politicians represent urban areas that already provide aid similar to constituent service, perhaps through state funding.

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<sup>27</sup>Interaction effects would capture similar results if each term included an interaction. This would be create a very complex model with a strong potential for very large standard errors. Separating the two parties creates substantially more concise and easily interpreted results. If the power of the model is reduced too much with separate models for each party, this would be inappropriate. This appear to not be the case for the models presented below.

<sup>28</sup>See appendix for a model that only includes an interaction term between socioeconomic privilege and party. Interactions do no better at capturing the difference between Republicans and Democrats. An odd statistical result is that there is no statistically significant difference between the slope of SES for Democrats and Republicans.

It is contrary to the expectation in the literature that black members of Congress focus on district activities (Grose, 2011). It is also unclear where black members of Congress spend the money they do not allocate to constituent service staff. The second unexpected finding is that committee chairs are more likely to allocate higher total salary to constituent service staff. While initially a surprise, this has a clear explanation. Committee chairs have access to staff focused on helping them with policy in addition to the staff and budget allocated to all members of Congress on an individual basis (DeGregorio, 1995). Thus, resources are freed to devote to other areas. The fact that the extra resources are not primarily devoted to constituent service supports this idea.

## 6 EVIDENCE for TRADE-OFFS in TWEETS

### Data Source: Congressional Tweets

My second test to determine whether members of Congress from less privileged districts spend fewer resources on constituent service and more resources on policy, or vice versa, uses data from Twitter. Members of Congress use Twitter both for describing their activities and for communicating with their constituents. But their tweets are much more than cheap talk. This is a sample of three randomly chosen constituent service-oriented tweets:

- “Next week our mobile constituent service center will be in Milford. Here is the schedule” –Representative Kerry Bentivolio:
- “VA says it will complete all cases 2 years or older within 60 days!”  
–Representative Jackie Speier



- “If you’re a veteran in the in 9th district having trouble with a va disability claim contact our office” –Representative Todd Young

The statements in constituent service tweets provided by members of Congress are generally highly factual, referring to activities performed or services offered. While it is theoretically possible that members of Congress are misrepresenting themselves through these tweets, it is unlikely. Members of Congress are generally followed by thousands of people, many of whom would notice or be scandalized by clear misinformation. The potential for backlash from an inaccurate tweet viewed by thousands of people, primarily constituents and the media, is substantial.<sup>29</sup> Thus, these tweets are likely a reasonable reflection of the activities described. These tweets also represent time-intensive activities. Touring traffic control towers, dealing with V.A. disability claims, speaking on the media about an issue, or attending a hearing in Congress are all resource intensive activities. Finally, the tweets themselves are not costly, while the activities they announce are.

Constituent service is extremely popular among constituents, particularly Democrats. Ideology has a strong association with how much people approve of constituent service. The more liberal someone is, the more likely they are to rate constituent service as an important activity (Cain et al., 1987; Lapinski et al., 2016). Thus, tweets from Democrats should be representative of their constituent service activities, and reasonably reflective of their policy activities. Whether the same holds for Republicans is more complicated. While conservatives are less likely to rate constituent service as more important than policy, it is not clear they would object to receiving constituent service or knowing that others received it (Harden, 2015;

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<sup>29</sup>It is possible that this norm will be subverted in the near future due to President Trump’s propensity to tell falsehoods in public and on the record. However, it is generally accepted that, prior to 2016, politicians were averse to telling outright lies in public forums.

Butler et al., 2012).

New tools allow for the automatic analysis of text documents, giving a comprehensive look at how representatives present themselves through Twitter. I use an implementation of semi-supervised document classification to analyze the tweets from members of Congress. Effectively, these methods link the word and sentence structure of the tweets to the content of the tweets. For example, if a tweet uses combinations of the words “cases,” “you,” “touring,” and “veteran,” then the method classifies the tweet as being constituent service oriented. On the other hand, if the tweet uses combinations of the words “pass,” “reauthorization,” “proposed ban,” “chairman,” or “hearing,” then the method should classify the tweet as being policy oriented. This method is not perfect, but it achieves a high accuracy rate and allows for the analysis of millions of tweets, a task that that would be effectively impossible by hand.

In order to turn Twitter into a data source, I first scrape all available tweets for each member of Congress.<sup>30</sup> From the 355 House members active on Twitter I collect up to 4,000 tweets per House member, gathering 528,835 tweets in total. The next step is to process the Twitter data and classify each tweet into either constituent service or policy statements.<sup>31</sup> First, I hand code a training data set of 500 randomly selected tweets. After splitting the hand coded tweets into two random subsets, I simultaneously train 5 different classification models on one subset containing 400 tweets. These classification models automatically associates tweet syntax with my hand-coded classification. In order to determine the accuracy of the newly trained classification models, I ask the program to predict the remaining

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<sup>30</sup>I collected all Twitter handles of members of Congress in 2013 from <http://www.govtrack.us/data/us/111/>, accessed January 2014

<sup>31</sup>In order to do this, I used a tool in R called RTextTools.

subset of one hundred hand coded tweets. The trained classification model is able to accurately identify 67.5% of the tested tweets. This is not adequate, so I improve the coding of initial subset of 400, and run the model again, achieving an accuracy rate of 72.4%. I repeat this process until I have an accuracy rate of around 75%. I then hand code an additional 1000 randomly selected tweets, and run a training model on 700 of these new tweets. The accuracy of the updated classification models is 77.5% for the remaining 300 hand coded tweets. Finally, I run the classification model on the entire set of 527,835 tweets. Because the hand coded data is randomly selected, the classification model is expected to be about 77.5% accurate for the entire data set. This is an accuracy rate that slightly exceeds general expectations for a text classification model.

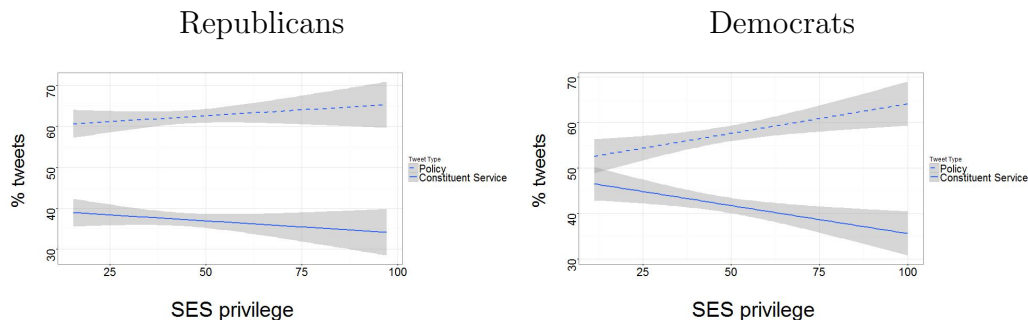
## **Twitter Results**

The results for the types of tweets on members' of Congress Twitter feeds are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2. I use the decision rule for model selection presented in Part 2 of this dissertation. This time, the joint effect of income and education is not statistically significant for Republicans, nor are the individual effects. The joint effect is statistically significant for Democrats. This is similar to the effect of income and education for Republican legislative activity, where the joint effect of both was statistically significant. Unlike the scenario for Republican legislative activity, where multicollinearity obscured the individual effects, the individual effect of education in the model of Democratic tweets is statistically significant. Thus, I can say that not only is the combined effect of income and education statistically significant for Democratic Twitter activity, but the joint effect is driven by the effect

of education.

The main results provide additional evidence for Hypotheses 1 and 2. This time, the effect of district educational attainment on Twitter activity is strong for Democrats, but the effect of both district income and educational attainment is minimal to nonexistent for Republicans.

Figure 2: SES and Tweets by Type



District educational attainment creates a significantly negative effect on how much a Democratic representative focuses on constituent service. That is, a Democratic representative of a district with a large percentage educated constituents does not use Twitter to advertise and discuss as many constituent services. They do, however, discuss policy more often.<sup>32</sup>

This finding is intriguing in light of the fact that Democrats do not allocate staffing resources in a similarly strategic manner. As discussed in the previous section, this lack of congruence with their staffing strategy may be because they are the minority party. As the minority party, their legislative activity is necessarily unlikely to be successful, yet their public appearance is still relevant. Thus, they

<sup>32</sup>Note that the effects for policy are very close to being the opposite of the results for constituent service. This is largely because policy and constituent service dominate representatives' Twitter feeds. Only around 10% of the tweets discussed some other topic. These other topics tended to involve popular culture and family. Because policy and constituent service account for the bulk of the tweets and because my measure is a percentage, more policy tweets generally mean fewer constituent service tweets.

Table 2. Percent tweets

	all		Republicans		Democrats	
	% service Tweets	% policy Tweets	% service Tweets	% policy Tweets	% service Tweets	% policy Tweets
SES	-1.783** (0.669)	1.853** (0.671)	-0.524 (0.997)	0.508 (0.997)		
percent college					-0.312* (0.120)	0.314** (0.120)
percent high income					0.145 (0.121)	-0.133 (0.121)
conservativeness	4.942 (4.049)	-5.414 (4.058)	-8.431 (4.799)	8.013 (4.802)	36.784*** (7.286)	-37.105*** (7.309)
percent black	-1.020 (0.639)	1.002 (0.641)	-0.101 (0.855)	0.006 (0.855)	-1.915* (0.882)	2.009* (0.885)
Black Caucus	0.556 (2.552)	-0.456 (2.558)			6.011* (2.743)	-6.012* (2.752)
comm. chair	-8.319** (2.781)	8.066** (2.787)	-8.557** (2.811)	8.294** (2.812)		
powerful comm.	-3.526* (1.420)	3.505* (1.423)	-5.325** (1.931)	5.291** (1.932)	-0.259 (1.961)	0.292 (1.967)
Republican	-10.165* (4.571)	10.708* (4.581)				
observations	371	371	203	203	168	168

OLS, p-values in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

may focus on tweeting about policy even if they cannot succeed at creating policy. As I will show in Parts 2 and 3, this pattern of policy tweets based on district educational attainment is congruent with Democratic legislative activity when they control the House. Additionally, tweets are likely to generate more approval from Democratic districts. Liberal constituents are more likely to philosophically approve of constituent service. Thus, it pays for them to advertise their constituent service activities, both to ease access to public services and to gain public approval.

In tweets, Republicans are less strategic, or if they are, it is not in the expected manner. The sign of the coefficients for each type of tweet is in the correct direction, but is small and not statistically significant. This effect is visible in Figure 2.<sup>33</sup> This does not provide much support for Hypotheses 1 and 2 with respect to Democrats. However, there are reasons to believe the effects would be lower for Republicans than for Democrats. One plausible argument comes from the fact that more conservative constituents are less likely to appreciate constituent service. Republican legislators may not be lauded by conservative constituents for advertising constituent service to the entire district. This does not discount the need for constituent service. Nor does it diminish the relevance of increased approval ratings from people who receive more constituent service representation (Tucker, 2017). It does reduce the incentives a representative has to talk about these services in a public setting, although they should still be incentivized to provide it. This provision is reflected in their staffing allocations. This is corroborated with evidence from Griffin and Flavin (2011) that representatives in poor districts have more district offices and the fact that poorer

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<sup>33</sup>As with all results presented here, this holds with or without the controls. However, unlike the other results in this paper, this effect is not robust to the inclusion of seniority in the model. Overall, privileged districts have statistically insignificant increases in policy tweets. This does not remain true after seniority is controlled for. Intriguingly, the independent effect of seniority is that more senior representatives are more likely to use their Twitter feed to discuss policy. I discuss the implications of this in the appendix.

districts tend to have representatives with more mentions of constituent service on their websites (Harden, 2015). So although Republicans do not advertise constituent service based on districts socioeconomic status, they do strategically provide it.

Ideology also has a very strong and distinctive impact on this model. The most eye-catching aspect is that the effects are opposite for Republicans and Democrats. The coefficients for Republicans are just shy of traditional significance, but the effects for Democrats are very large and strongly significant. Extreme Democrats, who are less conservative for their party, are more involved in policy discussions than moderate Democrats. This can be explained by the fact that moderate Democrats, the conservatives within their own party, are likely to represent more suburban and ideologically divided districts. Unsurprisingly, they are relatively more likely to announce constituent service compared to their more extreme counterparts.

Extreme Republicans, on the other hand, are more likely to discuss constituent service than moderate Republicans. This is an interesting finding, because there are conflicting theories about which direction this effect should go. On one hand, conservatives tend to be more opposed to constituent service, at least theoretically. On the other hand, strongly conservative districts tend to be poor and rural—two conditions that increase demand for constituent service. It appears that the latter assumption is better supported.

In addition to the ideological effects discussed above, committee chairs tend to discuss policy more often than those who are not committee chairs. This nicely counters the earlier evidence that committee chairs are more likely to devote their personal staffing budget, as opposed to their committee staffing budget, to constituent service. Committee chairs, who are intimately involved in policy creation, discuss policy more often on their Twitter accounts.

## Magnitude of the Effect

The effect sizes for each type of representation are substantial, as shown in Table 3. In order to retain comparability between coefficients, I revert back to the socioeconomic status variable for Democrats, instead of using the measure for education alone.<sup>34</sup> I look at the estimated budget and number of tweets for a privileged district, and compare that to the corresponding difference for a district that is not as privileged.<sup>35</sup>

The magnitude of the effect is particularly obvious in the staffing budget. Overall, a less privileged district will spend around \$7,445 more per year on constituent service staffers than a privileged district. The estimated difference is particularly striking for districts represented by Republicans. An unprivileged district represented by a Republican will spend a full \$18,128 more on constituent service staffers. This is close to half the salary one staffer, who makes on \$40,000 per year on average (CSPAN, 2015). The difference for districts represented by Democrats is not statistically significant, but the best guess is around \$5,518 more spent on constituent service staff in underprivileged districts. If true, this is not large, but neither is it a pittance.

The magnitude of the effect on Twitter is substantial when you consider that most tweets devoted to constituent service describe an activity that the member of Congress and/or their staffers are spending multiple hours or most of a day on (e.g., town hall meetings, constituent service hours, or spending part of day with constituents) or are asking constituents to contact them for particular constituent

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<sup>34</sup>The magnitude of the effect is similar regardless of the measure used.

<sup>35</sup>In particular, I look at the district that is more privileged than 75% of all other districts, and compare against the district that is more privileged than only 25% of all other districts. This gives an indication of the difference between a privileged and non-privileged district.



Table 3. Estimated change between a privileged and a less privileged district

	staffing		tweets	
	<i>policy</i>	<i>service</i>	<i>policy</i>	<i>service</i>
all	+\$7,445	−\$11,830*	+14**	−8**
Republican	+\$15,453*	−\$18,128*	+2	−4
Democrat	+\$724	+\$5,518	+18*	−12*

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

service needs. Thus, 18 tweets, which is the estimated number of extra tweets that a member of Congress in the Democratic party devotes to constituent service when representing a socioeconomically disadvantaged district, represent a fair amount of work. Intriguingly, the effect size for Republicans is estimated to be close to 0. Their trade-offs between policy and constituent service appear primarily in their staffing budgets rather than their Twitter feeds.

As summarized below, I find support for both Hypotheses 1 and 2, although the disparity between the parties is striking. Both Republicans and Democrats both appear to face this trade-off, but their responses come through different mediums. Republicans modify how they allocate resources to staffing positions, while Democrats change the kinds of activities they publicize on Twitter. This is supported by findings that representatives' websites advertise more constituent services and that representatives have more district offices when they represent poor districts (Griffin & Flavin, 2011; Harden, 2015). These studies do not isolate the differences between Republicans and Democrats, so it is unclear whether these findings holds for both parties or just one.

Hypothesis 1: Representatives in less socioeconomically privileged districts devote disproportionate resources to constituent service.

Evidence: Democrats from privileged districts are less likely to make constituent service announcements on Twitter than Democrats from less privileged districts.

Evidence: Republicans from privileged districts are less likely to allocated funds for constituent service than Republicans from less privileged districts.

Hypothesis 2: Representatives in more socioeconomically privileged districts devote disproportionate resources to policy.

Evidence: Democrats from privileged districts are more likely to discuss policy on Twitter than Democrats from less privileged districts.

Evidence: Republicans from privileged districts are more likely to allocate funds for policy staffers than Republicans from less privileged districts.

Clearly, the socioeconomic privilege of a district affects the behavior of its representative, but in different ways for different parties. Republican representatives from less privileged districts tend to emphasize constituent service in their staffing allocation. They are also more likely to allocate resources to policy staffers when they represent privileged districts. Democrats from less privileged districts tend to emphasize constituent service activities in their Twitter feeds. These results support Hypotheses 1 and 2: representatives from less privileged districts disproportionately focus on constituent service, while those from more privileged districts focus on policy.

## 7 LEGISLATION FAVORS THE PRIVILEGED

I have shown that both Democrats and Republicans engage in disproportionate policy representation when they represent privileged districts, albeit by different means. Similarly, they both engage in disproportionate levels of constituent service representation when they represent less privileged districts. At the constituent service level, these findings are bolstered by the fact that poor districts have more district offices than do rich districts and their legislators discuss more constituent service on their websites (Griffin & Flavin, 2011; Harden, 2015). The next test shows that this disparity in resources is connected to legislative output. This is a critical step in connecting the disparate preferences of the privileged and the less privileged to the ultimate provision of policy that favors the rich.

Legislative activity is simultaneously a form of representation and a way to influence ultimate policy outcomes. In order to capture the effect of members of Congress for each aspect, I choose to focus on the number of bills a member of Congress sponsors that are approved by the entire House of Representatives. This captures policy representation because sponsoring successful bills requires effort from both the representative and their staffers. Few sponsored bills are ever reported out of committee, the first major hurdle in the legislative process. Of those, even fewer pass the first chamber: for the 113th Congress, only 9.8% of all sponsored bills were approved by the House. Bill sponsorship does not necessarily capture the amount of effort a representative is putting into policy representation. All one has to do to sponsor a bill is tell the House clerk that you want to sponsor a bill. They are useful to claim credit for policy congruence without actually doing the work to deliver the policy,<sup>36</sup> but the vast majority never make any progress at all through

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<sup>36</sup>Anecdotally, constituents contact regarding policy are often reassured by evidence of sponsored

the legislative process. It is safe to say that many of these bills were never intended to make progress, but were simply cheap talk. A bill that progresses through the House is likely to be more than cheap talk. The process of deciding the kind of bill that will likely be passed, then lobbying colleagues to ensure its passage, is much more involved than simply sponsoring a bill. There is also the danger that if a poorly thought out bill is enacted into law, an opponent will use it as leverage in a future campaign. Legislation that passes the House serves as a useful proxy for the time and effort a member of Congress devotes to policy representation.

Legislation that passes the House is also a way to influence policy outcomes. There is evidence that legislators from high income areas vote for and sponsor bills that favor the interests of the rich (Carnes, 2016b). If legislators from privileged areas are also more productive legislatively, then we can expect more overall policies that favor the interests of the privileged. This is, of course, exactly what happens. While it would be ideal to only look at the number of bills a member of Congress sponsored that became law, there are two strong reasons not to. For one, a member of Congress can be expected to influence the legislative process much more within their own chamber. Two, the House in 2013 and 2014 was controlled by Republicans while the Senate was controlled by Democrats. As I have already shown, Democrats and Republicans behave differently with respect to how they represent the socioeconomically privileged and those who are not. For these reasons, the impact of district privilege will be obscured by what happened in the Democratically controlled Senate. Neither of these problems hold for how many bills pass the House, so I choose

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bills waiting to be voted on. They are less likely to track what happens to a bill, or to blame their representative for failure to progress. It is very easy for members of Congress to shift blame to the rest of Congress, and there are plenty of anecdotal reports of exactly this.

to focus on this measure.<sup>37</sup>

## Data

To test the effect of district privilege on legislative outcomes. I constructed a dataset that traces the sponsorship and success of House bills in the legislative process. This dataset encompasses all proposed legislation in the 113th Congress, 2013-2014. I parsed from the text of all bills to determine who sponsored each bill, the bill title, how far the bill got through Congress, and whether these bills had become law as of 2016.<sup>38</sup> The bulk data source also contained basic data on members of Congress.<sup>39</sup> As with the staffing and Twitter datasets, I matched these legislative observations with district demographics, committee information, and ideology.

## Results

Because the dependent variable is a count of bills and the data is over-dispersed, I use a negative binomial model (Rocca & Sanchez, 2007, p. 136). The results of the negative binomial regressions in Table 4 demonstrate that the more privileged the district, the more legislative activity occurs. However, the differences between Republicans and Democrats are substantial. Republicans in privileged districts successfully shepherd bills through the House's legislative process. While the sign for Democrats is in the correct direction, the magnitude is much lower and there is no statistical significance.

As shown in Table 5, the magnitude of the effect of successful legislation is

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<sup>37</sup>I also ran these models with a legislative effectiveness score (Volden & Wiseman, 2014). The results remain essentially the same.

<sup>38</sup>Data found at <http://www.govtrack.us/data/us/113/>, accessed August 2016. This site scrapes bill information from congress.gov, a process that is illegal to automate on my own. I have checked the validity on over 3,000 bills, and have found no errors.

<sup>39</sup>Data on members consists of name, party affiliation, committee membership, date entered into current Congress.

Table 4. Number of sponsored bills successful in House

	all	Republicans	Democrats
SES	0.191** (0.001)	0.444** (0.005)	0.129 (0.234)
conservativeness	-0.376 (0.256)	-0.804 (0.249)	-0.043 (0.964)
% black pop.	-0.280*** (0.000)	-0.481*** (0.000)	-0.342** (0.003)
Black caucus	0.912** (0.001)		1.026** (0.005)
comm. chair	0.800*** (0.000)	2.208*** (0.000)	
powerful comm.	0.006 (0.963)	-0.096 (0.734)	0.079 (0.749)
party	1.566*** (0.000)		
intercept	-0.412* (0.036)	2.928** (0.000)	-0.144 (0.708)
observations	435	234	201

Negative binomial model

P-values in parentheses: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ 

substantial. Again, I compare districts at the top of the socioeconomic distribution against those at the bottom.<sup>40</sup> I also examine the effects of the representative's race. Republicans who represent a district at the top quartile of socioeconomic privilege net an extra 0.42 successful bills than Republicans who represent a district at the bottom quartile. As the average number of successful bills that Republicans sponsor is only 1.75, this represents a 23% increase.

Table 5 shows that the evidence supporting Hypothesis 2 is not just statistically significant but substantively meaningful. This support is summarized below.

<sup>40</sup>I use the same method as in the previous section. A privileged district is defined as a district at the bottom of the top quartile of the socioeconomic distribution. A less privileged district is defined as a district at the top of lowest quartile of the socioeconomic distribution.

Figure 3: Legislative Success by SES and Party

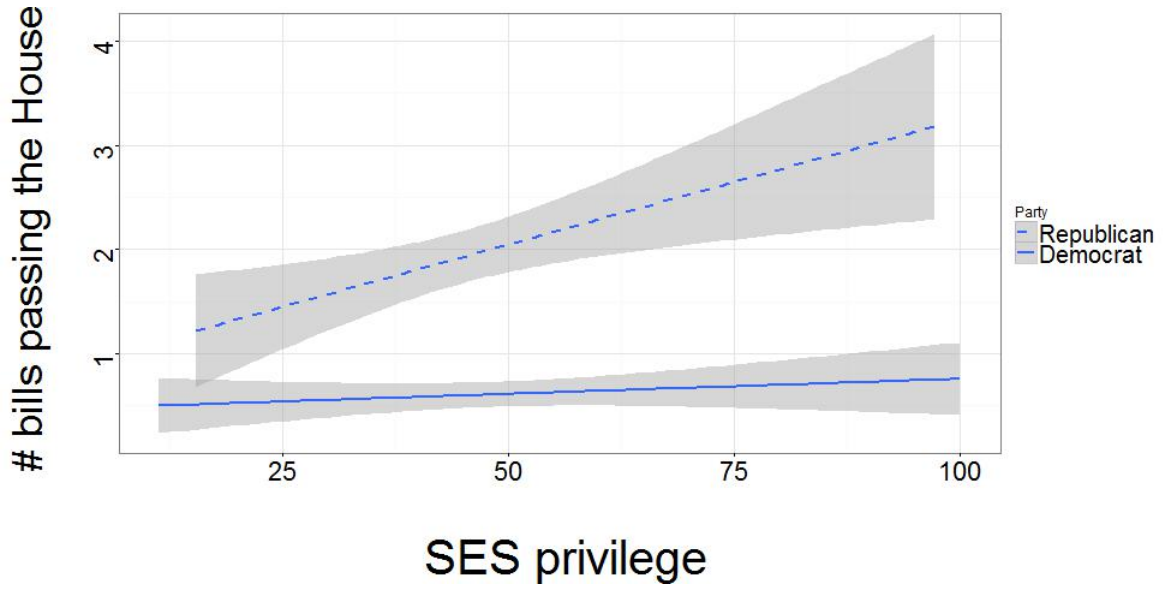


Table 5. Effect size of privilege and race

	privileged district		Black Democrat
	Republican	Democrat	
yes	1.95	0.50	1.07
no	1.53	0.42	0.38
difference	0.42**	0.08	0.68**

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Hypothesis 2: Representatives in more socioeconomically privileged districts devote disproportionate resources to policy.

Evidence: Relative to less privileged districts, Republicans from privileged are more successful legislatively.

There are a few other results from Table 4 that deserve to be mentioned. The first is a relatively unsurprising finding that committee chairs are more successful legislatively. Of greater interest is the opposing effects of district race and

a representative's race. Districts with more minority citizens have a strong negative effect on legislation across the board. This is in line with much of the current research on district minority populations and legislation (Keane and Griffin 2009, Rocca and Sanchez 2007). However, minority members of Congress are much more likely to sponsor successful legislation. The magnitude of this effect, holding all other variables at their mean, is 0.68 extra bills for black Democrats than for white Democrats.<sup>41</sup> This is larger than the effect of being a Republican from a privileged district.

### **Robustness**

I chose to look at a combined socioeconomic variable because it effectively captures the combined effect of education and income. In Table 6, I present a table that looks at income as the dependent variable instead. As with the socioeconomic variable, income is measured as the percent of the district that earns over \$75,000 per year. The results remain very similar, although it is clear the socioeconomic variable captures a little more variation than does the income variable on its own.

Also of interest is whether the effects become stronger when we hone in on the super rich. There is some evidence that indicates the preferences of the mildly rich are in fact proxies for the preferences of the super rich. The data provided by the census breaks income into 8 brackets of varying sizes, which allows me to examine whether the effect size increases for districts with large levels of extremely rich constituents. The census lists the percentage of each district that falls into each

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<sup>41</sup>This is different from the straight average of how much successful legislation black Democrats and white Democrats sponsor. It compares what black Democrats would do if they looked like white Democrats in all other respects. The straight average number of bills black Democrats create is 0.70, and the same average for white Democrats is 0.58. The difference is larger when controlling for other variables because black representatives tend to represent districts that are otherwise likely to have less legislatively successful representatives.



Table 6. income alone, Republicans

	legislative success Republicans	Policy Staff Republicans	Service Staff Republicans	Policy Tweets Republicans	Service Tweets Republicans
high income population	0.015(0.010)*	0.118(0.027)*	-0.123(0.041)*	0.054(0.501)	-0.056(0.488)
conservativeness	-0.296(0.395)	-1.234(0.688)	-2.729(0.431)	12.794(0.006)**	-13.290(0.004)**
% black population	-0.258(0.000)***	0.242(0.657)	0.287(0.641)	-0.204(0.801)	0.113(0.890)
Black caucus member					
committee chair	0.659(0.000)***	-3.509(0.072)	5.277(0.017)*	2.613(0.370)	-2.784(0.339)
powerful committee	-0.038(0.788)	-1.237(0.318)	-0.106(0.940)	4.048(0.029)*	-4.063(0.028)*
intercept	0.547(0.109)	47.626(0.000)***	36.782(0.000)***	48.334(0.000)***	51.721(0.000)***
observations	234	234	234	201	201

income bracket. While it would be nice to perform this analysis for socioeconomic status, the results would not be as intuitive, nor is it clear how I would create a variable that systematically captures increasing levels of privilege. For income, it is simple to group these into a variable that captures the percent of the district that is high income. As presented in Table 7, the entirety of my analysis is highly robust to the particular group I define as high income. It is clear that the substantive size and significance of my main explanatory variable, income, on each dependent variable similar across each grouping of income brackets. The one partial exception is policy and constituent service tweets for Democrats. The statistical significant expands substantially for lower income brackets.

Table 7. Robustness of coefficient on income for legislation, staffing, and policy

	Legislation Republicans	Policy Staff Republicans	Policy Tweets Democrats
% over \$200k	0.051* (0.003)	0.319 (0.056)	0.487* (0.011)
% over \$150k	0.031** (0.002)	0.197* (0.039)	0.276* (0.023)
% over \$100k	0.020** (0.002)	0.128* (0.032)	0.146 (0.075)
% over \$75k	0.017* (0.003)	0.118* (0.027)	0.120 (0.120)
% over \$50k	0.017* (0.008)	0.130* (0.022)	0.110 (0.162)
% over \$35k	0.018* (0.017)	0.161* (0.035)	0.114 (0.232)
% over \$25k	0.021* (0.036)	0.227** (0.009)	0.136 (0.260)
observations	234	234	168

Party choice in each model is based on which party had a clear effect for that type of representation.

P-values in parentheses: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Each variable achieves its maximum value for the highest bracket of income. The percentage of the district that earns more than \$150,000 per year has a stronger effect than does the percent of the district that earns more than \$100,000 per year, and so on down to \$35,000. At this point the effect size increases mildly, but never surpasses the effect estimated for the rich. Intriguingly, the magnitude of the effects change in similar ways for all three dependent variables: Republican legislation, Republican policy staffing, and Democratic policy tweets. This implies that the effects are indeed better captured by the influence of the richest residents of a district.

## **8 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS**

The last part of my theory is that Republicans focus more on policy while Democrats focus more on constituent service. Republicans have a self-help, anti-government ideology. The more conservative an individual is, the less likely they are to advocate that the government help individuals with problems. Since this is exactly the role of constituent service, Republicans should be less likely to advertise it. However, it is not as clear that they should provide less of it. Rural areas, which are strongly Republican, have fewer of centralized services that replicate the help members of Congress and their staff can provide (Verba & Nie, 1972). These include groups that help with health care applications, veteran support, and/or the needs of the elderly. Republicans from strongly conservative and strongly rural areas may try to fill the gap with their own resources. Meanwhile, Republicans are also members of the majority party, and can be expected to be more successful legislatively. This provides

incentives to devote more resources to policy. I lay out the following evidence to support Hypotheses 3a and 3b.

Hypothesis 3a: Democrats focus on constituent service more than Republicans.

Evidence: Democrats tweet more about constituent service than Republicans.

Hypothesis 3b: Republicans focus on policy more than Democrats.

Evidence: Republicans devote more twitter discussions to policy than Democrats do.

Evidence: Republicans are more legislatively successful.

Table 8 summarizes the magnitude of the effect of being a Republican instead of a Democrat. As seen in the table, Republicans are estimated to sponsor an additional 1.29 successful bills than Democrats. The p-values are drawn from the regressions presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 4. All but two are strongly statistically significant and in the correct direction. The strongest support is found for the policy expectation in Hypothesis 3b. Republicans are significantly more likely to tweet about policy. They also might spend more on policy staffers. Additionally, Republicans sponsor on average 1.29 additional legislatively successful bills. As Democrats only average 0.4 successful bills, Republicans are 3.8 times more successful than Democrats.

Interestingly, the evidence supports the theory that Republicans talk less about constituent service, but it does not support the idea that they provide less of it than Democrats. The estimated effect size for is very small and no where near significant. Recall that staffers were divided in the three major categories and one uncategorized block: legislative, constituent service, communications, and other. Thus, representatives do not always spend more funds on constituent service when

Table 8. Estimated difference between Republicans and Democrats

	staffing budget		tweets		successfull bills
	service	policy	service	policy	
magnitude	-\$1,246	\$11,555	-20***	33***	1.29***
p-value	(0.738)	(0.210)	(0.027)	(0.020)	(0.000)

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

they spend more only policy. See the appendix for graphs of the correlation between funds for each category of staffer. This is in line with the idea that they provide more constituent service when they represent less privileged districts. It appears that the needs of the district overwhelm ideological preferences.

## 9 CONCLUSION

I have traced the existing evidence connecting representational preferences of the privileged to policy that mirrors their interests, as well as provided key supporting evidence that socioeconomically privileged districts get more legislative representation legislative representation. The privileged are more likely to prefer and be involved in policy related activities. The less privileged are more likely to prefer and to need constituent service from their representatives. This leads to representatives who are disproportionately responsive to individual requests regarding policy when they represent the privileged. Conversely, representatives from less privileged areas are disproportionately responsive to individual requests for constituent service. I show that this disparity appears not just in individual responses but in how the all constituents are represented. Republican members of Congress from privileged districts are disproportionately to likely allocate their staffing salaries to

policy positions. Democratic members of Congress from highly educated districts advertise disproportionate levels of policy relative to constituent service on their Twitter feeds. Either because Republicans were the majority party or because they have been ideologically aligned with the preferences of the rich, we see this disparity appear in Republican legislative activity. I find they are more likely to create successful legislation when they represent privileged districts. This provides one clear explanation for why representatives are more likely to create policy in the interests of high income constituents, particularly when they are Republicans representing high income voters: Republicans from privileged districts have more resources available to create policy changes because they are less distracted by constituent service.

As shown throughout this paper, we can see the trade-offs representatives make in many ways.

- Republicans are more likely to allocate staffers to constituent service when they represent districts with high numbers of socioeconomically less privileged constituents. When Republicans represent privileged districts, they devote more resources to staffers who focus on policy.
- Democrats make similar trade-offs, but in public communications as seen through their tweets. Relative to districts with fewer highly educated constituents, Democrats from privileged districts are more likely to engage in policy discussions in their tweets. They focus less on constituent service.

There are also consistent differences between the parties.

- Republicans, who are the majority party, are more legislatively successful.

- Democrats focus on constituent service more than Republicans in their tweets. Republicans focus more on policy tweets.

I expand on evidence showing individual liberals are more likely than conservatives to approve of constituent service Harden (2015). Representatives reflect this in both Twitter and staffing allocations. Republicans are less likely to engage in constituent service than Democrats whether or not they represent a privileged district, particularly in their tweets. Conversely, they are more likely to engage in policy and legislation through both tweets and staffing resources. My findings only apply to a congressional session dominated by Republicans, so this will be interesting to explore during congresses controlled by Democrats.

Finally, I show how Republicans and Democrats represent their constituents in different ways. Republicans are more strategic in their staffing allocations, while Democrats are more strategic in their public Twitter feeds. There are some plausible explanations for this difference. Republicans constituents are less likely to philosophically approve of constituent service, although there is no evidence that they are less likely than Democrats to approve of receiving it. Thus, Republicans may strategically provide constituent service to less socioeconomically privileged districts, but strategically avoid mentioning it publicly. Democrats, on the other hand, tend to represent urban areas that more readily accessible services which replicate kinds of constituent service representatives provide. Thus, advertising these resources may be a way to increase how often they are used. It remains open whether there is substantial evidence for these explanations.

Additional discussion is needed to understand the normative implications of this study. I find that representatives are not just ignoring the less privileged; they are often representing them through constituent service instead of policy. But if

certain members of Congress are indeed sacrificing policy for constituent service, then we need to understand whether this is a worthwhile trade-off. Constituent service is highly focused. It tends to address problems of people in need or public works. For example, people ask for help with difficulties obtaining federal assistance programs like Medicare and disability or for help on existing public work projects. While important, help on these issues tends to be less sweeping than creating laws.<sup>42</sup> Legislation often deals with large scale projects like appropriations for Homeland Security or implementing trade agreements. This is in addition to managing and modifying public assistance programs and public works.

This analysis does not discount the importance of other ways the privileged have disproportionate policy influence. In addition to the systematic causes discussed here, it is clear that there are many other paths for money to influence politics. Legislators have personal biases that induce them to discount the preferences of the less privileged (Butler, 2014). There is some evidence that campaign contributions directly influences the legislative process (Powell, 2013). The rich are far more likely to hold political office, which highlights the perspective of the rich through personal and community knowledge (Carnes, 2012). The individuals who try to recruit citizens to run for office show a bias toward high income candidates (Carnes, 2016a). What this analysis does is highlight a systematic form of inequity may be even more difficult to remedy.

There are elements of good news. It is intriguing that commonly requested constituent service issues mirror the policy where the poor are better represented. Constituent service requests include Social Security, Medicare, taxes, and public works (Serra and Moon 1994: 202-203; Fenno 1978:101). These are most of the

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<sup>42</sup>Not always though. Many laws are devoted to focused areas like naming public buildings, or creating pork for particular recipients.



areas where Gilens (2012: 121) finds the poor are better represented.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that legislators may change policy to reflect what they hear is needed. Constituent service requests tell them one set of problems, while conversations within their social circles that are higher income may tell them another. Testing this, possibly through interviews, would be highly informative.

The question of minority representation comes up throughout this analysis. Districts with high populations of African-American constituents are regularly underrepresented in legislation while black members of Congress devote fewer staffing resources to constituent service. This is in line with the finding from Verba and Nie (1987, p. 97-8) that parochial constituents are not socioeconomically privileged and are not African-American. Thus, if constituents who request constituent service are not African-American, then districts with many African-American constituents are not going to receive much constituent service. Intriguingly, African-American members of Congress are much more likely to sponsor successful legislation. That is, black representatives are more likely to sponsor bills that make it through the House. This is in line with studies from Rocca and Gordon (2010) and Rocca and Sanchez (2007). The magnitude of this effect is similar to the effect of being a majority party member. This is striking and deserves a separate study of its own.

Finally, determining the degree to which my results generalize across different congressional terms should be fruitful. In particular, congressional terms from different eras of politics may be affected differently by education, race, income, and freshman status. Alternatively, congressional terms with a different majority party may also change the results. Examining both possibilities would demonstrate the ways privilege influences legislation.

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<sup>43</sup>School voucher programs are also better represented. This issue may not be listed by Serra and Moon because it was not as prevalent before Serra and Moon's article was published in 1994.

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## 10 APPENDIX

### 10.1 STAFFING CORRELATIONS

The correlation between constituent service and legislative staffing salaries is strong, with small standard errors, as seen in Figure 4. This supports the idea that there is a tradeoff between constituent service staffing and policy staffing.

Figure 4: Correlation between policy and constituent service staffing budget

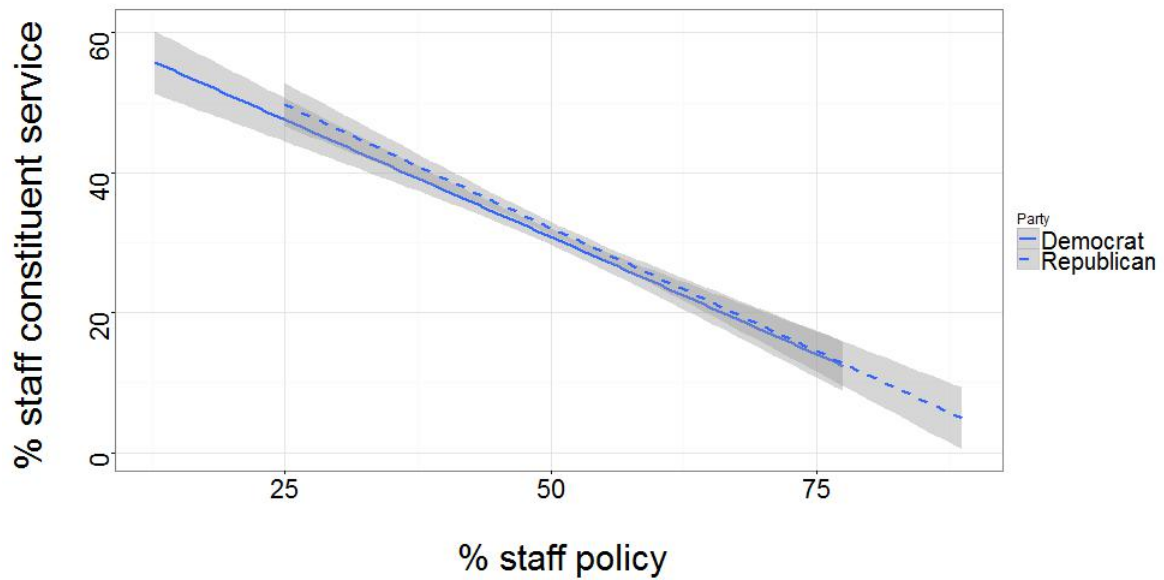
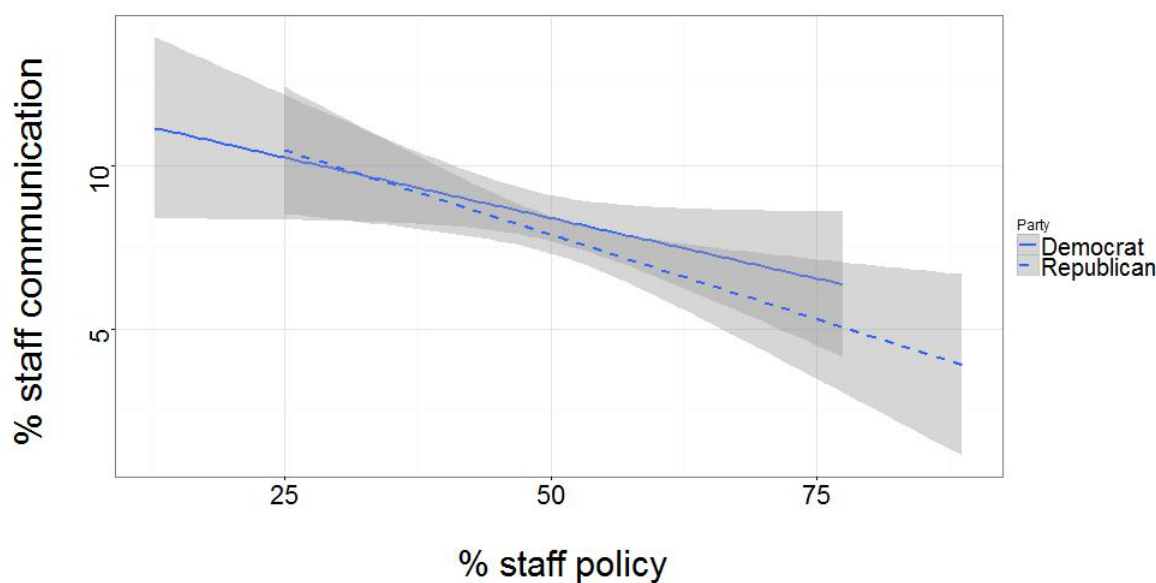


Figure 5: Correlation between policy and communications staffing budget



## 10.2 SENIORITY AND REPUBLICAN TWEETS

The goal of this paper is to understand the effect of district socioeconomic status on how a representative engages in constituent service and policy. The following section will describe the effect of seniority on each of these aspects of representation. Across the board, seniority leads to politicians who focus more on policy, and less on constituent service.

Multicollinearity between seniority, policy tweets, constituent service tweets, and district socioeconomic privilege leads to a situation where the

Seniority and policy tweets are strongly positively correlated.

Seniority and privileged districts are strongly positively correlated.

Overall, ie without any controls, district privilege is positively yet insignificantly correlated with policy tweets.

Including all that controls including seniority reverses the direction of the effect.

This effect reversal does not happen for any other analysis.

Figure 6: Correlation between communication and constituent service staffing budget

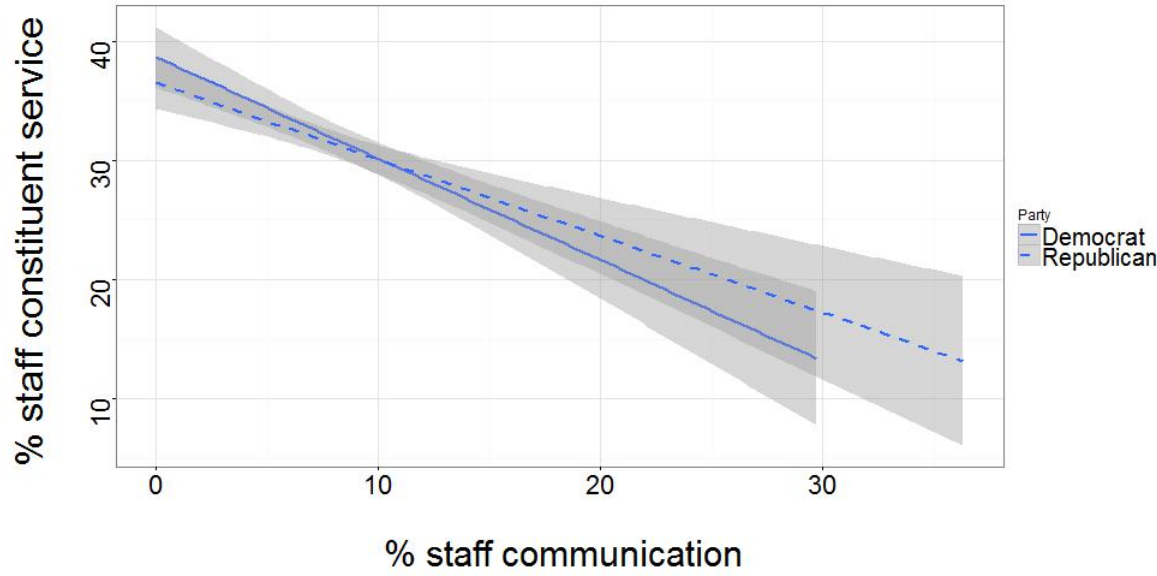


Table 9. Percent Tweets about Policy, Republicans

	full	SES alone	exclude seniority	seniority, SES
SES	-0.433 (0.654)	1.107 (0.276)	0.508 (0.611)	0.083 (0.931)
seniority	1.119*** (0.000)			1.123*** (0.000)
conservativeness	12.911** (0.004)		12.911 (0.097)	
% black pop.	-0.196 (0.809)		0.006 (0.809)	
Black caucus				
comm. chair	2.615 (0.370)		8.294** (0.004)	
powerful comm.	4.093* (0.028)		5.291** (0.007)	
intercept	47.359*** (0.000)	61.586*** (0.000)	54.191*** (0.000)	57.165*** (0.000)
observations	203	203	203	203

OLS, p-values in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Table 10. Percent Tweets about Constituent Service, Republicans

	full	SES alone	exclude seniority	Terms, seniority
SES	0.432 (0.654)	-1.136 (0.264)	-0.524 (0.600)	-0.097 (0.920)
seniority	-1.137*** (0.000)			-1.141*** (0.000)
conservativeness	-13.408** (0.004)		-8.431 (0.081)	
% black pop.	0.105 (0.897)		-0.101 (0.994)	
Black caucus				
comm. chair	-2.786 (0.338)		-8.557** (0.003)	
powerful comm.	-4.107* (0.027)		-5.325** (0.006)	
intercept	52.688*** (0.000)	37.859*** (0.000)	45.745*** (0.000)	42.352*** (0.000)
observations	203	203	203	203

OLS, p-values in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$