Understanding and explaining the representation gap in Britain

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This thesis is dedicated to my Mum, Anne, who was diagnosed with breast cancer 18 months ago and has since fought and beaten it – hopefully for good.

To Anne

ABSTRACT

In a democracy, how people perceive the quality of political representation is important. In Britain, representation is organised and often conceptualised on a territorial basis and, as most people feel attached to their communities, they want to see their areas represented. This is a question both of structure and agency: a disadvantaged structural position, or political representatives who fail to act in satisfying ways, can both result in representation 'gaps' in perceptions of whether the local area is well-represented. Understanding these attitudes is especially urgent given substantial and rising levels of political discontent; a growing concern with geographic inequalities and 'left-behind' places; and changes in the behaviour of Members of Parliament. This thesis analyses the contribution of three factors. First, what is the role of communication, which may raise the profile of MPs and thus contribute to satisfaction? Second, does it matter whether one's MP has a local or national focus? Third, how might economic conditions (objective, subjective and relative deprivation) be related to perceived local representation?

Using high-quality British Election Study survey data, linked to secondary data measuring the local context and activities of MPs, I carry out empirical analysis. In Chapter 3, I find evidence that communication, in the media and through expense spending, boosts the name recognition of MPs and that this in turn is linked to better perceptions of local representation. In Chapter 4, I find that the more constituency focused an MP is, as measured through their House of Commons speeches, the more they are trusted champions for their local community; though, crucially, focus only boosts MPs when they are known by constituents. In Chapter 5, I show that people who a) live in low-income areas, b) have negative views of their community's economy and c) perceive their area to be worse-off than the country at large, have greater tendencies to feel unrepresented.

These findings contribute to an understanding of geographic 'representation gaps', alongside the better-understood individual-level gaps of class, generation *etc*. They have implications for several key fields in political science, namely political communications, parliamentary studies and political geography. Despite its limitations, this thesis opens doors for future research, as I suggest various avenues in Chapter 6. Likewise, the conclusion explores implications for policy, reform and practice. I draw attention to the need for effective structures to facilitate communication, for consideration of incentives around MPs' focus, and I comment on whether targeted investment to 'left-behind' places may reduce discontent. This thesis, I hope, will be of service for not simply understanding, but acting on, the many dimensions of the representation gap.

Chapter 1. Introduction

What is the most significant gap, within Britain[1], in how people are represented? Is it *who* you are, as an individual, that matters - whether you have certain demographic characteristics in terms of class, education, age, gender, ethnicity and so on? Or is it *where* you are, both in terms of where your area fits into the country's unequal socio-economic structure and how your local representative acts for their constituents? Both are plausibly powerful, yet the 'where' has obtained less attention than the 'who'. A primary form by which we in Britain understand representation is territorial: that through our representatives on the national stage, the diverse geography of the nation is 'made present' (Rehfeld, 2005). Furthermore, though we are hardly unique in this, the 'local' is deeply important to most people in Britain. This thesis therefore adopts a novel focus, centring the local in regard to both the attitudes I consider, and their causes. Therein lies the main question of this thesis: how do we perceive the quality of representation offered to our local areas, and what is the role of the socio-economic structure and the agency of our local MPs?

In an era when, by a common academic understanding, society has 'atomised', with our social ties weakened and our attitudes more individualistic (e.g. Bauman, 2000; Putnam, 2000), why adopt this local focus? A variety of data demonstrates that this understanding is flawed: quite simply, people care about their local area, as exhibited in both their attitudes and behaviours. First, people feel they belong in their local communities: roughly seven-in-ten agree or strongly agree that they belong in their neighbourhood (Community Life Survey, 2019). Second, they generally have local ties of friendship and kinship: six-in-ten people say they have half or more of their friends in the local area (University of Essex ISER/NatCen, 2014). Third, they express strong

[1] I have attempted to be consistent in making reference to Britain (that is, England, Scotland and Wales) and not the United Kingdom (which includes Northern Ireland). However, direct quotations and some paraphrases may still refer to the UK and in other cases I have deemed it more appropriate to refer to the UK (e.g. one would refer to the UK Parliament, not the British Parliament). The important thing for the reader to be aware of is that the empirical analysis does not include Northern Ireland and consequently the scope of its argumentation is limited to Britain.

interest in local issues: eight-in-ten people say they follow news about their city and town 'very' or 'somewhat' closely (Pew Research Centre, 2018). Moreover, this orientation towards the local cuts across the political divides which today structure so much else about our politics. Although it has been claimed that community ties are stronger among so-called 'people from Somewhere' – lower-educated, older people who voted to Leave the European Union (Goodhart, 2017) – survey evidence instead suggests that local attachment is just as strong among Remainers as Leavers (Ipsos MORI, 2019).

The importance of local factors to politics has been recognised by a relatively strong tradition of political geography in British political science. However, this local focus has rarely extended, within the British context to questions of perceived representation. Rather, the domains where local factors and dynamics are best understood are, first and foremost, research on voting and electoral outcomes (e.g. Pattie and Johnston, 2006) and research on attitudes where there are especially strong prior theories about the causal role of local context, such as immigration attitudes (e.g. Kaufmann, 2017). By contrast, research about how people perceive representation tends to elide the role of the local. First, through the typical survey measures, the existing research directs respondents to think in ways other than the local, both in terms of who is representing (typically 'politicians' or 'government') and who is represented ('people like me'). Secondly, the key causal factors are imagined to operate at one of two levels: the individual, or the nation. As Mutz and Mondak (1997) have argued, we should also study how people relate to the 'countless subnational collectives' between the individual and national.

This thesis cannot provide a comprehensive account of how the local shapes people's understanding of representation. Rather, it is intended to interrogate the place of both structure and agency in how people develop an understanding of the quality of local representation by government and MPs, bridging a gap between political geography and parliamentary studies. For the purposes of clarity, 'structure' and 'agency' are not meant in the commonplace sense of determining the degree of constraint upon the political actors themselves. Neither are they strictly competitive factors: both can have explanatory power that would otherwise be occupied by individual-

level idiosyncrasy. They simply denote different forces that might work at a local level to influence the sense of representation, some direct results of the actions of individual representatives (agency) and others more deeply embedded within society (structure). This clean distinction will be problematised by the Conclusion, but for the majority of this thesis serves as a heuristic for grouping chapters and lines of enquiry.

Within these categories, I identify three factors I consider substantively interesting, particularly insofar as they relate to present debates and concerns beyond the strict confines of political science. Since Chapter 2 addresses the broad theoretical perspective I adopt, and discusses the literature in greater depth, these components are addressed only in their outlines here: this introduction will thus focus on both what the gaps are in our understanding, why these are important contemporary questions and how the expanding availability of data presents an opportunity for rigorous exploration.

As regards the theme of MPs' agency, this inquiry is divided into two areas. The first is *whether people hear* from their MPs. At least as far back as Burke, it has been an expectation that an MP should live in 'unreserved communication with his constituents'. Despite a considerable literature on what MPs do to speak to the people they represent, it is poorly understood what effects this has – if any – for how people perceive the representation they offer, and why. The second is *what people hear* from their MPs, in relation to whether the MP presents a sense of focus on the local constituency. It is often assumed that being a champion for one's local area brings rewards in improving constituents' impressions of their MP, but no systematic study exists to test whether this is really the case.

In relation to the theme of structure, I address the effect of *what people see* around them, in terms of the socioeconomic environment in which they live. People in 'left behind' places in England[2] have tendencies towards certain political attitudes which have been described as 'inward-looking': nostalgic, culturally conservative and so on (Jennings and Stoker, 2016). However, it has not been established that they see

[2] It is unclear from prior research whether this pattern also applies in Scotland and Wales.

themselves as less well-represented, and prior research designs have been unable to establish contextual as opposed to merely compositional effects (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995). These key questions form the basis for the three core chapters: later in this chapter, I will expand on the substance of these inquiries (Research Questions and Hypotheses).

These factors are liable to have differential impacts on perceptions of the two actors charged with local representation which I consider here (local MPs, and central government). This derives from the different expectations people apply to these actors, and the extent to which each actor can cater to those expectations. Thus, I consider MPs' agency as a factor in how people perceive MPs themselves: specifically, the dependent variables used across this study address trust and, more crucially, a sense of local focus and effort to look after local interest. Meanwhile, I consider socioeconomic factors in relation to how people perceive representation by central government: concretely, the dependent variable asks whether one's community is listened to when important policies are made.

In this introductory chapter, I first highlight the growth in political discontent as a motivating factor for this thesis, at the same time drawing attention to a major limitation in how this has been interpreted. Since in Chapter 2 I will expand greatly on the literatures around my chosen factors (MPs agency, and the socio-economic structure), and the unanswered questions about their effects on perceived representation, I restrict this discussion here. Rather, in this chapter, I expand on the case for analysing my chosen causes with reference to contemporary significance for debates and policy. I then spell out my specific research questions, expectations and hypotheses. These call for both the careful selection of existing data and, in many cases, the collection of new data, especially as it relates to how MPs exercise political agency, which I discuss in the penultimate section. The final section clarifies how these are structured into the three core chapters, and will report the key findings of the thesis.

Political discontent: a very British crisis?

This thesis is given urgency by the widespread concern around a 'crisis' of representation, and its apparent manifestation in political discontent. Why discontent should be of concern may be intuitive to political scientists (Gershtenson, 2005), but Chapter 2 nonetheless establishes a firmer basis for this as a threat to both the legitimacy and functioning of representative relationships. This threat appears to be acute in Britain, which has attracted comment as a significant outlier from European and (more broadly) Western trends. Norris and Andeweg agree that international levels of 'trust' and 'democratic satisfaction' exhibit 'trendless fluctuation' (2014, p. 178), while the UK 'presents the clearest case of eroding confidence in parliament in a well-established democracy'. Further confirmation of the increase in discontent comes from Jennings *et al*. (2017), who show a very long-term trend from the 1960s to the present day.

Neither are individual local MPs immune from public discontent. There is a common belief that the public 'hate politicians but love their MP', an Anglicisation of Fenno's famous 'paradox' that people 'hate Congress but love their Congressman' (Fenno, 1975). However, this conventional wisdom finds little support in the data. Annual Hansard Society surveys indicate that, as a proportion of the population, the group 'satisfied' with their local MP has never exceeded more than two-fifths. Even among the satisfied, there is little evidence of 'love': less than 10% are 'very satisfied', mirroring findings from Cowley (2014) on levels of trust. The Audit also allows for an over-time comparison. Between 2003-2015, and particularly after 2009, dissatisfaction increased, while satisfaction has decreased. Furthermore, much of the public is non-committal: combining 'Don't Know' and 'Neither' responses, little more than half take have a view on their MP one way or the other. Though not untrue that local MPs are a more popular part of the Westminster system, genuine public approval is limited.

This thesis does not attempt either to explain the aggregate discontent nor the causes of its rise, but explores questions of how discontent can be properly understood and how it is constituted: the 'who' vs the 'where'. Many accounts treat

discontent as a fundamentally national phenomenon: for instance, Andeweg (2014) claims that national political events, especially scandals such as the 2009 expenses crisis, are key. This thesis asks whether how people perceive representation is influenced by more localised factors, namely the agency of their MPs and where their community fits in our unequal socio-economic structure: both themes with significant relevance in the here-and-now, as I shall discuss next.

The contemporary relevance of agency and structure

MPs' changing behaviours

A major reason for the contemporary value of this thesis is the changing behaviour as MPs themselves as agents, and how this is facilitated or discouraged by institutions. Both their communications with constituents, and constituency focus, display striking and perhaps contrasting trends, which likely reflect changing opportunity structures and incentives.

First, this thesis traces a downward trend in some important forms of MPs' communications with constituents. It is true that Parliament has generally encouraged MPs to become more communicative (Norton, 2007) in the face of concerns about disengagement and public distrust (Leston-Bandeira, 2012). However, this aim may be frustrated given existing and emerging threats to the efficacy of Parliamentary communication. One such threat is the decline of local media (Ramsay and Moore, 2016), which may reduce both the ease of media access that MPs have and the size of the audience that they potentially reach. Though the decline of local media is on the current government's radar, including its effect on local 'democratic engagement' with councils (Cairncross, 2019), little interest has been shown in its importance for MPs in their constituencies. A second threat is that MPs are spending less money on certain communicative activities which are likely to improve constituents' basic knowledge of MPs, as documented in Chapter 3. I suggest that this results from high – possibly excessive – restraint by MPs since the expenses scandal, who fear being exposed as profligate by the media (National Audit Office, 2011). The proliferation of

social media has tended to eclipse these damaging trends, but research on both how MPs use social media, and the audience they attract, strongly suggests that it is functioning poorly as a substitute vessel for constituency communication (Jackson, 2008; Jackson and Lilleker, 2011).

There is particular value to assessing the impact of MPs' communications expenses, as I undertake in Chapter 3. The tenth anniversary of the 2009 expenses scandal has brought much commentary on our system of parliamentary allowances (e.g. Kennedy, 2019). However, this has focused principally on the issue of protecting against abuse and the restoration of trust. The concrete, and potentially positive, effects of using allowances have been neglected almost entirely. Since 2011, Parliament itself has hardly considered the efficacy of the system set up in the wake of the expenses scandal: this may be an opportune time to do so. Though communications are just one possible usage of expenses, understanding their effects represents an important contribution.

The limited evidence on the effectiveness of expense spending on communications has, in the past, contributed to a legitimacy problem within Westminster itself, which has increasingly led to curtailing of the communicative activities that MPs can justify. Furthermore, existing research on communications expenses focuses on the 'electoral connection': highlighting both that usage of expenses is associated with electoral threat, and that it may improve re-election chances (e.g. Auel and Umit, 2017; Johnston and Pattie, 2009). This has created greater knowledge of the risk of generous allowances than that of their benefits, an asymmetry that has influenced policy. The Kelly Report into MPs' expenses (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 2009) brought about the abolition of the Communications Allowance, which had provided a £10,000 lump sum separate from the office expenditure budget for publishing and delivering diverse materials such as newsletters and reports of their activity. Both materials are no longer permitted under the current system, while other forms of expenditure which are still allowed (such as surgery advertisements) may be squeezed by competing with other office costs.

In contrast, while MPs are communicating less, *what* they are talking about is more and more tailored to their constituencies. In Britain, there is a well-documented long-term trend towards MPs focusing on their constituencies, in response to both growing demand, as navigating government bureaucracy plays a greater role in people's lives, and rising incentive to meet demand, as increasingly 'dealigned' voters with less party loyalty were seen as more inclined to lend politicians a 'personal vote'. This trend appears to have continued to this day, as I show in Chapter 4. The dominance of Brexit-related activity, the short-term dysfunctionality of Parliament as a law-making chamber (Institute For Government, 2019), and Labour and Conservative MPs' alienation from party leaderships (of Corbyn and May, who each faced leadership challenges, in Corbyn's case backed by a large majority of Labour MPs) may have made national politics in recent years unsatisfying for many MPs. By contrast, turning towards constituency representation may have been a way to feel competent and fulfilled in times of turmoil. Importantly, constituency focus is also facilitated by institutions. The local media is one such institution: MPs who speak about issues most relevant to the constituency are more likely to gain newspaper coverage in their constituencies (as suggested by Amsalem *et al*, 2017). The formal political institutions themselves also matter: the growing role of backbench business in the House, and the fact that constituency relevance can justify proposed business, also lends itself to a focus on constituency (Kelly, 2015).

Yet although MPs go to great lengths to prove their 'constituency focus', the difference this makes is far from certain: though people prioritise 'representing the views of local people in the House of Commons', they doubt that their MPs share this priority (Hansard Society, 2010). However, aggregate-level dissatisfaction can still exist where MPs satisfy constituents at a local level: we understand little about how a constituency MP's focus can affect perceptions locally.

Thus, between the case of constituency communications and of constituency focused speech, this thesis tests the effectiveness of both activities that are on the wane and those that are on the rise, asking whether or not these changes in how MPs act are consistent with convincing the public their areas are represented.

The politics of place in an unequal Britain

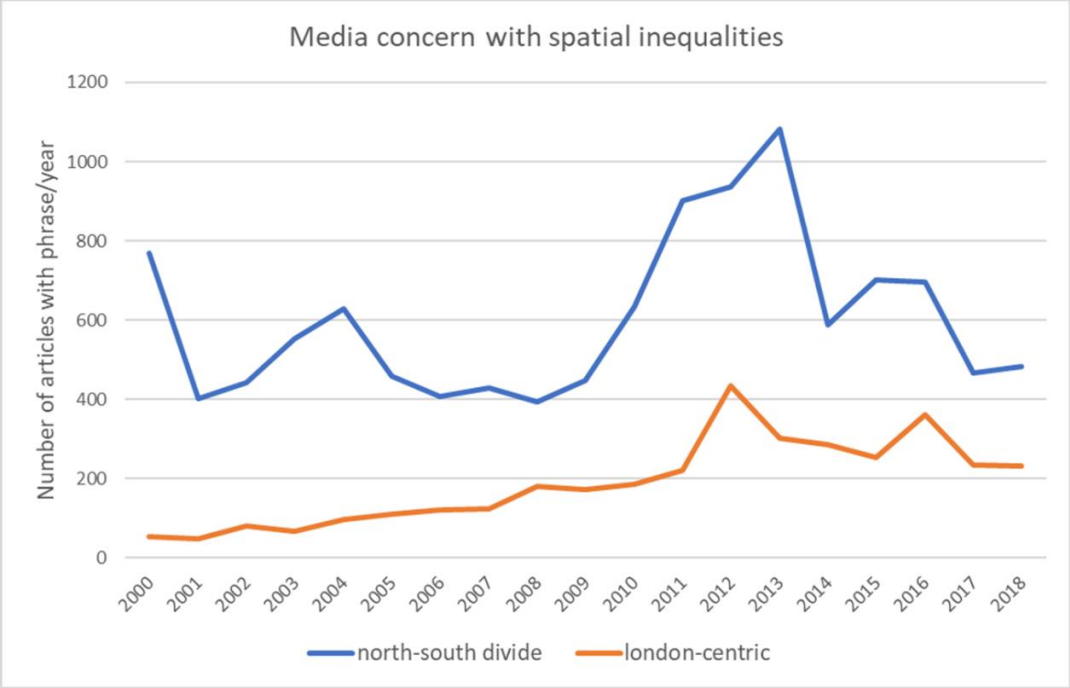
This thesis also addresses structural drivers of perceived representation, a particularly important topic given a growing concern with the politics of place, and more specifically how it is shaped by growing spatial inequalities.

There are two components to this: concern with 'spatial' inequalities *per se*, and with their consequences for political attitudes and behaviours. First, we see a rising concern with the geographic or 'spatial' component of inequality in Britain. This is reflected in a number of spheres. In the academic literature, economic geographers have documented in increasing detail the nature and extent of these spatial inequalities (McCann, 2016; Dorling and Pritchard, 2010). Several think-tanks have articulated a critique of the policies of successive governments, especially with regard to the targeting of investment and apparent bias privileging some parts of the country over others (e.g. Raikes, 2019).

There is also a notable trend of growing media attention to these inequalities, though this has ebbed somewhat since the end of the recession. The economic crisis that battered the UK post-2007, and a sluggish initial recovery, was linked to a tranche of coverage which employed language associated with socio-spatial inequalities. I identify two signifiers in the public discourse. The first is references to a 'North-South divide', originating in the middle of the Thatcher governments, which generally refers to economic phenomena such as a gap in incomes, job creation and wealth. The second is mentions of 'London-centrism': in its early usage, this predominantly originated from media soul-searching about its own geographic bias, but grew to encompass a critique of London's economic dominance and the grip on policy-making. Figure 1-1 shows, for six major newspapers, the number of articles containing each phrase per year. Usage of the phrase 'North-South divide' nearly tripled between 2008 and 2013, though in subsequent years there has been some reversion to the mean. Hits for 'London-centrism', meanwhile, show a steadier increase, perceptibly

accelerated post-2007, with a notable peak in 2012 – the year of the London Olympics, perhaps leading to introspection about London's overperformance.

Figure 1-1. Media concern with spatial inequalities. Lexis-Nexis article hits per year for six major newspapers, 2000-2018.[3]



Politicians have proved increasingly receptive to this concern, in some cases perhaps feeding into it, and addressing these inequalities has begun to manifest in policy proposals. Parliamentary mentions of the North-South divide and London-centrism likewise saw growth at a similar time (see Appendix A, Figure A-1), with the new power centres of the city regions also providing a platform for politicians such as Labour's Andy Burnham to levy similar criticisms (Guardian, Aug 22 2017). Meanwhile, at an executive level, the Northern Powerhouse agenda, initiated by George Osborne in the Coalition government, has been a frequent subject of speeches by ministers and Prime Ministers. More recently, politicians have refocused on a closely

[3] The change in overall number of articles (recorded in the Lexis-Nexis database) makes this potentially problematic. Therefore, I also calculated change in the annual proportion of articles containing these key phrases. The trends over time were not significantly different in direction despite some possible differences in the magnitude of changes, but ultimately we are not concerned with precision here and it is sufficient to establish trends.

connected inequality between 'left-behind', post-industrial towns and prosperous cities, which has contributed to the Johnson and May governments setting up the Future High Streets and Stronger Towns funds, with corresponding policy offers from the Labour opposition.

In tandem, there is increasing interest across various spheres in the political consequences of spatial inequalities. For instance, economic geographers such as McCann (2019) argue that inequality produces a 'geography of discontent' with dangerous implications for the institutions: if discontent contributes to voting for outsider parties who disrupt the political system[4], and discontent concentrates in 'left-behind' places, then a first-past-the-post system means the system is vulnerable to 'political shocks'. Senior civil servants likewise display their concern, for instance, Michael Wilshaw of Ofsted worried that educational inequalities between North and South feed into a sense of 'our needs being neglected' (*The Guardian*, December 1, 2016). Though discussions of this kind predate the vote, concern with the *political* ramifications of spatial inequality have arguably been solidified by the Brexit vote. A perception has proliferated that political discontent was key to the vote, especially the discontent of 'left-behind' areas (Marsh, 2018). Upon visiting the 'Brexit heartlands', such as Stoke-on-Trent, many commentators have relayed a sense of – as journalist John Harris put it – 'profound estrangement from Britain's dominant institutions' (*New Statesman*, 22 September 2016).

The academic literature has not yet leant support to this narrative specifically – though, of course, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. While earlier studies documented the electoral and participatory consequences of spatial inequalities (Pattie and Johnston, 2006), interest has recently been revitalised by Jennings and Stoker's study of the political attitudes of the 'Two Englands' (2016). Jennings and Stoker's 'cosmopolitan' areas were well-connected to the global economy and resultingly prosperous, while 'backwater' areas were not and experienced decline. 'Backwaters', they found were 'more inward-looking, illiberal, negative about the EU

[4] I do not concern myself with the truth of this argument, but see Rooduijn (2018) for a discussion and test of the generalisability of the political discontent -> populist voting thesis.

and immigration, nostalgic and more English in their identity' (p. 372). Most importantly, however, 'backwaters' were no higher in 'anti-political sentiment' over a variety of measures. I revisit this surprising finding in Chapter 5. In the dataset used in this analysis, a relationship between local economic context and perceived representation is suggested even by simple descriptive analysis, as depicted in Table 1-1. People living in areas in the bottom decile of earnings, relative to the top decile, are seven percentage points more likely to say they are 'not at all' represented by central government and eight points less likely to say they are represented 'somewhat' or 'a great deal'.

Table 1-1. Perceived community representation by area household income decile (average weekly earnings after housing costs at Middle Super Output Area level).*

	Bottom decile (≤£360/week)	**Top decile (≥£660/week)**
'Not at all' listened to	31.3	24.5
Listened to 'not very much'	48.7	47.8
Listened to 'somewhat/a great deal'	20.0	27.7

* 'How much do you think the interests and views of people in your local community are listened to when important decisions affecting them are made by national government?'. *N* = 13889. Source: Fieldhouse *et al* (2016), *British Election Study Internet Panel Wave 3.*

This thesis is, then, relevant in a number of ways. The macro-trend of mounting political discontent, and disillusionment even with local MPs, has drawn significant commentary and attention, but variation across geography and local factors have been overlooked. Meanwhile, major trends in representatives' activity – both short-term and long-term – have been insufficiently explored as causes of local-level variation in sentiment about representatives. These trends (in constituency focus and

constituency communication) are shaped by changes in institutions and their practices. Although these institutions (the local media; the expenses regime) have been the subject of much discussion of late, this discussion has little considered the effect on the MP's relationship to constituents. Likewise, research into perceptions of representation are failing to speak to a growing concern with the politics of place and an emergent narrative, linked to Brexit, about 'left-behind' local communities and their political discontent. This thesis's inquiries into both the effects of MPs' agency and the socio-economic structure are thus rigorously targeted for contemporary pertinence and the possibility of change.

Research questions and expectations

The chapter to this point has indicated the overarching research question and the three key phenomena with which this thesis is concerned. This thesis deals with *whether people hear* from their MPs (communication); *what people hear* from their MPs (constituency focus); and *what people see* (the local economy), forming the basis for my three empirical chapters. In this section, I specify the research questions at hand and articulate key expectations.

Chapter 3 addresses communication, a topic where we know more about the determinants than the results of this important political activity. I first ask whether there are noticeable effects of the *volume* of communication from their MP, to which constituents may be exposed, on the public's awareness of their local MP. My second research question concerns the mechanism by which volume of communication can matter for perceived representation. Is the mere ability to name an MP associated with positive evaluations of that MP? In sum, I expect a sequential effect wherein communication can create a sense of representation through raising awareness of the MP. This requires development and justification, particularly with regard to the second line of inquiry: it is not necessarily clear why 'mere exposure' should translate to positivity and indeed reasons to believe it often does not, which Chapter 3 expands on at length. By answering these questions, it is possible to comment on the

implications of the growing invisibility of MPs within their constituencies, and the value of changing incentives and removing barriers.

Chapter 4 concerns constituency focus. Here, the evidence of both public demand and political supply is well-understood, but it is less clear how the public respond to seeing these expectations fulfilled. Thus, the chapter poses this question: does an MP's degree of local focus predict positive evaluations of him or her as a constituency representative? I expect that this is indeed the case, and that it can be captured over both specific and general evaluations of the MP. Though intuitive, several logical links are required for this relationship to exist. For instance, the 'real' focus and the portrait of an MP's actions observable to constituents of MPs must bear some relationship, and the public should have some general preference for their representatives to adopt constituency over national focus: over Chapter 2 and especially Chapter 4, I justify that these conditions are met. Through this analysis, this thesis will be able to comment on whether the growth in constituency focus is proving fruitful for MPs who want to win people's trust, and discuss how the public can access information for making good trust judgments on these terms.

Chapter 5 concerns the local economy, an area where the literature shows some attitudinal consequences, but the effects on perceived representation are unclear. First, this thesis asks, what is the effect of objective economic circumstances within the local area on perceived representation? Second, what effect do perceptions of the local economy have on this attitude? Third, how do perceptions of unequal economic performance between one's local community and the country at large translate to perceptions of representation? In each case, I expect that the worse things are, or seem (in both absolute and relative terms), the more likely people are to express the 'negative' view that their area is poorly represented by central government ('community representation'). This is grounded in numerous insights from the literature, from rational choice perspectives on economic factors in political discontent to group psychology and reference group theory: I expand on this thinking in Chapter 2 and especially Chapter 5. At the conclusion, it will be feasible to reflect on the consequences of our unequal economic geography for perceived representation, and to speculate on the likely effectiveness of policies to address this.

Data

To answer these research questions, I exploit a variety of data sources. First and foremost, this thesis is made possible by the existence of an ideal public opinion data-set, the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP), containing a wide variety of contextual containers and thus facilitating a fine-grained analysis of the effect of localized factors. In particular, research modules of the BESIP concerning 'community' perceptions and attitudes, and knowledge and attitudes to MPs, have proven especially useful. Given the BESIP's large sample size, small effects can more easily be detected, and complex models can be built involving many controls and interaction effects. Despite the many strengths of the BESIP, I acknowledge the potential unrepresentativeness of online panel data with respect to respondents' level of engagement, and where appropriate I account for this (for instance, by controlling for political attention and knowledge).

However, to develop independent and control variables has required the creation of several new datasets, particularly regarding the activities of Members of Parliament. Secondary data generally does not exist in any easily useable form regarding both communications and constituency focus, requiring substantial processing and manipulation to render useful. In some cases, these are based on existing measurement approaches, though generally I make some alterations in line with underlying theory and constructs. For new measures created, I undertake substantial validation where appropriate, both using manual checks as well as considering the convergent and discriminant validity of measures using statistical tests.

The most intensive and time-consuming measure to create was that of MPs' communication in local newspapers. First, relevant outlets were identified, which had significant operations within a given local constituency, and constituencies where all such outlets were available in the media data were retained. These constituencies were validated using BES data on local newspaper usage, showing that local newspaper readership was indeed much higher in such places than elsewhere. Second, one-

by-one search was undertaken for each MP name and newspaper, including testing for colloquial and formal alternatives and minor misspellings where appropriate. Third, a somewhat lengthy process of trial and error was applied, testing alterations in search terms to find the best method to capture instances of 'communication' rather than mere 'media mentions' not involving communication. Fourth, I tested the importance of MP-level variance against variance between newspapers, showing that MPs' agency – not just different levels of political coverage – explained the differences. Fifth and finally, the exercise was worked through again for national newspapers to generate an appropriate control, in order to test that it really was *local* communication that mattered.

Measuring constituency focus also proved a significant challenge, though here the existing literature was more developed and consequently more useful. Following a variety of recent works in parliamentary studies, I measure constituency focus using MPs' contributions in the House of Commons. Where MPs used the word 'constituency' or used all or part of its name, this was deemed a constituency-focused speech: the focus measure is constituency speeches as a proportion of all speeches. This requires substantial data cleaning and text-to-data processing. Though not unique to my study, its scale is unusual. Other studies have worked with smaller datasets, either through considering particular types of Parliamentary contributions (such as those in Prime Ministers' Questions and its equivalents) or through narrower time frames. I collect data on over five years of Parliamentary records for nearly all Westminster MPs. However, the most significant advance on existing approaches is more extensive validation, testing the convergent and discriminant validity of the measure against a variety of logical correlates. Notably, some of these correlates are measures developed earlier in the thesis: for instance, constituency focus is linked to a higher volume of constituency communications. In addition, I conduct the first test of this objective measure of constituency focus against MPs' own self-reported focus.

Key contributions

Through the empirical work in Chapters 3-5, this thesis establishes a role for both the activities MPs undertake and the geographical inequalities that exist in Britain: meaningful evidence that the local – 'where' you are – matters to perceived representation.

The first two empirical chapters focus on the role of MPs' agency in perceptions of local representation. In Chapter 3, I show that higher levels of communication from a local MP are linked to improved perceptions of local representation, albeit via an indirect pathway. This pathway is name recognition. By communicating more, MPs can inform or remind constituents of their identity. This is true of two important forms of political communication: 'apolitical' communications from the MP's expenses, on advertising surgeries and sharing their contact details, and communications in local newspapers by being quoted in their articles. In turn, this may - so long as the constituent does not have a strong reason to oppose the MP, such as supporting another political party - translate into a perception that the MP acts as a good constituency servant. These findings show that despite important contextual differences, such as a more restrictive expenses system and a less well-read local media here than in the U.S., the predictions we might derive from the American literature still apply to the British context. MPs can use the opportunities available to them to communicate to build awareness and improve perceptions of themselves as representatives in their constituencies.

In Chapter 4, I show that the more focused on a constituency an MP is, according to references to constituency in their Commons speeches, the more likely constituents are to perceive them as locally focused, and the more likely they are to trust them (although there are stronger links for the former). Due to measurement improvements, these findings provide a more convincing indication than U.S. studies that constituency focus matters to constituents' views, while challenging literature for Britain by showing the focus, and not the amount of Parliamentary activity matters. This is driven, as predicted but not tested by the literature, by constituents who are aware of their MPs. The specific results provide an important counterpoint to those of chapter 4: though name recognition is linked to more positive perceptions of MPs

on the whole, the more aware among the public can be more rewarding, but also more punitive of their MPs.

Finally, Chapter 5 focuses on the role of socio-economic structure. I show that real and perceived spatial inequality is related to evaluations of local representation. Firstly, real economic contexts play a role, since residents of low- income communities tend to adopt more negative views about how well their community is represented. Insofar as incomes are a good proxy for economic performance, this finding offers a counterpoint to the findings of Jennings and Stoker that the 'two Englands' were no different in their degree of political discontent.

Moving to the subjective, negative 'communotropic' perceptions of the local economy are associated with more negative views of community representation. The former effect is large – among the largest in the model – and as such presents particularly strong evidence of local factors. However, equivalent 'egotropic' measures of people's personal economic situation and conventional 'sociotropic' perceptions of the national economy have no such effect, thus diverging from some prior studies in the degree to which the local economy is genuinely central to these attitudes. Thirdly, I observe a 'grievance' effect wherein people are particularly negative about community representation when they believe that the national economy is more successful than that of one's local community. This aligns with underlying theories of the likely attitudinal effects of 'relative deprivation', hitherto untested in relation to spatial inequality and political discontent.

Throughout this thesis, I show that 'where' you are matters as well as 'who' you are, due to both MPs' agency and socioeconomic structure. Indeed, in some cases, as shown in Chapter 5, it is exclusively the (real and perceived) local context, and not the individual's demographics, income or perceptions of their own finances, that manifest as significant drivers of perceptions of how one's area is represented by central government. Furthermore, people's judgments on 'local' representation are not fully determined by either a generalised view of the actor they are judging (e.g. government approval), or their view of the wider system the representing actor belongs to (e.g. 'MPs in general'). Even within a prevailing 'mood' of political discontent

(Jennings and Stoker, 2017), local factors shape people's confidence that their area is represented.

Before exploring the specifics of these issues, this thesis first depends on a more in-depth interrogation of the literature. In the next chapter, I step back first to consider what is meant by representation, identifying conceptual approaches that best support the empirical analysis, and assessing existing constructs and measurements. I then move to discuss the causal narratives, showing the limitations and deficiencies in current explanations of public attitudes, and point towards theories and approaches of my own, before expanding and testing these empirically in the core chapters.

Chapter 2. Literature and theory

In this chapter, I review relevant literature in depth, to be explored further within the core chapters. I begin with a consideration of theories of representation, clearly identifying a way of thinking that undergirds the empirical component of the thesis and justifies its focus on public opinion. In the prior chapter, looking at attitudes to local representation was principally justified with reference to contemporary relevance: in this chapter, I set out from first principles why these attitudes matter. I move on to deliberate constructs and measurement, assessing their utility in measuring perceptions of representation with regard to the theory already set out. I perceive there to be significant issues with using existing measures to diagnose a 'crisis of representation', despite the prevalence of this framing in the wider literature, and argue that these measures have tended to obscure or downplay the importance of local factors. I therefore suggest alternatives, which I will be utilizing in the core chapters of this thesis.

Next, I turn to the potential causes of perceived local representation. The agency of individual MPs is theoretically important to the representational relationship, and is increasingly centred in the legislative studies literature, yet according to the conventional wisdom among the political class, MPs have little influence over their constituents' views of them. In the previous chapter, I identify two activities that are particularly pertinent and in which MPs exercise considerable agency: communication and constituency advocacy. I discuss the respective literatures here. Though communication of various kinds appears to have some impact in the United States context, this has gone untested for Britain, despite increasing interest in the topic. Meanwhile, a substantial literature demonstrates that in advanced democracies the public generally prefer for MPs to be focused on their constituencies. However, the existing literature fails to prove that the general public is aware when MPs are doing so, and whether their views of the MP change correspondingly.

Finally, I consider the role of structural factors, and the local economy specifically. Though economic factors have been studied in considerable depth, the local component has been mostly overlooked which, for multiple reasons, should increasingly be seen as a critical oversight: furthermore, theory would suggest more weight should be given to the social psychology of spatial inequality.

However, before returning to these questions, it is important to establish the underlying conception of representation, and my critique of perceived representation research in general.

Representation theory and public opinion research: why perceptions matter, and how measurement falls short

The political representation literature has grown to a size and complexity that has led to some confoundment about the underlying concept. Eulau and Wahlke (1978, p. 31) came to state bluntly that 'we cannot say what representation is', while more recently Pollak et al. (2009, p. 1) suggest that 'the concept… remains hidden behind a cloud of countless definitions, theoretical approaches, platitudes, truisms and different practices'. As such, some clarity about the conception used for this thesis is important. This thesis rests on two critical conceptualisations, one intrinsic to my understanding of representation *per se* and one a choice of focus. The first and most fundamental point is that representation is *relational*. As Castiglione and Warren (2006: 8) put it, representation involves an 'entity that represents' and an 'entity that is represented'. The second is an active choice to emphasise *territorial* representation. Though increasing attention is paid to how representation can transcend territory, as in 'surrogate' representation (Mansbridge, 2003), British democracy began and 'remains rooted' in territory (Judge, 2014: 78), and thus elites and voters consider territory a 'natural' basis for representation (Rehfeld 2005, p. 72). In this thesis, bringing the 'relational' and the 'territorial' understandings together,

geographically-bounded 'local' areas are the represented entity, whereas both local MPs and central government are entities that represent.[5]

The trustee model of representation – and why trusteeship needs 'trust'

There are two well-established, fundamental ways of configuring any relationship between representative and represented. Though this binary has been much critiqued in more recent literature (especially beginning with Mansbridge, 2003), even the most critical theorists tend to concede that 'There is nothing illegitimate about making such distinctions and using them as heuristic tools' (Saward, 2010, p. 71). These two models are, respectively, the trustee model and the delegate model. As Dovi (2006) puts it, 'trustees are representatives who follow their own understanding of the best action to pursue', identified with the political thought of Edmund Burke, while 'delegates simply follow the expressed preferences of their constituents', a school of thought associated with James Madison and the Federalists. However, Rehfeld (2009) alerts us to the reality that 'trustee' and 'delegate' are terms loaded with multiple meanings. Rehfeld states that a 'Burkean' trustee would combine three elements: a concern with the 'whole' over any 'part', 'unresponsiveness' to the threat of sanction, and being the sole 'source of judgment' (p. 215). Here, trustee can be taken to mean the latter only, which as Dovi's definition implies is typically taken as the central element.

Most of the arguments in this sphere pertain to the desirability of these respective models, which this thesis is only concerned with to a limited extent. Rather, I follow Pettit (2010, pp. 73-4) in accepting the *inevitability* of trusteeship. Petitt's criticism is that delegate-like representation 'supposes that the mind of representees is made up and manifested to representers', but 'representees in the public worlds rarely

[5] As we will see, the 'local' refers to different 'objects' in relation to how it is conceptualised in Chapters 3-4 (on MPs and their constituencies) compared to Chapter 5 (on central government and respondents' subjective local 'communities'). It could be argued that the latter 'object' is not a territory. However, the question design used in Chapter 5 first asks respondents to delimit a community in territorial terms using mapping software. Thus, however different perceptions about 'community' and 'constituency' representation might be, they can nonetheless be considered evaluations of territorial representation.

provide representers with a fully formed, directive mind'. Crucially, the information that elected officials need in order to act as delegates might only become available through acts of trusteeship: Pettit (p. 72) argues that 'representees stand by, ready to reveal relevant attitudes, or impose relevant constraints, only in the event that the representers stop performing to their taste'. Representatives, then can strive to act as delegates but they cannot entirely avoid trusteeship.

A representational relationship of trusteeship finds its legitimacy in two sources. The first, and most simple, is electoral victory. The second is constituents' willingness to accept the representative, on an ongoing basis, as a legitimate custodian of constituency interests. In Burkean thought, this is generally conceptualized as deference (Eagles and Johnston, 2008). However, deference is no longer – if indeed it ever was - a realistic foundation for trusteeship. This has both intrinsic and historically contingent components. Intrinsically, according to Bianco (1994, p. 11), 'deference' cannot be a 'dominant strategy' for the represented, because it can be too easily exploited and the power differential between representative and represented is too great. Historically, a substantial literature (e.g. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2018) argues that popular willingness to defer to all kinds of authority, including political authority, has greatly diminished, especially over the latter part of the 20th century. This has led scholars to put the 'trust' in trustee, arguing that more 'active' judgments of elected officials underpin the trustee model, based on representatives' qualities and activities rather than simply their status *as* elected officials.

If positive perceptions are an important underpinning to trusteeship, in terms of legitimacy, then they may also facilitate its effective functioning. According to Warren and Gastil (2015, p. 562), modern theorists of representative democracy 'increasingly conceptualize democratic systems as requiring divisions of cognitive labor'. This is because citizens have both limited capacity and limited desire to engage with politics, and 'monitoring the many agents on which a citizen depends requires more time, attention, and knowledge than even the most attentive can muster' (p. 563). Trusteeship provides one possible solution to this, given that people feel sufficiently represented. Seeking to limit their 'cognitive costs', citizens who trust their representatives can use their various 'resources' – principally their time – monitoring more

aggressively those political actors which might be engaged in doing greater harm (p. 566). Meanwhile, representatives can better function as trustees, using the policy knowledge available to them (Bimber, 1996), when they can have confidence that their store of trust can either prevent or offset negative voter reactions to unpopular decisions. This will especially be the case where the good consequences of unloved policies might only become clear after an election (Fox and Shotts, 2007).

Notably, Burkean thought has proven to have a lasting grip on the representative philosophy of the political class in Britain. Surveys of parliamentarians show that of 15 European countries, Westminster MPs are the third most likely to adopt trustee styles (Dudzińska *et al*, 2014), while as Judge (1999) shows, the 'ghost of Burke' is frequently invoked by MPs, often explicitly. However, MPs also display an awareness of the incompleteness of the trusteeship claim from electoral victory alone, and resort to other approaches to shore up the representational relationship they desire.

Strengthening fragile claims: the agency of MPs

Classic trusteeship theories claim a significant role for the agency of MPs: yet the representative relationship with constituents is typically seen as coming before and hence, *facilitating* their actions. By contrast, I would argue that MPs' agency also has a significant place in establishing or sustaining a representative relationship. MPs will – whether to win re-election, or to address 'intrinsic' motivations such as a personal sense of duty – address the incompleteness of the trusteeship claim from electoral victory alone. This claim can be seen as incomplete for two reasons. First, as argued above, trusteeship has always rested on the idea that constituents would hold their MP in esteem. In previous eras, this might have originated from 'deference' to authority figures, but today a judgement to trust is required. Second, evidence suggests that the public in many countries, including Britain, by-and-large reject the trustee model, and endorse a delegate model. They apply this preference over representational style both to how governments should represent (Bowler, 2017), but also, crucially, to how MPs should, too (Carman, 2006). Thus, an MP cannot hope to ground their representational relationship with constituents in shared endorsement

of their trusteeship. Even though MPs will often have a personal proclivity towards acting as a trustee, they will resort to other approaches to shore up the representational relationship they desire.

To do so, MPs make other 'representative claims', for which they hope to gain affirmation from constituents (Saward, 2010). Saward identifies the traditional conception of representation as a subject which stands for an object: for instance, an MP (as a given fact, based on being elected) represents their constituents. The details of his critique are not crucial here, but Saward argues for the need to ascribe greater agency to our representatives: to 'liberate the politician as artist, as a maker of representations, as a portrayer of the represented' (p. 17). An important question, then, becomes what kinds of depictions make the most successful *claims* to representation for a given political actor.

I argue that territorial claims, in which MPs profess that they are 'the embodiment of constituency interests' (Saward, 2010, p. 37), will be a crucial strategy, both readily available to MPs and likely to be effective in public opinion terms. Claims of this type are available to virtually all MPs[6]; contrast, for instance, a claim to be a descriptive representative, which may not be credible for MPs not born in or living in their constituency (in Saward's terms, they lack the 'personal resources' to make the claim) Their possible effectiveness derives from many sources, including public demand for territorial representation (as I shall later discuss) but also the defensive work these claims perform. The British public at large is highly suspicious about the effects of political socialisation in Westminster and its effects on severing the constituency relationship. For instance, when most recently asked in the 2011 British Social Attitudes survey, three in four people agreed that 'generally speaking, those we elect as MPs lose touch with people pretty quickly' (Park *et al*, 2013, p. 70). Thus, identifying oneself with the constituency interest is theoretically important if an MP wants to be regarded more positively than MPs at large. However, Saward (2010, p. 45) stresses that audience remains the essential arbiter of representation: 'there is no claim to be

[6] I expand on this in Chapter 4: in brief, I argue that claims of this nature can be frequently made because of an institutionalised definition of the role of an MP and the many opportunities that present themselves within Parliamentary debate - though there are certainly other reasons.

representative of a certain group that does not leave space for its contestation or rejection by the would-be audience or constituency'. Thus, the effectiveness of claims cannot be assumed, but is a live empirical question.

Measurement constructs and the representational relationship

If representation is legitimated and facilitated by perceived representation, then it is especially important that we understand these perceptions. In recent years, an empirical literature has grown which diagnoses a 'gap', 'deficit' or even a 'crisis of representation', as evidenced by negative perceptions across a whole tranche of attitudes.

For instance, Mainwaring (2006) argues that a 'crisis of representation' can be diagnosed based on attitudinal indicators, specifically identifying a lack of confidence in parties and parliaments and low satisfaction with democracy. This conceptualisation has been widely followed (Conti *et al*, 2018, Vidal, 2018, Kriesi, 2020), though the precise indicators used vary. For instance, Sauger (2017) determines a 'crisis of representation' with reference to 'external efficacy', using indicators such as whether politicians 'care about what people like me think'. These measures are often deemed particularly significant because this research is concerned with assessing the potential for system-threatening crisis – so overall system attitudes are assumed to be of greatest interest.

However, I argue that this is less informative than we might imagine about whether we have a crisis of representation, and especially a crisis of local representation, since the relational nature and territorial form of representation are poorly reflected in the survey questions used. I show this through a discussion of three major constructs: 'satisfaction with democracy' (or SWD), external political efficacy, and political trust. Besides this conceptual point, discussion of these measurement constructs will also aid in understanding the remainder of the literature, especially in relation to the role of socio-economic structure, which often utilises SWD, external efficacy and political trust as dependent variables.

'Satisfaction with democracy' is a common construct, intended to measure perceptions of 'the way democracy works in your country' (Ferrin, 2016). However, there is dissensus about what this item actually measures (Canache, 2001) and interpretation of SWD results is increasingly caveated. Satisfaction with democracy is suspected to measure people's sense of 'minimalist democracy' (basic rights) and 'direct democracy' rather than their views of representative democracy per se, and thus cannot be taken as a proxy measure for perceived 'quality of representation'.

'External efficacy' is a similarly widely used concept, as originally devised by Lane (1959), 'relating to the perceived willingness of those in power to adhere to citizen opinion' (Esaiasson et al, 2015, p. 433). The classic American National Election Study (ANES) questions have seen only modest deviations over different times and places: 'People like me don't have any say about what the government does' and 'I don't think public officials care much what people like me think'. External efficacy is less contested than SWD, although Esaiasson *et al* have argued for refinement. In particular, they argue that the vagueness of the 'reference object' (or in our terms, 'representers') that respondents are encouraged to bear in mind limits its utility from the standpoint of representation theory (433).

The final related concept is 'trust' or 'mistrust' of political actors and institutions (parties, politicians, parliament) involved in processes of representation. Perceived representation and trust are not synonymous: however, research on trust tends to be closer than SWD and external efficacy research to analysing attitudes to specific representational relationships. This is mainly because 'representers' are better specified, revealing some degree of 'attitudinal discrimination' in how people see different 'representers' such as parties, parliaments and governments (Easton, 1975; Klingemann, 1999; Dalton, 2004).

This summary highlights a major concern with using these measures to analyse the representation 'gap'. Satisfaction with democracy questions rely on the respondent's conception of democracy, which may or may not centre on representation and empirically, often emphasise other conceptions. The latter two measures, though conceptually tied to representative democracy, are also problematic to apply as assessments of the quality of representation. Representation, as noted, is *relational*: a

subject standing for an object. In external efficacy questions, though there is some attempt to assess how well the respondent thinks representation is working, it is not clear who (subject) is representing, and who (object) is represented. In trust questions, the subject is often clearer, but the object usually is not. Thus, we have little understanding of how perceptions differ depending on the represented 'object' that is specified. This is true for any number of 'objects'. Are these institutions seen as representing one's social class, one's racial or ethnic group, one's generation? These are all important questions, but the failure to consider *territorial* representation – how people see their areas as represented – is a substantive omission of most of the literature, and the one which I tackle here.

This problem is significant in itself, but it has a more serious ramification: it may leave unclear the causal role of local factors, and indeed may even tend to depress their importance. Where 'objects' are left vague – for instance, the reference to 'people like me' in the external efficacy question - people can bring any one of their heterogenous identities to bear, which they in some way sample from (Zaller and Feldman, 1992) in a way the researcher cannot know. Will they think of the local? I argue that two tendencies will tend to suppress the role of the local when more general questions are asked. First, there is a well-known tendency for people to think of politics as essentially nationalised. The most common associations people make with the word 'politics' are all to people, events and institutions at the national level (Hansard Society, 2010). When responding to a 'political' survey, they will thus likely think of the relevant 'objects' as being 'the country as a whole' unless explicitly directed otherwise. Secondly, political surveys may tend to activate political identities (such as party ID) that may be less salient in other contexts, while leaving social identities (such as local identity) dormant.

From theory to measurement: the dependent variables

Given these problems, survey questions aiming to assess perceptions of local representation should ideally have certain qualities: well specified 'representers', and

specific mention of 'represented' territory or a territorially-bounded group. These considerations inform the selection of dependent variables in this thesis.

For assessing perceptions of how MPs represent their constituency, I use three questions over Chapters 3 and 4, making use of items unique to the BES Internet Panel. In Chapter 3, for assessing the impact of name recognition, I utilise a measure of whether the local MP 'tries hard to look after the interests of people who live in my constituency'. In Chapter 4, for assessing the importance of 'constituency focus', I look at a direct measure of focus perceptions, where respondents place their MP on a scale from totally 'focused on national issues' to totally 'focused on the constituency'. However, since there is nothing *intrinsically* positively-valenced about perceived local focus, I also look at 'How much trust' the respondent has 'in the MP in your local constituency'.

For Chapter 5, which considers how the local economy, perceptions of the local economy and local-national comparisons affect perceive local representation by government, the survey question asks 'How much do you think the interests and views of people in your local community are listened to when important decisions affecting them are made by national government'?. This more novel survey question requires greater explanation and establishment to prove it does not simply replicate existing measures such as trust, which I undertake in Chapter 5 itself.

The chapter thus far has laid out a theoretical perspective highlighting the importance of how people perceive representation, and 'territorial' representation in particular. To understand these perceptions, we need to sidestep notions of system-wide crisis, using specific outcomes to understand how people understand the functioning of specific representational linkages, both between MPs and their constituencies, and between central government and local communities. As my underlying theoretical perspective is especially informative regarding the constituency link, I progress to discussing the literature on this relationship. Above, I have argued that MPs take action to improve perceptions of their representation, to address the weakness of their legitimacy as constituency 'trustees' and (re)assert their

'representative claim'. However, what they do, and with what effect, remains to be explained.

MPs' agency

Rediscovering the agency of local representatives

As we have seen, the literature on perceptions of representation is generally focused on how people see their national political actors and institutions. In the absence of evidence on attitudes to local representatives, and the corresponding lack of understanding of more local causes, the conventional wisdom tends to flatten out views of local MPs, largely dismissing their own ability to convince constituents of the quality of representation. On the one hand, the public are sometimes portrayed as uncritical fans of their local MPs, as captured by the cliché that people 'hate politicians but love their MP', which although inaccurate (Cowley, 2014) is a common belief among MPs (Crewe, 2015). On the other is the view, increasingly mainstream since the expenses crisis, that individual MPs are passive victims of an 'anti-politics' age. Interviewed in 2015, departing MPs attribute the lack of goodwill towards them almost exclusively to national-level factors: above all, general media hostility and its particular obsession with expenses and MPs' pay, the lack of information on MP's roles and activities, the imagery of 'empty chambers' being misunderstood as 'shirking', and Prime Minister's Questions (Tinkler and Mehta, 2016, pp. 14-16). Though these may all be important factors, this, I suggest, is an incomplete picture.

To the extent that research has engaged with the local variance in perceptions of representation, it has largely considered this as a by-product of institutional design, and the incentives that result from this design. The primary example here is the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system used for Westminster elections, which creates variable incentives for individual members, local and national political parties, and governments to engage with and confer benefits on constituents. This might function in several ways. First, constituency service by local MPs is related to their electoral security (Cain *et al*, 1987). Second, the intensiveness of campaigning activity is

associated with marginality (Middleton, 2014). Third, safe and marginal seats may receive unequal treatment in the distribution of government spending, as Ward and John (1999) showed for the Major government.

This diverse research often takes as its starting point Mayhew's famous claim that US Members of Congress (MCs) are 'single-minded seekers of re-election' (1974, p. 5). However, several studies increasingly challenge this 'rational choice' perspective as simplistic: research in legislative studies has demonstrated that representatives often act in ways they are not strategically incentivised to. For instance, the link between strategic motivation and member activity is not as clear or consistent as first thought (Dropp and Peskowitz, 2012), with some research even questioning whether marginality and constituency work are related (Studlar and McAllister 1996, Heitshusen *et al*. 2005).

However, even if strategic motivations do matter, other explanatory frameworks are still of value. Several scholars have emphasised that, as Andeweg (2014, p. 271) puts it, members also need to 'satisfy emotional needs', particularly their own 'sense of duty' (see also Searing, 1994). For instance, representatives undertake service even in closed list systems with no individual reward (Poyet, 2014). This 'sense of duty' is related to, though not synonymous with, a more intellectual conception of the representative role. Representatives who conceive of the role as constituency-focused generally behave as such (André et al, 2014). The intrinsic and extrinsic motivations may co-exist (Gallagher and Holliday, 2003), and are likely to interact: for instance, André et al (2014, p. 184) show that 'electoral incentives impact only on those legislators whose views on representation conflict with these incentives'. Sometimes, what MPs do may have no clear motivation: Marcinkowski and Metag (2014) conclude that MPs' communication on social media is mainly a result of pure idiosyncrasy.

With this increasing recognition of individual representatives' agency, additional attention should be given to what happens when it is exercised. The most obviously consequential decisions an MP takes relate to national law and policy, spawning a literature evaluating the impact of MPs' voting behaviour on constituent perceptions. Yet positive findings for the U.S. (e.g. Ansolabehere and Jones, 2010; Carson et al,

2010) translate in a more inconsistent way to the British context: Vivyan and Wagner (2012), find no evidence of MPs being punished or rewarded for Commons votes, while Pattie *et al.* (1994) show that free votes and rebellions by governing party MPs 'generally… had no effect on their subsequent share of the popular vote', with the sole exception being very high-profile votes.

If not policy, how can MPs improve constituents' perceptions? First, I consider the impact of communication. As Burke (1889: 373) argued, 'it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents'. But will it be the constituents' happiness, too?

The role of communication

Communication is acknowledged as an important part of representation by parliamentarians, theorists and legislative professionals, and Parliament has encouraged its MPs to expand their efforts. I focus on two varieties of communication: usage of Parliamentary expense accounts, and usage of the local media. Research on Britain has examined predictors of communication, yet this literature often takes the effectiveness of communication to be a given. However, why MPs do communicate is important, since it helps in selecting appropriate outcomes, consistent with those identified in the above section on measurement. A theme in the communications literature is MPs' tendency to pursue aims that are not purely electoral. Jackson and Lilleker (2005, p. 522) found MPs believed communication was 'about trust and service' as well as winning votes. However, MPs' concern with trust has not been reflected in the British literature on communications: existing studies (e.g. Johnston and Pattie, 2009) concern electoral outcomes. Parker and Goodman (2009) suggest that this distorts our picture about the effectiveness of communications, since it is theoretically easier to move perceptions of incumbents than votes.

Based on interviews with MPs, Negrine (2005) also highlights a sequential way of thinking about the impact of communications. Negrine claims that, though MPs

eventually hope for trust and votes, their initial expectations are relatively tempered: MPs want to 'signal their presence', creating the 'basis for name recognition', especially early in their career (p. 109, p. 105). This indirect pathway is particularly plausible given the limitations of the types of communications considered here, which either allow for no positive content about the MP (expenses) or leave the tone somewhat out of the MP's control and even potentially negative (media).

This intuitive effect has some evidence in its favour, as studies in Britain suggest that encountering MPs, in person or from a distance (such as through the media), predicts name recognition (Cain et al, 1984; Kam, 2009). However, these are based on self-report data, making minimal differentiation between the effect of forms of contact, and thus saying little about what and how much MPs must do to achieve certain results. After this point, how far the communications literature shows effects – and the issues with this literature - depends on the type of communication considered.

Constituency communications from parliamentary resources have only rarely been considered for their effects on constituents. The only clear British example, Johnston and Pattie (2009, p. 584), addresses the effect of stationery and postage spending at the 2005 election, which they claim are 'representative of the amount of MP–constituent contact'. However, they find effects, albeit small ones, only for (then opposition) Conservative incumbents. Again, it is unclear how far underlying awareness of, or attitudes to, the MPs are shaped by communication: the concern of Parker and Goodman is pertinent here. Furthermore, by selecting postal-related spending, one is in effect assessing the impact of communications on those already aware of their MP, since mass-mailings are ruled out in the British system. This excludes important forms and purposes of communication, which, as argued, is partly about creating awareness. More noteworthy uses of expenses in this regard are the advertising of surgeries and the distribution of contact cards.

The American literature is somewhat more developed, though the different rules and scale of communication should not be forgotten. Cover and Brumberg (1982) overcome the self-report problem, using a small sample experiment to show that new parents receiving 'baby books' signed by their member of Congress were afterwards more likely to recognize their member than those receiving unsigned books.

However, it was unclear if the same effect could be achieved from other mailings or in other districts, or how much effort or resource it took to achieve a given effect.

Parker and Goodman conduct two larger-scale studies of the effect of using 'franked mail' for both members of Congress (2009) and Senators (2013). The 'franking' privilege covers a wide variety of communications, including 'newsletters regarding legislation and Member votes, press releases about official Member activities… and upcoming town meetings' (Glassman, 2007). They show that, for MCs, 'franking' expenditures have a small but statistically significant effect in increasing positive comments about constituency service. However, 'franking' allows for much more self-promotion than the current UK rules. For instance, credit-claiming and highlighting achievements are key aspects of U.S. newsletters (Yiannakis, 1982; Frisch, 1998), which informed Parker and Goodman's hypothesis that franked mail would improve service perceptions. In the UK, by contrast, permissible communications are restricted to more bare-bones voter aids for finding the name and contact details of the MP: thus, we might expect the more sequential effect whereby only name recognition is directly affected.

More is known about local media effects, though again mostly in the United States. Coverage of the MC in local newspapers has various impacts, from bolstering their name recognition, improving ideological placement, generating a sense that they 'keep in touch' and willingness to vote for them (Niemi, Powell, and Bicknell 1986; Kropf and Boiney, 2001; Schaffner, 2006; Snyder and Stromberg, 2010; Hopkins, 2018). In European contexts, two studies show that in open-list systems, where MPs receive 'preference votes' separable from party voting, local news coverage boosts the preference vote in both Belgium and Norway (André, Wauters and Pilet, 2012; Elvestad and Johannessen, 2017).

However, this literature – especially the US literature - speaks less directly to communications than first appears. This is because variance in coverage is treated as a result of structural factors, rather than deriving from the agency of representatives. The main example is that representatives' districts overlap by chance with different 'media markets', within which a common set of television, radio and often

newspapers operate: where a representative's district sits more neatly within a single market, they gain more coverage.

Though this is an important factor, it nonetheless obscures representatives' agency to an excessive degree. MPs are important in driving their own coverage. Empirically, this is best proven in the US, since effort can be proxied by number of press releases, which are comprehensively stored for each member on the U.S. House website. Gershon (2012) and Romano (2014) each utilise this resource, finding that frequency of press releases was related to quantity of local coverage. However, both find no effect on tone of coverage: Romano shows that the effect is entirely through increasing the proportion of neutral stories. This is significant. Theoretically, members can control valence as well as frequency of local media appearances by issuing releases that paint them in the best light, ostensibly very different to the functional information conveyed in surgery advertisements and contact cards. Consequently, we could expect that local media coverage, unlike the other form of communication, could have a direct effect on constituent perceptions. However, since in practice members affect only frequency and not tone of coverage, it is more likely that coverage will affect name recognition prior to any effects on member perceptions.

Chapter 3 takes up the challenge of analysing these effects in the under-studied British context, with particular focus on setting out a sequential approach. To do so, real methodological innovations are required, particularly for the study of local media, in order to test the effect of the effort-driven component in MPs' communication. Yet it is likely not just the amount of communication that matters, but also the message transmitted. Thus, I turn now to the role of constituency focus in perceived representation by MPs.

Constituency focus and perceptions of MPs

Crewe (2015, p. 104) claims that, though policy matters little, 'our relationship with our MP' is grounded in their 'championing of our area and the people within it'. Certainly, many MPs act as if this were the case. As discussed in the Introduction,

constituency focus among Members of Parliament is rising. At a theoretical level, this means that MPs are showing greater desire to stake their representative claims over constituents: yet, as previously noted, constituents can reject or ignore these claims, and it is unclear whether being a local champion really results in better perceptions of the MP. A basic expectation is that people will respond positively to their MPs' activities where supply meets demand (Grant and Rudolph, 2004). A central question, then, is 'what is it that constituents want their MPs to be doing?'

In this regard, our understanding has developed only relatively recently: an open question in the 1980s, we now better understand the 'meaningful preferences' of the public (Jewell 1985; André and Depauw 2018). Though there remains some dispute, the evidence generally points to a firm preference for local focus and pursuing locally beneficial activities. This is true both of the international literature and Britain-specific studies. In the US, though there are some dissenters (e.g. Krasno, 1994), subsequent studies have improved on question design to incorporate more ways a member of Congress can act on behalf of their constituency, and have thus found greater preference for local focus. Other research designs, based on survey experiments, have likewise suggested that people's revealed preference is for prioritising the local (Doherty, 2013). In Europe, studies generally support preference for local focus (Bengtsson and Wass, 2011; André et al., 2017; although see von Schoultz and Wass, 2016).

Most importantly, however, British-specific evidence shows the public expect MPs to prioritise their constituencies (Hansard Society, 2010; Campbell and Lovenduski, 2015; Vivyan and Wagner, 2015). These studies also highlight potential failures to meet this demand: the Hansard Society (2010, p. 93) found that people perceive that MPs are adopting priorities other than 'representing the views of local people in the House of Commons'. This is perhaps surprising, since the fact of rising attention to constituency should be a textbook example of supply meeting demand: however, the product has not been public satisfaction with MPs in general. Both Judge (2014) and Crewe (2015) confront this paradox, suggesting that the impossibility of representing constituencies as a whole, which have no cohesive identities, interests or views, means that MPs can never fulfil expectations of local focus. However, an alternate

explanation is that aggregate-level dissatisfaction can still exist where MPs satisfy constituents at a local level. Thus, the next important line of enquiry is 'Are MPs' activities effective in improving constituents' opinion?'.

This general principle has largely been tested by a simpler question than the role of constituency focus, requiring less careful measurement. Several researchers have attempted to find a link between generalised 'effort' and constituent perceptions of their MP. In British studies, Bowler (2010) finds a positive association between vote share/approval and the number of Private Members' Bills proposed by an MP; Kellerman (2013) shows the same for Early Day Motions. To overcome confounding, studies in other countries exploit the 'randomisation' of who gets to propose legislation, finding an effect on MPs' approval and electoral fortunes (Loewen et al., 2014; Williams and Indridason, 2018).

However, there is less clarity on what effect constituency focus has specifically. This is partly because of a U.S.-centric literature, but also relates to methodological concerns, particularly regarding the measurement of both independent and dependent variables. The U.S. literature is the most notable, since it alone exploits survey data alongside electoral outcomes, which are problematic as a dependent variable (see Chapter 4). Two U.S. studies suggest that 'constituency focus' can lead to more positive evaluations of a Member of Congress (Grant and Rudolph, 2004; Box-Steffensmeier et al, 2003), although Box-Steffensmeier *et. Al.* have inconsistent results across dependent variables. However, each of these come with major caveats about their independent variables. Grant and Rudolph's measure collapses 'constituency service' indicators with legislative ones into a single index despite low correlations, whereas Box-Steffensmeier *et al.* use an infrequent activity to indicate focus, leading to implausibly low variance. It is thus unclear how robust these results are, even in the U.S. context.

Though the literature outside the US uses the less useful indicator of voting behaviour, it suggests that the effect of constituency focus may travel well to European democracies. Martin (2010) relates survey responses by Irish Teachta Dálas to their preferential votes, finding that those who claim greater local focus and attention receive more preferential votes than district co-partisans. Using actual behaviour as his

independent variable, in the form of constituency-focused parliamentary questions, Chiru (2018) shows that in Romania (but not Hungary), constituency focus increases the personal vote.

Thus, there is credible evidence that what MPs do, in general, does matter in the context of Britain. Yet despite positive indications, there is weaker evidence that constituency focus specifically is important. The evidence that the public respond to effort suggest they are at least minimally informed about the activities of their MP: however, we know that for much of the public this is not the case (Arnold, 2013). Estimates vary, but as little as 25% of the public may have memorized even the name of their MP, while around two in three may be able to 'recognize' them when prompted (Hansard Society, 2014; Cowley, 2014). Fewer still self-report specific knowledge of representatives' deeds. The literature (Norris, 2002; François and Navarro, 2018; Chiru, 2018) suggests that it is precisely these informed constituents that respond to MPs' activity, yet this theory has gone untested.

Constituency focus has a high degree of theoretical importance to constituents' sense of representation, and is clearly something in high demand among both international and British publics. Local MPs' focus on constituency is likely to impact, at the least, on some well-informed constituents. This discussion has also highlighted the need for profound methodological care in the selection of dependent variables and in the creation of independent variables. As such, this is an especially important component of the research in Chapter 4.

I have argued that representative agents are potentially significant in shaping perceptions of local representation, both through communication and constituency focus. However, agency clearly has its limits: even the most committed MPs rarely materially transform their local constituencies. It is here that our focus must shift towards the structural. There are many good reasons to believe that structural factors also shape perceptions of local representation and, crucially, that it is attitudes to local representation by *government* that are most affected, as they may be held responsible for the state of the local economy and when people feel 'left behind'. In

the next section, I analyse the literature on structural, economic factors, finding a significant shortcoming of this literature with reference to the local economy and to the 'grievance' that may accompany spatial inequality.[7]

Structural factors

From personal and national to local contexts (real and perceived)

How economic inequalities shape the sense of representation more generally is a long-standing question in the literature. One of the best-researched questions in this field is the influence of personal demographics, particularly education and income (often grouped under 'socio-economic status', or SES). There are strong, though simple, theoretical grounds to expect this. Those of higher SES are, essentially, society's winners and thus through 'rational choice', unlikely to rage at 'social arrangements that have served them well' (Newton, 2018). For the most part, existing studies suggest that the assumption of the rational choice perspective holds (though see Newton, 2001 and Levi and Stoker, 2000). In particular, external efficacy and satisfaction with democracy are very often found to be associated with SES (Hayes and Bean, 1993; Jackson, 1995; Soss, 1999, Castillo, 2006; Aarts *et al*, 2014; Van Der Meer and Dekker, 2013).

Though the rational choice frame has been prominent, there are numerous reasons lower SES can lead to discontent. One potential mechanism is inequality of representation between the wealthy and the rest (Gilens and Page, 2014; Peters and Ensink, 2014). Failure to ensure personal prosperity could be seen as a failure of political performance, and thus reduce trust according to the 'performance perspective' (Van

[7] The reader may question, given that this thesis discusses both structure and agency, why only the agency of MPs, and not the agency of government is covered by this thesis. Governments, of course, also have agency, but this does not manifest to individual communities in comparable ways: governments rarely make place-based policy on a large scale, and can deliver 'pork' to specific territories only very discreetly. However, the conclusion does turn to questions of how government can use investment to make left-behind communities feel better represented, following from the discussion on structural factors.

Ryzin, 2007). Social distance from wealthy professional politicians could result among lower-income people in a perception their interests are unrepresented (Allen and Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, 2015). Meanwhile, as low-income people will likely be more pessimistic for the future, they will struggle to trust (Scheidegger and Staerklé, 2011). However, none of these mechanisms are necessarily 'egocentric': all can be easily translated into the terms of the local. In poorer communities particularly, people could believe that *local people*'s interests are underrepresented in policy; politics is not delivering for *local people*; politicians are different to *local people*; *local people* cannot trust in a good future. For this reason, it is plausible that local economies are important to the perception of representation.

Yet though this has a material foundation, how individuals perceive their world is crucial. There are firm theoretical reasons for the importance of 'sociotropic' economic perceptions to political discontents. Again, Van Ryzin's 'performance perspective' is important here: the economy is a central responsibility of governments, and thus economic performance and political satisfaction are related. Yet the importance of the economy is also based on people's sense of belonging to a national community. Kinder and Kiewiet (1981, 132) set out two fundamental reasons the national matters, both linked to this sentiment. First, people experience 'pro-social' concerns for those within the community; second, they expect, from a more egotropic point of view, that what is happening in the country at large will somehow affect them, tomorrow if not today.

However, empirical research has, perhaps surprisingly, failed to find consistent effects of national economic perceptions on attitudes such as trust (Citrin and Green, 1986; Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). Two potential objections present themselves here. In environments where spatial inequality is dramatic, such as in Britain, it is increasingly unclear that national economic perceptions should be meaningful for evaluating political representation, particularly when people consider whether *their area* is well represented. National conditions may feel increasingly abstract: Menon (2016) reports a memorable exchange in which, after warning an audience in the North East of England about the likely fall in GDP after Brexit, a heckler replied 'That's your bloody GDP. Not ours!'. Secondly, to the extent that national perceptions

do matter, this may disguise effects that truly originate at a more local level. Bisgaard *et al.* (2016) and Ansolabehere *et al.* (2014) show, for two countries, that the local or state-level economy is used by the public to form perceptions of the national economy.

It should also be noted that the same theories underlying the plausible effects of national-level perceptions are equally applicable to the local level. Our local in-group sentiment may be stronger than our sense of 'imagined' national community: closer to home, we have many more tangible connections to others. Secondly, the (disguised) egotropic dynamic will also be at work, since most people live and work physically close to home. Therefore, local economic conditions may seem to bear on their own prospects.

Thus, to briefly summarise, the literature on individual-level objective socio-economy is suggestive of good theoretical reasons to expect effects of the local, in spite of the traditional egotropic vs. sociotropic divide. Meanwhile, the basis for the importance of national economic perceptions – though this has not always translated in empirical enquiries - should also apply to perceptions at the local level. Researching perceptions at the local level is also important because the assumption of equal exposure to a singular 'national economy' is increasingly untenable, given spatial inequality, and owing to new research into its effects on national economic perceptions.

Economic geography and political discontent: the existing literature

Research into the effects of within-country economic geographies is decidedly sparse, though more recently growing. One line of research has been the centre-periphery dynamics identified by Rokkan (1999) as consistent features of modern nations, often strongly related to economic inequalities. Gidengil (1990, pp. 36-40) finds significant regional variation in external efficacy in Canada, explained not by compositional factors but by 'the region's location in the centre-periphery system'. In 'depressed' and 'industrial' areas, people are lower in efficacy than in 'centres' and 'secondary centres'. More recently, Stein *et al.* (2019) similarly show that trust is

lower in Norway's periphery than its centre: yet this was not explained by any third variables such as the urban-rural divide, economic performance, associational membership, and so on. Thus, this literature leaves unclear how far *economic* geographies play a significant role *per se*.

In this regard, some recent papers are informative. In the US, Rogers' (2014) research on 'communotropic' politics indicates how local economic conditions (real and perceived) may have ramifications for evaluations of representation, in this case measured by Congressional approval. Rogers finds that voters who perceive the local economy to have improved are more likely to approve of Congress – and that perceptions of improvement stem at least in part from objective change. Similarly, Norris (2015) shows that higher state-level economic growth is associated with higher external efficacy (though this is attenuated by income inequality within a state).

However, the single similar study applicable to (at least part of) Britain failed to find comparable effects (Jennings and Stoker, 2016). Jennings and Stoker identify 'Two Englands' of 'cosmopolitan' and 'backwater' areas: the former being strongly tied to the global economy and thriving, the latter isolated and going through decline. They identify swathes of the country – fifty parliamentary constituencies for each - that exemplify these categories, comparing them across a number of social attitudes. They found that 'backwaters' were 'more inward-looking, illiberal, negative about the EU and immigration, nostalgic and more English in their identity' (p. 372). Most importantly, however, 'backwaters' were no higher in 'anti-political sentiment' over a variety of measures. These included two satisfaction with democracy measures ('English' and 'UK' democracy), two classic external efficacy measures ('Politicians only care about people with money', 'Politicians don't care what people like me think') and one trust measure (trust in MPs in general).

I suggest this finding needs revisiting. Firstly, the survey items used to measure attitudes are limited and will have a tendency to elide the role of local factors, which can be better elicited by survey items that directly measure perceptions of local representation. Second, the contextual unit can be questioned on multiple grounds. Research on economic inequalities in Britain (e.g. Dorling and Pritchard, 2010) has emphasised the 'fractal' nature of inequalities, with close proximity between wealthy

and poor places: constituencies could contain both 'backwater' and 'cosmopolitan' areas and the aggregate may not be especially meaningful to inhabitants. Chapter 5 expands in detail, with reference to the economic geography literature. Further, the sociotropic, or 'communotropic', dynamic that would drive the effect of local economy is dependent on the context having meaning to people. Yet 'subjective' communities tend to refer to smaller places than constituencies, as established by Wong *et al.* (2017), mainly because people see communities as meaning places they regularly encounter and interact within. Both these problems call for revising down the contextual unit: a strategy pursued by Chapter 5.

Social psychology and inequality grievance

This chapter has argued that the local is important partially through local attachment or 'in-grouping'. If this is recognised, then we can also make predictions about how people respond to their circumstances and perceptions on a psychological level, which have particularly important ramifications for how they process perceived *inequality*. Theories of group-based 'distributive justice' argue that when a group does not receive the same benefits as 'salient others' (Tyler *et al*., 1992, p. 122) – a situation of 'relative deprivation' — members of that group tend to experience a sense of 'grievance'. As a result, the system perceived as responsible for distributing resources (in this instance, 'central' government) is held in lesser regard. This dynamic is furthered by the tendency of people to seek external causes for the problems facing an in-group, even though they give the group itself credit for its successes (Jost and Banaaji, 1994). The distributive justice perspective is rarely applied to research on representation attitudes, though it has been shown that relative deprivation is linked to protest engagement and non-co-operation with authorities – activities which relay popular discontent with the functioning of representative democracy (van Zomeren *et al*, 2008). How might this principle translate to the local? If people perceive their area as falling behind a significant reference group economically, they may be especially likely to experience discontent with the representation of their community. This prediction is tested in Chapter 5.

While the case for these theories is strong, they nonetheless rely on certain conditions to exist. Do individuals perceive their environment accurately enough? Are they aware of inequalities? Do they engage in social comparison between their community and the country at large? Do they hold the government responsible for local, national and *relative* conditions? These questions will be explored, for the British case, in Chapter 5. Similarly, as touched on by this chapter, testing such theories requires great care: Chapter 5 recounts the choice of data and methodological approach in depth.

Summary

This thesis concerns how people perceive the political representation of their local communities by MPs and by central government. In the first part of this chapter, I articulate a theoretical perspective on representation that has several virtues. First, it is analytically sound in describing representational relationships that are both relational and territorial. Second, it makes a case for *perceptions* of representation as crucial to a legitimate and effectively functioning representational relationship, both between the MP and their constituency and between government and local communities. Third, it suggests that the representative legitimacy of MPs and governments faces intrinsic challenges in terms of public opinion, because the required representative style of trusteeship is unpopular: thus, MPs in particular develop strategies to (re)assert their representative 'claim'. Fourth, it articulates criteria for judging measures of perceived representation, to which existing measures can be held and found lacking, and around which alternative measures can be selected or developed. On this basis, I choose dependent variables suited to measuring how the representation of constituencies by MPs and of local communities by government are perceived.

I have identified two categories of forces that work on (local) representation attitudes: the agency of local representatives, and the socio-economic structure of real and perceived inequalities between places. For the British context, I perceive a dissonance between a growing recognition of individual representatives' agency and a conventional wisdom which at times suggests that local MPs receive either blanket

love or hate from their constituents. I argue for a focus on two major kinds of activity: communication and (demonstrations of) constituency focus. The literature leads me to expect that communications impact on knowledge and perceptions of MPs. I identify two key forms of communication: usage of Parliamentary expense accounts, and usage of the local media. Though the U.S. literature offers precedents for the effectiveness of both, this requires major theoretical revisions – in terms of measurement and expected effects – for application to the UK system: I discuss this in greater depth in Chapter 3. Second, I expect that constituency focus could have substantial effects given strong evidence of both public demand and supply from MPs. However, this is untested in the British context, while in other contexts the literature has significant measurement issues. Furthermore, the literature has failed to explore heterogeneity in who is impacted by constituency focus. This, too, will be explored in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5, I turn to economic structure as a source of 'representation gaps'. Considering how sociotropic influences on political attitudes work, there is a good theoretical basis to expect that the real and perceived local economy matters to representation attitudes that has been overlooked by most scholars. Yet few studies test this empirically, finding mixed results and significantly, negative indications in the single British-based study. I argue that various methodological choices affect the likelihood of finding this relationship. Equally important is how inequalities, and how people perceive them, could result – through well-known processes in social psychology – in 'grievances', fuelling perceived under-representation: Chapter 5 will elaborate substantially.

Thus, this chapter has traced an evolution from the theoretical to the practical and concrete. However, one final point remains that suggests the analysis must be taken further, still. By the logic of this chapter, that voters perceive their local areas are well-represented is a desirable democratic outcome. Therefore, understanding not merely how these outcomes are determined, but how they might be improved, is an important task of this thesis. Accordingly, as this thesis progresses, I evince a concern with potential remedial actions, to be developed fully in the Conclusion.

Chapter 3. Constituency communication, the profile of MPs and its consequences for perceived representation

Introduction

While parliamentarians, theorists and legislative professionals debate many other issues about what makes a good local representative, one uncontentious notion is that they should be in touch with constituents. Indeed, Esaiasson *et al.* (2017) have argued that communication should be considered an intrinsic part of the representative process of 'listening, explaining and adapting', and one which they consequently urged more attention to. Parliament has generally encouraged MPs to become more communicative, including an increase in the resources available for MPs to communicate with their constituents (Norton, 2007), in the face of dual concerns about 'apathy' and public distrust (Leston-Bandeira, 2012). However, it remains unclear what the role of MPs' constituency communication is in affecting public awareness and evaluations of representatives. This chapter attempts to fill this gap.

I consider two types of communication here. First, I explore the effect of using expenses for 'apolitical' communication publicising the MP's role and activity as a constituency MP. This contributes to a growing literature around use of the parliamentary expense accounts (Auel and Umit, 2018): however, in refocusing on the effects rather than the causes of expense spending I complement this body of work. Second, I examine the impact of communication through the local media. It is known that British MPs use the local media extensively, and although MPs are confident that this achieves results this has not been verified. Though media effects have been found in the United States, this has not been considered, either theoretically or methodologically, from the perspective of communication, downplaying the representative's agency to achieve these effects.

The effects of communication are especially relevant at this present juncture in British politics, because of the existing and emerging threats to the efficacy of Parliamentary communication: some self-imposed, others external. MPs appear to exercise considerable and growing restraint in their expenses on communication: the most likely explanation being a response to informal policing of their claims by the media. Meanwhile, the decline of local media – mainly that of local newspapers – threatens MPs' ability to gain exposure for their words and actions, as well as to effectively publicise their 'apolitical' constituency service activities using their allowances.

Meanwhile, the tenth anniversary of the 2009 expenses scandal has presented a moment for reflection on the British system: however, this has focused principally on its defense against exploitation and struggle with public legitimacy. What has been neglected are the concrete and potentially positive effects of using allowances: while communications only constitutes one of many possible usages this nonetheless represents an important contribution. This absence has led to reforms being undertaken on a weak evidential basis, however well-reasoned were the supposed issues of existing systems. Given new data, this evidence base can now be built: today what we know about what MPs do to communicate is unprecedented, due to the frequent public release of Parliamentary expense claims by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA).

How should communication impact on constituents? Though other studies have predicted that it can directly improve evaluations of constituency representation, to this end only scattered evidence has been found. Instead, I suggest that the effect of communication should generally be more indirect. The most proximal and most consistent effect of communication should simply be to remind constituents who their MP is. This awareness – often called 'name recognition' – is regarded as an important aim by MPs (Negrine, 2005), and the wider literature suggests that it can be consequential to evaluations and behaviours. However, in Britain, it has generally been overlooked in surveys – as opposed to the United States, where it is a consistent item in the American National Election Study (ANES) – and consequently very little literature explores its causes and consequences. This chapter does both, first asking

'does communication predict name recognition' and then 'does name recognition improve perceptions of local representation'? This approach is partially inspired by Fenno (1978) – who writes that instead of an exclusive devotion to explaining outcomes (like voting), we should make attempts at 'explaining explanations': making efforts to trace causal chains back.

There are three key mechanisms by which name recognition can lead to positive attitudes towards MPs. First, name recognition should serve to supply a store of trust in local representatives, as people distrust the unfamiliar (Gigerenzer and Goldstein, 2011), and may reduce the 'sense of distance' from representatives (Coleman and Blumler, 2009). Second, name recognition may also be understood by the public as an indicator of role fulfilment. Hansard focus groups (Hansard Society, 2011, p. 32) found that views of MPs 'relied on knowledge of who their MP was': often those who did not know them concluded they were underperforming. Third, name recognition presumably plays an important role in enabling constituents to evaluate their representative, and respond to new information they encounter about them, as argued by Norris (2002). This chapter deals with the former two mechanisms: the third, however, becomes increasingly relevant in Chapter 4.

In Part I, I first set out why awareness of local MPs is an outcome to which communication should be relevant, the indications that previous literature can offer, and the kinds of communication that should matter. I then discuss why awareness of local MPs may be an important factor in how people evaluate them, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative evidence, and consider how partisanship may moderate the effects of awareness. In Part II, I explore the tangible, direct effects of communication, in terms of raising constituent awareness about their MPs, setting out data, method and results. In Part III, I establish and execute a method to examine how far constituents' knowledge of their MP's identity is important to their evaluations of the MP.

Part I: the theory of communications and profile effects

Why do MPs communicate?

In the first instance, I briefly consider why MPs communicate. I do so for two reasons. Firstly, because this demonstrates that MPs expect results of some kind, which can be tested more rigorously here. Secondly, because their specific concerns aid in the selection of appropriate outcomes upon which to test the effects of communication. What drives politicians to communicate is a contested question in the literature. A particularly influential school of thought holds that a cynical view of politicians' motives is most appropriate. This is what Besley and Larcinese (2011) dub the 'public choice' view, in which politicians are motivated by self-interest. In the literature, there are stronger and weaker expressions of this school of thought. Mayhew (1974, p. 5), in his classic study of U. S. Congressmen, cast them as 'single-minded seekers of re-election'. Strøm (1997), on the other hand, promoted a view of MPs as seeking numerous goals, but re-election was given primacy: furthermore, MPs would consistently behave in ways consonant with that goal.

However, critics have argued that aspects of their motivation are more benign. Jackson and Lilleker (2005) have argued that the activities that MPs pursue are predominantly about the establishment of 'political legitimacy', citing one interviewee as stating that his media appearances were 'not just about winning votes' but 'about trust and service as well'. However, there is a fundamental asymmetry in the ability to muster proof for either side. While the effects of, for instance, seat marginality have a direct bearing on how MPs' motivations can be understood, it is not necessarily clear what factors would indicate the trust motive and this, perhaps, has led to a preponderance of cynicism about the drivers of behaviour.

This cynicism is also reflected by a rather limited view of what 'success' means in terms of the outcomes of the MP's activity. MPs' concern with trust is rarely reflected in the political science literature, which has a longstanding focus on election outcomes. As Parker and Goodman (2009) argue, this can lead to an overly dismissive view of how worthwhile or rational the MPs' activity is. 'If member activities are designed to produce certain perceptions, then the appropriate dependent variable is constituent perceptions rather than incumbent vote share, which could be

contaminated by external factors' (p. 496). In this study, I broaden the range of relevant outcomes further. Some member activity, I argue, is directed not even at influencing constituent perceptions (at least directly) but in the first instance at ensuring the MP is known to their constituents.

How do MPs boost name recognition?

Before exploring the literature on the causes of constituent awareness, it is first worth considering what we know about how widespread this awareness is. While data is somewhat sparse – and the methodologies of older surveys decidedly obscure at this point – it can be said, at a minimum, that most MPs are not household names – nor, in recent memory, have they been. The earliest data for Britain is from 1978, when a poll for the BBC's *Nationwide* found that 46% could recall the name of their local MP (Walter, 1978). A similar figure (52%) could do the same in 1991: however, this fell to a lower, but stable level in the 2000s, with between 41-44% of the population consistently able to name their MP in MORI polls (Ipsos MORI, 2011). Comparatively, then, people in Britain do not seem to have structurally lower knowledge of representatives: for instance, name recall of the district's Member of Congress was sometimes recorded at below 30% in US polls between the 1950s and 1980s (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). However, there are indications of a striking downturn in public recognition of local MPs. After the 2010 general election, the figure fell somewhat in MORI's December survey to 38% (Ipsos MORI, 2011) - but 2012, the most recent available survey, saw an unprecedented fall to a level of just 22% (Hansard Society, 2013).

This lack of knowledge has, as a phenomenon, been little explored. There is little dedicated literature as to why members of Parliament are known or not known to their constituents: perhaps, in large part, because the data is 'sketchy and unsystematic' (Karnoven, 2010). In the United States, scholars have long been able to rely on the inclusion of name recognition and recall questions in the American National Election Study (ANES). This has led to a relatively healthy literature concerning the issue, although constituents' awareness of representatives is more often used as

independent than dependent variable. This has not been the case for Britain: this chapter leverages the best data that has been produced in over fifty years of polling and election studies.

More than thirty years on, the most substantive study is that of Cain *et al* (1984). They find that constituents were more likely to know the name of their MP when they, or someone they knew, had come into contact with them in one way or another. Furthermore, it did not matter if contact was made in person (at private or public meetings, or with their staff), or if it was 'impersonal' (such as receiving mail, reading about them in the media, or exposure through radio and TV). Kam (2009), using data from the 1997 British Election Study, also finds that self-reported contacts were associated with name recall of incumbents. However, the self-report data utilised in these studies has intrinsic limitations. It is not clear how far objective phenomena – what MPs and parties actually *do* - underpin the results identified.

A compelling piece of evidence that constituency communications matter is supplied by Cover and Brumberg (1982), in the American context. Vexed by the issue of self-reported contacts, they exploited the usage of two standard pieces of government pamphlets for new parents. Very often, these pamphlets would bear the signature of their Member of Congress: in other cases, the member would also write a note of congratulation. Cover and Brumberg find a large short-term effect on name recognition from both pamphlets, though with some decay. However, the study relied on small samples, just one Congressional district and one type of mailing. Moreover, the time and resource investment to achieve a given effect was unmeasured.

In order to speak to this, there is a literature that relates to *candidate* recognition – including but not limited to incumbents - that is somewhat instructive for our purposes. Nonetheless, in its own right, this literature is decidedly modest, with just a handful of studies scattered over three countries and several decades. Indeed, Giebler and Wessels (2017) go as far as to state that 'little to nothing is known about the factors that are conducive for candidate recognition': although, with the addition of their article, there are, at present, findings that are cautiously generalisable across a variety of contexts. For our purposes, the most interesting of these is that exposure during campaigns appears to be of consistent importance to constituent awareness:

since this implies that other forms of exposure – though substantially different in content, purpose and timing – might, too, have implications for what constituents know.

These findings take three distinct forms. Firstly, as with the studies on MPs, a consistent finding in the literature is of direct contact effects. Individuals who report being contacted by a candidate are significantly more likely to recall the name of said candidate; Pattie and Johnston (2004) find that this applies to all three major parties in the 1997 general election. Goldenberg and Traugott (1980) find that this holds for two different varieties of contact: having directly encountered the politician, for instance, having a home visit or seeing them at a public meeting, had an impact, but so too did the at-a-distance contact of receiving mail from the campaign. Secondly, these effects are complemented by an impact of the campaign environment. Pattie and Johnston show that campaign spending by individual parties can have very significant impacts on people's ability to name their candidates; while Giebler and Wessels demonstrate independent effects of both time investment and financial investment in constituency campaigning. Furthermore, they show that local campaigns that relied on the most 'classic' campaign techniques – in-person contact, flyers, posters and so on – tended to result in higher name recognition for their candidates than those which had adopted the most 'postmodern' style, with a heavy reliance on digital campaigning.

From the literature on awareness of MPs and incumbents, there are two key points of relevance here. Firstly, being on the receiving end of communications from the MP is liable to result in awareness of them, no matter how 'impersonal' is the contact one receives. Secondly, the deployment of resources at constituency level appears to be capable of raising awareness of the MP – although this is only proven in the context of campaigns. Between these two observations, it seems plausible that the resources the MP allocates to communication are also likely to result in constituent awareness. In order to test this possibility, I specify the following hypothesis:

H1. *The more that the MP spends on communications, the more likely that their constituents will be able to recall their name.*

Below, I discuss surgery advertising and contact cards as specific, communicative activities undertaken by MPs. Due to the public release of Parliamentary expense claims by IPSA, it is possible to quantify these, modelling their effects on constituent awareness.

The forms of expenditure identified above are plausible candidates for identifying effects on constituent awareness. Surgery adverts and contact cards are, in some regards, very different, but share the characteristic of being 'bare bones' in their content. The intended effects of each are simply to make the respondent aware of the MP, and how to find them. They are restricted from including party political messages, or even party names and logos. They should not – at least directly – have any effect on how people regard their MP: there is no content about their service, their political attitudes, or their personal biography that should have any such impact. Rather, their effects on constituents should be limited to awareness-raising.

The second facet of communication which I tackle is the MP's use of the (local) media. There is a reasonable literature in the UK and other parliamentary democracies regarding how much they use the local news (Negrine, 2005 – UK; Kavanagh, 2014 – Ireland; Schittny and Schnatterer, 2018 and Siefken and Costa 2018 – France and Germany). Kavanagh says that, for Irish parliamentarians, MPs and local media exist in a 'pragmatic partership', with the local media their 'most effective conduit' for the message that they are working hard for the constituency. Siefken and Costa find that, for French and German MPs, newspapers are the exception to MPs' weak media presence, with over half in each country reporting that they use local newspapers often or very often. Negrine and Lilleker (2003) find that MPs adopt a 'proactive local media strategy', with most MPs conducting one or more press releases every week for their local newspaper, and contacting them 2-3 times a week on average. MPs 'bring the media in' because 'if you don't [the voter] will forget who you are' (p. 207). As such, there is evidence that parliamentarians both in Britain and internationally perceive the media as important for constituency relations, with name recognition as one of their key goals – and that they often act on this belief, frequently using the local media.

However, there is in fact little evidence from Britain on the consequences. This is unlike for the US, where it is acknowledged that news coverage increases name recognition (Niemi, Powell, and Bicknell 1986; Kropf and Boiney, 2001), and the sense that Members of Congress are 'keeping in touch'. Constituents of high-profile MPs are more likely to be able to place the incumbent ideologically, and they vote for the incumbent more (Schaffner, 2006; Snyder and Stromberg, 2010; Hopkins, 2018). This has also been investigated in the context of the Belgian open list system, in which the extent of 'personal voting' is easy to determine: and here, again, it matters substantially how much coverage an MP gets (Maddens et al, 2006). It also has effects in local elections in Norway, again impacting on preference voting (Elvestad and Johannessen, 2017). Thus, the literature suggests MPs are making good use of their time by appearing in the local media.

Yet these literatures are poorly linked. The literature on MPs' activities, which is focused on exploring the perceptions of the efficacy of communication among politicians, presupposes effects – it does not show them, especially for the British context. New evidence, however, reveals that politicians may over-estimate the effectiveness of communicating in newspapers. As Schittny and Schnatterer argue, the communication relationship between representatives and represented is 'more characterized by gaps and barriers than by mutual understanding'. Although MPs could access newspapers with relative ease, few constituents in their subject nations – France and Germany – used newspapers to access news. Meanwhile, the literature on the effects of media disavows the contribution that MPs' own efforts make to their media coverage: rather, espousing the view that representatives benefit from quirks of geography that win them automatic coverage – in particular, the correspondence between U.S. House districts and media markets (Schaffner, 2006; Snyder and Stromberg, 2010; Hopkins, 2018).

This neglects the evidence that MPs drive a great deal of their news coverage. Local newspapers – especially daily newspapers – are 'news-hungry', not especially critical of their local MPs, and run almost any story that has a plausible local angle (Negrine and Lilleker, 2003; Negrine, 2005). Empirically, this is best proven in the US. Fogarty (2008, 2012), using a small group of U.S. House members, finds that over 80% of

stories 'simply used the representative's handouts, press releases, or public words' without other sources; when they did proactive sourcing, they overwhelmingly contacted the member as opposed to other sources. There is also evidence of the contribution MPs' effort makes to overall coverage, since effort can be proxied by number of press releases, which are comprehensively stored for each member on the U.S. House website. Gershon (2012) and Romano (2014) each utilise this resource, finding that frequency of press releases was related to frequency of coverage in local newspapers. The British context is fundamentally similar, as 'the chief form of contact with the media is through the press release' (Negrine and Lilleker, 2003: 204), backed up with frequent telephone or email contact to impart more information or respond to enquiries.

However, MPs can influence the quantity of their coverage more than its quality. Gershon and Romano both find that there is no effect on tone of coverage: Romano shows that the effect of press releases is entirely through increasing the proportion of neutral stories. This is significant. Theoretically, members can control valence as well as quantity of appearances in the local media, by releasing stories that paint them in the best light. This at first glance would seem a major difference to the functional information conveyed in surgery advertisements and contact cards. Consequently, it might lead to the prediction that local media coverage, unlike the other form of communication, could have a direct effect on constituent perceptions. However, since in practice members affect only frequency and not tone of coverage, it is more likely that coverage will affect name recognition prior to any effects on member perceptions.

How can these literatures be reconciled within empirical analysis? Two things are required here. On the one hand, a method is required to effectively proxy the MP-driven component in media coverage. On the other hand, there needs to be a way of parcelling out the effects of variation in the newspapers which people can access, the extent to which these newspapers cover MPs and politics in general, and so on. I discuss these methodological choices in greater depth below. At this point, the reader must only be aware that I adopt a unique method that is intended to capture how an MP contributes to their own media coverage. Whereas other studies use

measures such as 'number of stories mentioning the MP/candidate', I narrow these down to stories where I have reason to believe the MP was *directly quoted*.

H2. *The more that MPs are quoted in the local media, the more likely it is that their constituents will be able to recognize their name.*

A further logical proposition follows from this. The profile-raising effects of communication should be stronger for those constituents most tuned into communicative channels. For the other, expenses-based forms of communication outlined above, these channels can be diverse; but for newspaper quotations, the channel is specific. Thus, I propose H3:

H3: The effect of the number of quotations of the MP in local newspapers is stronger for those who read local newspapers than for those who do not.[8]

While I argue that constituent awareness is an important outcome in its own right, it may have broader attitudinal implications. Below, I describe how theoretical and qualitative literature indicates that awareness may lead to perceived representation, despite mixed results in the quantitative literature. Nonetheless, the existing literature lacks a strategy for causal identification that adequately establishes this relationship: this chapter intends to supply such a strategy.

Why awareness matters

While knowing one's MP may be substantially associated with underlying interest and engagement, there is reason to expect that it may be an independent driver of satisfaction with local MPs. At a fundamental level, there is some basis in psychological research for the general notion that people have a preference for the familiar: the 'recognition heuristic'.[9] For instance, Thoma and Williams (2013) find that people

[8] Hypothesis 3 also serves the more prosaic function of helping to validate media effects.
[9] The notion of the recognition heuristic originally developed to see how people would make factual judgements (Goldstein & Gigerenzer, 2002), but is increasingly used as 'a model for preferences' (Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 2011).

overall preferred brands they recognized, even when given information indicating that other brands had superior products. It is likely that stronger pre-existing considerations apply in the domain of politics than in consumer choice: however, Kam and Zechmeister (2013) find using experimental studies that subliminal priming of names affects candidate support in a hypothetical election.

A second indicator of the importance of familiarity is its prevalence as a theme in how members of the public discuss their MPs. Qualitative study in Britain has frequently highlighted the importance of a basic recognition of who one's representative is. Focus group findings (Hansard Society, 2011), and open-ended questions (Coleman and Blumler, 2009), indicate that the perceived 'visibility' of an MP is almost considered a pre-requisite for representation. Hansard focus groups found that 'whether or not participants felt represented by their MP very much relied on knowledge of who their MP was'; many respondents argued that their MPs could not be doing a good job 'if they did not even know who he or she was'. Similarly, Coleman and Blumler stress 'the importance of being seen' to feelings of satisfaction with the representative, since it reduces the sense of distance between people and their representatives.

However, the quantitative literature as it stands is insufficient to firmly establish this relationship: there are strikingly few studies of the reasons for approval or disapproval of local representatives, and fewer still that model the effects of name recognition. When this has been studied, results point in different directions. Cain *et al.* (1979) find that, controlling for a range of factors, there was no relationship between name recall (that is, the ability to spontaneously recall the name of the MP) and satisfaction, while Campbell *et al.* (2019a) do find this association. The limited international literature also supports a relationship, with Ansolabehere and Jones (2006) finding that name recall has a highly significant effect on approval of a member of Congress. These studies suggest some relationship is at least plausible.

H4: *Knowing the name of one's MP is associated with positive evaluations of him or her.*

However, there are also good theoretical reasons to expect that this relationship works differently depending on the presence of strong alternative considerations. An

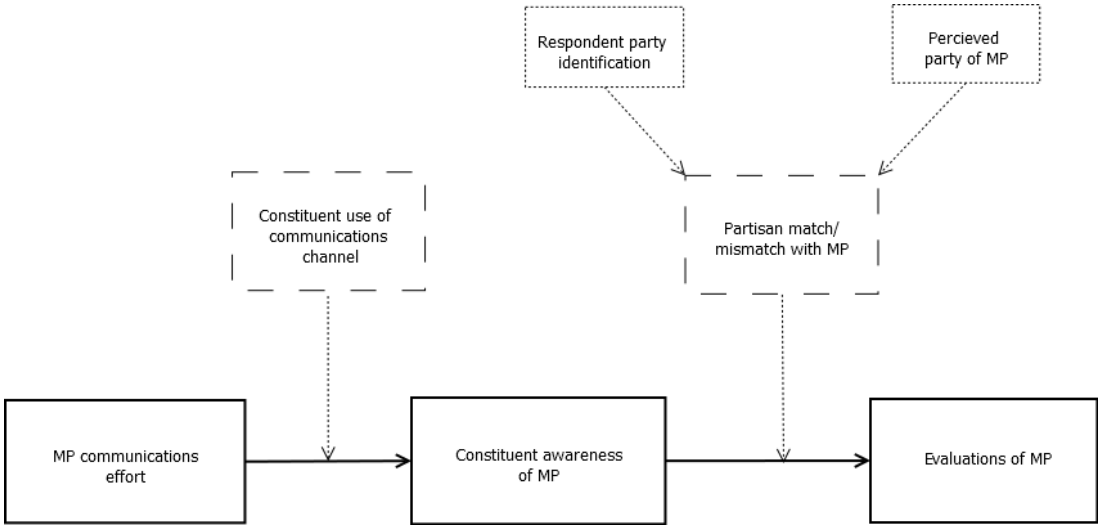
important component of the literature on the recognition heuristic is the extent to which recognition is 'compensatory': that is, how far it is traded off against other, competing considerations. Oeusoonthornwatta and Shanks (2010) and Thoma and Williams (2013) each show that, although recognized brands were preferred overall, negative information significantly reduced the effect that recognition had on preference. This has important consequences in the domain of politics. One important source of public judgements about their representatives is party identification: the evidence is clear that shared party identification substantially boosts support for a local MP, while clashes in party identification substantially decrease it. As such, for partisans, the MP belonging to another party is self-evidently a source of negative information. From this, the following hypothesis follows:

H5: *Among party identifiers who believe their MP belongs to another party, name recognition is unrelated to evaluations of him or her.*

The big picture

The theory set out above – while specifying relationships of individual importance – can also be regarded in terms of a causal chain. This is depicted by Figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1. Theorised causal chain (excluding exogenous influences).



Next, I consider the first set of relationships; the effects of MP communications on constituent awareness (and the moderating factors). I detail the methodology, before reporting and explaining the results.

Part II: The effects of MPs' communications activity on their public profile

Data

Expenses

For the purposes of this study, I analyse communications spending that falls under two categories: spending on surgery advertisements, and on contact cards. This, clearly, does not capture the full range of MPs' communications activities: partly for good conceptual reasons, and partly because of data limitations. The reader should first be aware that some forms of communication are no longer permissible under the post-2010 rules: for instance, newsletters, which could be claimed for under the Communications Allowance, cannot now be funded from the public purse. Neither can Annual Reports, in which MPs would produce an account of their work in Westminster, discuss their attendance and voting record, and so on. According to Auel and Umit (2018), these were among the top five uses of the Communications Allowance, and so their effective abolition marks a considerable limitation on the means and variety of MPs' communication methods. As such, contact cards and advertising are left as one of only a handful of valid communication-related expense categories.

In the literature, one of the most frequently used measures of member communications is on postage (or 'franked mail', as it is known in the U. S.: see Parker and Goodman, 2009). However, forms of postal spending are omitted from this analysis. Since this substantially deviates from the literature, this choice warrants some justification. Firstly, the reasons for which an MP can claim are almost entirely unrestricted. While advertising claims and contact cards are strictly for constituent-facing activities, claims on postage may apply to almost any activity within

parliamentary duties (IPSA, 2020). Secondly, much of the constituent-facing work that would have involved letter-writing is today likely to be conducted by email. Postage claims are, thereby, more problematic as a means of capturing the volume of MPs correspondence with their constituents than, for instance, in the period of the 2001-5 parliament studied by Bale et al (2008), Besley and Larcinese (2011) and Johnston and Pattie (2009). Thirdly, name recognition should, in theory, be boosted by activities that involve people who do not know the MP encountering communication from them. However, letter-writing to constituents is overwhelmingly 'reactive', in response to their enquiries. Those who have written to the MP are, presumably, aware of their identity, if nothing else about them. As such, excluding postage-related spending is not as substantial a concern for the modelling of name recognition as it would be for, say, modelling overall satisfaction with the representative.

Substantive content of communications expenses

The substantive content of claims made under the categories chosen merits a brief discussion. IPSA records a 'short description' and some additional voluntary 'details' of every claim used, which allows for a closer look at what advertising and contact card claims really entail. Reading through a small sample of the claims made under 'advertising', these claims overwhelmingly refer to advertisements bought in newspapers and magazines. In some cases, they refer to space bought on noticeboards and in leaflet stands; in a handful they refer to enhancements to the constituency office exterior that act as continual advertisements for the member. However, buying media space is the dominant form of advertisement. This has two key consequences. Firstly, it is valid to posit that *spending* will make constituent exposure to advertising more likely. Higher claims will be directly related to either more advertisements, or advertisements placed in more expensive, high-circulation outlets. Secondly, the effects of spending should be close to instantaneous: local newspapers and magazines will likely be read in the day, week or month of their publication, along with the advert itself. This is relevant when I attempt to identify the effects of advertisements on the propensity to learn the MP's name between two time-points.

Upon inspection, contact card claims have two potentially problematic aspects as an independent variable. Firstly, claims refer exclusively to the *printing* of cards. There is no certainty that the cards produced for the MP are ever actually distributed. Secondly, in some cases, the descriptions given in the expense claims indicate that cards are not for the MP themselves, but for their staff. However, one could reasonably expect that these cards will always mention the MP prominently in order to explain the assistant's role. Despite these issues, this is still a relevant category of spending.

For the analysis, I identify for each MP the total amount in pounds sterling claimed in the categories of surgery advertising and contact cards. This is transformed by the natural log in order to reduce skewness and the influence of extreme values. According to Kim (2013), a rule of thumb is that for large samples, absolute skew > 2 or absolute kurtosis > 7 determine substantial non-normality. The log-transformation reduces skew from 3.26 to -.48 and kurtosis from 16.12 to 1.94: thus, the transformation has usefully normalised the distribution of expense spending.

Media quotations

Using data from Ramsay and Moore (2016), I identify 314 constituencies in England, Wales and Scotland in which at least one local daily newspaper was operating circa 2015.[10] I am, however, forced to narrow this down further by the limitations of the Lexis-Nexis database, from which I collect my data on quotations. For many of these constituencies, one or more newspapers was missing from the database. Where this occurred, cases had to be dropped – even if a second newspaper did appear in the database. This meant that 229 constituencies were covered by the data. Due to potential imprecision in Ramsay and Moore's method of identifying constituencies with

[10] Ramsay and Moore define this as constituencies that intersected with local authority areas where a newspaper had a household penetration of five percent or greater, and where a newspaper sold ten percent or more of its circulation. In essence, a newspaper would have to have a non-negligible circulation locally, and have a localised reader base that presumably gave it a local focus. Ramsay and Moore note that they were likely to be overestimating the number of constituencies that had dedicated newspapers. For our purposes, however, this makes it a conservative test of the effects of local media coverage and thus suggests we may correspondingly underestimate how much local coverage matters in constituencies that are genuinely served with local print media.

local newspapers, I check the variable indicating local newspaper presence against a variable in the British Election Study asking respondents which newspaper they read most often – which, crucially, included a response category for those reading a local daily morning newspaper. This should make us more satisfied that we are looking at the right places. In such constituencies, respondents were more than twice as likely to say their main newspaper was a local daily, by 5.8% to 2.7%, than those who lived in places which Ramsay and Moore suggest do not have one.[11]

A critical element here is the claim to be able to identify media coverage attributable to MP effort – which is proxied here by quotations from the MP that appear in the newspaper. This approach is justified on the grounds that stories appearing with quotes are more likely to have involved effort on the MP's part (such as a press release or phone conversation) than stories which do not and will involve more substantive focus on the MP in order to justify using them as a source. Some possible objections to this approach are discussed in Appendix B; here I will progress to its actual implementation.

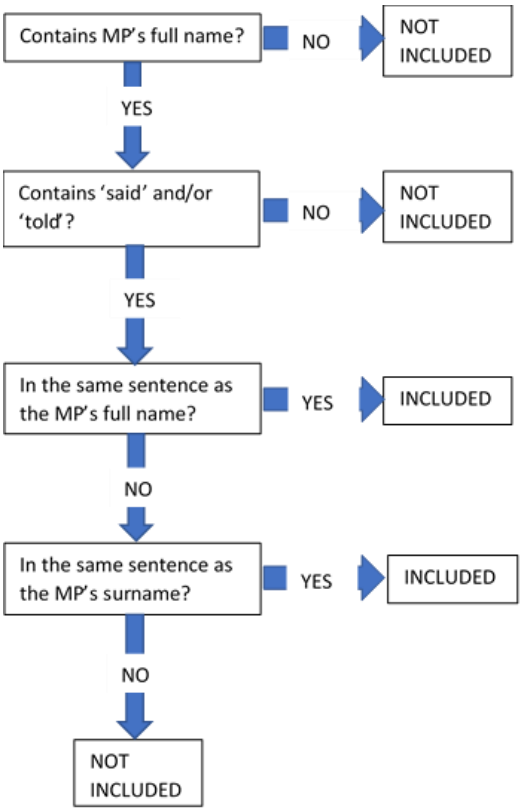
The Lexis-Nexis database allows for searching on the basis of words or phrases that appear in the text, and others that appear in the same sentence as that word or phrase. I use the database to search for stories in the relevant newspaper(s) for that MP which mentioned the MP's name – testing for colloquial and formal alternatives (and minor misspellings) where appropriate – where the words 'said' or 'told' appeared in the same sentence. Figure 3-2 summarises the process step-by-step. In brief, this approach had beneficial effects (given its purpose), as compared to a strategy of using all mentions of the MP, removing mentions in reader letters and improving the consistency with which the news stories had a focus on local issues

[11] It should not greatly concern the reader the figure is not closer to a zero for those living in places without one; e.g. it is possible that they buy daily newspapers outside the constituency, or that they do not know the difference between a regional and local newspaper which the question asks for.

It also does not mean that only 6% of people read a local newspaper, as the respondent's main source of news being a national paper does not preclude them reading local newspapers. 21% of respondents to a 2015 UK survey (corresponding closely to collection of the BES panel data) stated that they read printed local newspapers (Ofcom, 2015).

and specific service by the MP. For further explanation and validation, see Appendix B.

Figure 3-2. Effective process of database search for newspaper stories.



I collect quotes given over a nearly five-year period, starting from May 8th 2010, immediately after the general election of that year, and ending on March 29th 2015, the day before the dissolution of Parliament. I choose this cut-off because the relevant efforts are those undertaken as a constituency MP, not as an election candidate (in which one is, in any case, not technically an MP). I omit the few MPs who win their seats in by-elections, since the number of quotations is not comparable. I also drop a group of MPs whose *national* media quotations (a control variable I discuss below) did not seem to pertain to them, because they had a name in common with another public figure (for instance, Chris Williamson MP shares his name with a widely-quoted economist), meaning that number of national media quotations would not perform well as a control (see below).

Among those in the sample, the number of quotes by an MP varied a great deal: with one MP apparently supplying no quotes, and one supplying as many as 985 over the course of five years. Across 204 constituencies, the median was 132 quotes; with a mean slightly higher at 174, reflecting the right skew of the distribution. If this seems an abnormally large degree of variation, it is worth noting that it is by no means outlandish by the standards of the literature. Snyder and Stromberg (2010) find that, over the period 1991-2002 in the US, the minimum number of stories about a local Congressman was zero; the maximum was 1,454.

Method

I aim to assess the effects of the MPs' communications efforts on constituent awareness, testing three hypotheses. Here, I discuss the methodological choices entailed. I begin by exploring the perennial problem in studies of constituent awareness: measurement. I explain the specifics of my approach to the measurement of name recall, and the definition of 'learning' the name of the MP. I discuss the two-fold approach to testing the effects of communication, and present solutions to the different challenges faced for modelling the effects of each type. I also set out and apply a systematic approach to the selection of control variables.

Measurement of dependent variables

The study of whether people know their representatives often stalls on the issue of measurement, and so particular attention must be devoted to this here. Two broad approaches have been devised to tackle this: the 'name recall' method and the 'name recognition' method. Under recall methods, the survey simply asks respondents to offer the name of their MP, without giving any assistance, and a respondent is deemed correct if their written or oral response is sufficiently close to the real answer. Under recognition methods, the name of the MP will be included somewhere as one of several possible responses. Unsurprisingly, these have produced highly divergent results (on the rare occasions that A-B testing has been performed). The 1978

congressional survey showed that while only 50% of voters could recall the name of their House incumbent, 94% of them could recognize the incumbent's name from a list (Jewell, 1982). However, it is not entirely clear that the choice of measure should be highly consequential here. Neither prior research nor theoretical considerations would lead us to believe that exposure through member communications should have a different effect on name recall to name recognition. Furthermore, they are similarly unlikely to have distinct effects on MP evaluations – Cain and Fiorina (1987) find them to have equivalent effects on the personal vote.

As such, I use both measures in this analysis. In the first model – predicting 'knowing' – I utilise name recall measures. This requires substantial processing of the raw, 'text-box' data to generate the final binary variable. I undertake this procedure in multiple phases. In phase one, I separate out surnames from first names, utilising only the former, to create a fractionally more lenient test.[12] In the second phase, I utilise the principle of the Levenstein distance, following Darr (2015). This calculates the number of edits required to convert the textbox response into the correct answer. Respondents who were within zero or one are deemed to be correct. In the third phase, I assign any 'Don't Know' responses to the 'incorrect' category. In the final phase, I manually assess the remaining 200+ respondents who had made errors recalling the name. In practice, many of these could be dismissed immediately, but some were more difficult to decide. One theme was that complex names – such as 'Kawczynski' – were entered phonetically, along the lines of 'Kor-zin-ski'. This example required a great number of written edits to actively be correct, yet it indicated that the respondent had in fact learned the MP's name, in all likelihood, having heard it on the television or radio. This process generated a descriptive result that was somewhat more 'optimistic' than previous British surveys: nearly 60% of the weighted sample being able to name their MP spontaneously, between five and nine weeks before the general election.[13]

[12] Ballots list the MP's surname first, and in capitals: this means that, if anything, the respondent will have learned the MP's surname and not their first name.

[13] Most of the name recall surveys mentioned above, however, are not pre-election surveys, and perhaps in this light the differences are less surprising.

For other models, I use name recognition measures. For modelling the effects of media quotations, this is necessary because the recall question was asked to a much smaller (4,000 strong) subsample, and in just one wave; once the constituencies with no local daily newspapers are excluded, the sample size is too small to properly estimate the effect of media exposure. Instead, I maximise sample size by drawing on three waves of name recognition data, resulting in over 17,000 observations for more than 6,000 respondents.

For the model predicting 'learning', I also use name recognition, which was asked in successive waves. I take those respondents who guessed wrongly, or did not know, at Wave One, and compare their responses at Wave Three. Respondents who did give the correct answer at Wave Three were deemed to have 'learned' it: this transpired to be around 30% of those who did not know at Wave One. In practice, there was little point to looking at the opposite process, of forgetting or losing knowledge, since this was comparatively so rare. This seems consistent with several possible causes: intensification of party campaigning as pitch-rolling for the general election in 2015; an MP actively intensifying their constituency service efforts by doing more surgeries and public events; or, potentially, the subject of interest here: what an MP did to communicate with their constituents. There are, in principle, possible concerns with the external validity of the 'learning' process. The extent of change might be exaggerated, because being quizzed on who one's MP is might cause some respondents to go away and look it up for themselves. However, this process is unlikely to bias the effects of spending, which is the object of concern in this analysis.

Models

In the analysis below, I test spending effects in two ways. The first test is for the effects of spending across the course of the Parliament on the likelihood of knowing the MP's name at the end of the 2010-15 session. The second exploits the specific capabilities of panel data as a tool for causal identification. This tests whether

spending in a given period of six months[14] predicts whether the respondent 'learns' the name of the MP over the course of that period. By identifying the effect of spending on *learning* the name of the MP, this research can diminish the chances of spuriousness.

For the media effects models, the key element is the claim to separate out irrelevant variation regarding the newspapers. To do so, I specify a level-2 unit for the combination of newspapers that serve the constituency – and from which the quotes are collected. This generated 62 level-2 units, with a mean of three-and-a-half MPs per unit. This ought to be sufficient to identify the effects of quotations by individual MPs.

Controls

For an analysis of this kind, a variety of controls are necessary, concerning characteristics of the MP, the constituency itself, and those relating to respondents. The first two are particularly important, since they may predict both constituent awareness of the MP, and how much MPs communicate with constituents.

The literature offers some useful directions in this regard. For instance, seniority generally predicts name recall (Cain 1979, Niemi et al. 1986, Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003; Kam 2009). However, seniority is also likely to be related to both communication expenses and media coverage – though not necessarily in the same direction. For instance, Bale et al (2008) and Auel and Umit (2018) find that seniority is linked to less spending on communications with constituents. However, scholarship on media attention consistently highlights that more senior MPs receive more of it (Tresch 2009, Mitdbo 2011, Van Aelst *et al*. 2017, Vos and Van Aelst 2018). Further, electoral majority may be associated with the MP's profile: safe seats might be linked to lower

[14] Specifically, this relates to those claims made between 9th March 2014 and 19th September 2014 – the former being the end date for Wave 1 of the British Election Study, and the latter the start date for Wave 3.
In practice, this method cannot identify with perfect precision when the communication was actually issued; nor when it might have actually reached the respondent. Some claims are made retrospectively, relating to communication already paid for and deployed by the MP; others are made in advance. However, the additional information provided by MPs to justify their claims – which often includes (for instance) the date or month that an advert was due to appear in the local newspaper – is suggestive of a strong degree of correspondence between date of claim and date of issue.

member efforts, less campaigning by local parties, and less incentive for constituents to learn about their MP since they can less easily hold them to account in elections.

Gender also falls into this category of controls. Female candidates could have weaker name recognition (Kropf and Boiney, 2001), yet they may also differ in levels of communication. While British-specific evidence is limited, Murphy and Rek (2018) show that female politicians received more media attention in the 2015 General Election campaign. I also control for whether the candidate belongs to a BAME ethnic minority, since in the U.S., African-American candidates are often found to receive more coverage than whites (Ward, 2017).

The other crucial task here is to be able to separate out the effect of MPs' communication activity from that of their election campaigns. It is plausible that there is some association between these, even controlling for marginality. Under UK election rules, candidates have an important role in soliciting donations, directing and authorising spending (Electoral Commission, 2017). Those who communicate more while MPs may be those who run the most vigorous and intensive campaigns as candidates. Since constituent awareness may be partly a product of election campaigns, there is a risk of Type I error if campaign effects are not accounted for. As such, I control for candidate spending at the 2010 general election. Specifically, this variable is the amount spent during the general election 'short' campaign as a proportion of the spending limit set by the Electoral Commission.[15]

For the media models, I also control for quantity of communication through the national media, utilizing an identical method to (theoretically) capture stories where the MP was quoted. This included all national newspapers (tabloid and broadsheet), and most of their online arms also, but removed stories where it deemed them to be duplicates. This was justified by the modest but real correlation between number of quotations in local and national newspapers (r=-.12).

In terms of respondent characteristics, there are a wide variety of potential influences. Most obviously, the degree of political engagement is likely to affect

[15] The choice of 'short' versus 'long' campaign spending is likely to be immaterial due to the large correlations between the two.

awareness of MPs (Kropf and Boiney, 2001; Box-Steffensmeier *et al.* 2003, McKee 2008, Kam 2009). I include three variables to capture distinct components of engagement: political attention (0-10), frequency in days per week of political discussion, and political knowledge. Political knowledge refers to the respondent's ability to identify, out of multiple options, the nation and role title of three foreign leaders (for instance, Bashar Al-Assad: President of Syria.) Age is included here, since descriptive relationships found in the prior literature suggest that age effects are likely, with older people substantially more likely to know their MPs (Hansard Society, 2013). Respondent gender is included, since McKee (2008) shows that women are less likely to recognise US congressional incumbents. Finally, I control for education, which some prior studies (Niemi et al. 1986, McKee 2008) find to predict name recognition.

The effects of MPs' communications activity on their public profile: results

Does what MPs do to communicate raise constituents' awareness of them? This is assessed in two ways. In Model 1, name recall is looked at in a cross-sectional perspective; in Model 2, a longitudinal approach is adopted, to assess whether communications spending makes people more likely to *learn* the name of their MP. In both cases, I specify multi-level logistic regression models with random effects, where the Level 2 unit refers to constituencies.

In Model 1, the dependent variable, *Name Recall*, is a binary variable referring to whether the respondent could state the name of their MP. The key independent variable, *Communications Spending*, relates to combined advertising and contact card spending during the 2010-15 parliament, transformed by the natural log to reduce skewness and the influence of extreme values. The following tables present the key statistics for the subsample analysed in Models 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 3-1. Descriptive statistics for name recall model.

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Recalled MP name	.61	.49	0	1
Advert + card spending 2010-15 (£)*	2513.76	4269.51	0	29271.60
Log of adverts and cards (2010-15)	6.10	2.38	2.30	10.28

** Only the logged measure (row below) is included in the models: the true spending is included here to allow the reader to better interpret the log-transformation.*

Table 3-2. Descriptive statistics for 'learning' model.

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Learned MP name	.31	.46	0	1
Advert + card spending Mar-Sept (£)*	315.29	741.89	0	8609.60
Log of adverts and cards (Mar-Sept)	3.96	1.95	2.30	9.06

** Only the logged measure (row below) is included in the models: the true spending is included here to allow the reader to better interpret the log-transformation.*

Table 3-3. Descriptive statistics for media model.

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Recognised MP name	.77	.42	0	1
Number of quotations in dedicated local newspapers	170.8	156.9	0	985

Table 3-4 presents the results of the regression models. In Model 1, the positive sign – and significant result – for *Communications Spending* indicates support for Hypothesis 1. The more that MPs spend on surgery advertising and contact cards, the more likely their constituents were to know them by name. Further analysis indicated that advertising and contact card spending had positive effects independent of each other – although these were somewhat weaker than the main effect of combined spending. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Communications Spending IV makes a notable contribution to model fit, as measured by a log-likelihood test against a model where this variable is omitted.

Table 3-4. Models of 'knowing' and 'learning' name of MP.[16]

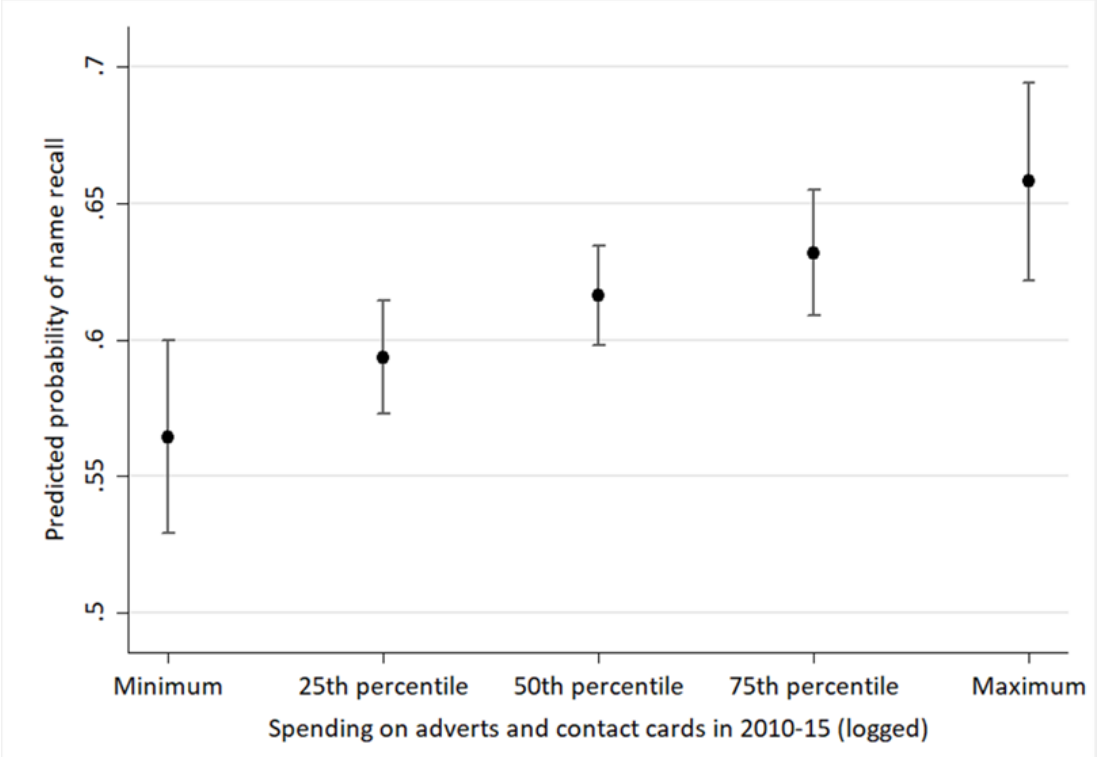
	Communications spending models		*Media model*
	[1]: recalled MP name	[2]: Learned MP name	[3]: recognized MP name
Comms: newspaper stories (10s)			.013*** (.002)
National newspaper stories (10s)			.001** (.000)
Comms: Log of adverts and cards (2010-15)	.066** (.022)	.	
Comms: log of adverts and cards (Mar-Sept '14)		051* (.022)	
MP/Const. characteristics			
Seniority	.012* (.006)	.014** (.005)	.024*** (.003)
Majority	-.008 (.004)	-.001 (.003)	-.014*** (.002)
2010 campaign spending	-.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.001 (.001)
Population density	-.004 (.002)	-.003 (.002)	-.004* (.002)
MP: female	-.125 (.125)	-.201 (.105)	.034 (.057)
MP: BME	.135 (.298)	.054 (.237)	.228 (.142)
Individual characteristics:			
Age	.030*** (.003)	.021*** (.003)	.040*** (.001)
Respondent: female	.084 (.088)	.204** (.079)	.042 (.043)
Level of education			
GCSEs	.464** (.156)	.042 (.135)	.491 (.078)
A-levels	.593*** (.168)	.129 (.148)	.717 (.085)
University	1.029*** (.157)	.234 (.141)	.949 (.080)
Political attention	.140*** (.024)	.097*** (.019)	.173** (.011)
Days discussed politics	.126*** (.022)	.053** (.020)	.101** (.011)
Political knowledge scale (base: 3/3)			
0/3	-1.437*** (.212)	-.771*** (.137)	-.977*** (.080)
1/3	-.664*** (.169)	-.576*** (.136)	-.695*** (.077)
2/3	-.222* (.101)	-.185* (.090)	-.315*** (.050)
N (observations)	3,136	3,832	16,946
N (respondents)	3,136	3,832	6,434
Level 2 unit	Constituency	Constituency	Newspaper combinations
N (L2 units)	619	614	62
Log-likelihood	-1926.80	-2213.62	-7693.33
AIC	3891.61	4465.24	15426.65
BIC	4007.63	4584.01	15581.41

** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

[16] As a robustness check, I replicated the media models with clustered standard errors at the respondent level (to account for the fact that the media model uses respondents observed in three waves). The result for the local newspaper stories IV is unaffected in size/significance.

The substantive effects of this are best shown by Figure 3-3, which indicates the effects of spending at the minimum and maximum, along with the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles. Figure 3-3 indicates the magnitude of effects: increasing spending from minimum to maximum increases the chances that any given respondent can name their MP by around ten percentage points.

Figure 3-3. Predicted probability of name recall by level of communications spending.



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted probability.

The results of the 'learning' model displayed in Column 2 also support H1. In this model, the estimation sample refers to those people who did not recognise their MP's name circa Wave 1, and who received this question in Wave 3 (n=3832). Positive coefficients indicate that the variable predicts name recognition in Wave 3. On average, people were more likely to learn the name of their MP when they spent more money on communicating with their constituents. The variable also makes a clear contribution to model fit. The substantive effects are best observed in Figure 3-4,

which shows the probability that a respondent learned the MP's name at the minimum and maximum levels of (logged) spending. Nonetheless, statistical significance here is somewhat weaker, with effects only significant at the $p<0.05$ level, and some over-lap in the confidence intervals of the predicted probabilities.

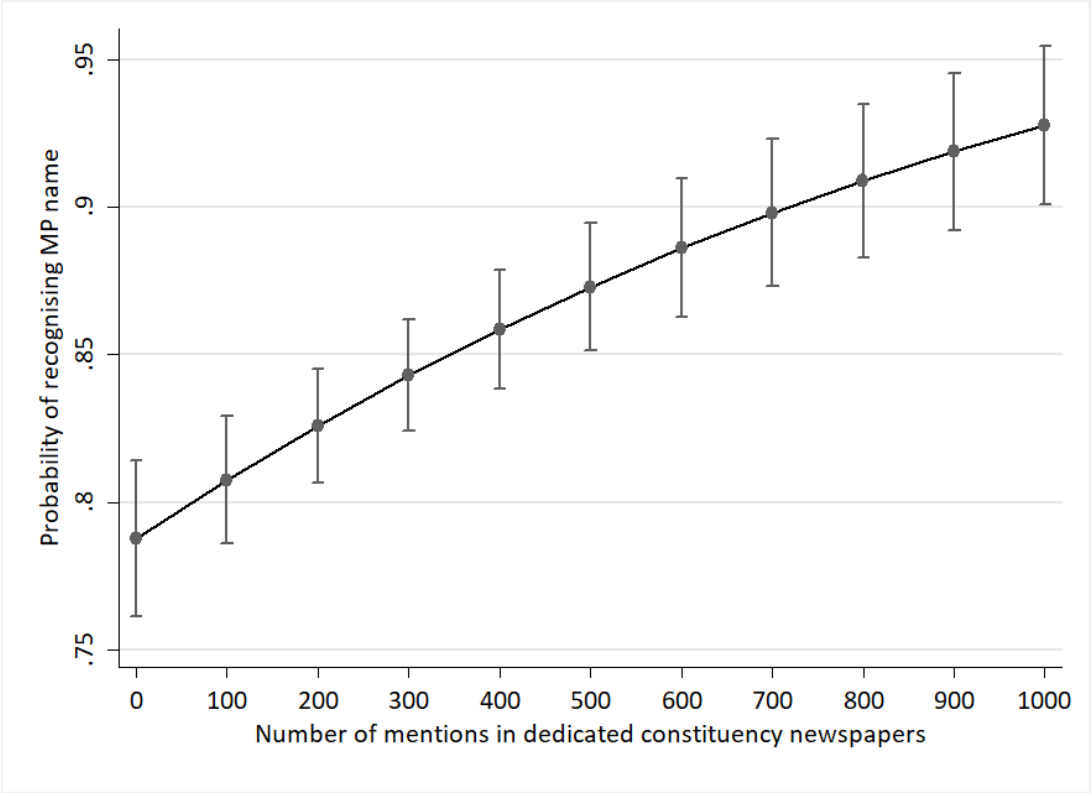
Moving from minimum to maximum increased the probability that a respondent could subsequently recognize the MP's name by around seven percentage points. This is especially notable given that those who did not initially recognize their MP are a group especially low in political attention, who discuss politics rarely and know little about it, and who have other demographic qualities associated with non-engagement (such as being younger). They might, conceivably, be thought of as those hardest for MPs to reach. This finding is, in this light, a reasonably compelling one.

Figure 3-4. Predicted probability of learning MP name between W1-W3 given level of spending on surgery advertisements.

Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted probability.

The next model concerns the effect of an MP's presence in the local media. Based on the results shown in Table 3-4 (column 3), we may reject the null for Hypothesis 2. The more that MPs are quoted in the local newspapers, the more that they are recognized by constituents. The effect is highly significant ($p<0.001$).[17] A shift from minimum (zero) to maximum (985) thus results in a roughly fourteen percentage point increase in name recognition, as can be observed in Figure 3-5. It should also be noted that the effect of local media quotations is a great deal larger than that of national media quotations (although both are highly significant).

Figure 3-5. Predicted probability of name recognition by number of local media quotations.



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted probability.

A further piece of evidence that supports H2 is that, as expected, the effect of MPs' appearances in the local media is stronger for local newspaper readers than those

[17] As an alternative to multilevel models, as an additional test of robustness, I specify models with standard errors clustered on the 'newspaper combinations' variable. The effect of newspaper quotations remained significant ($p<0.05$).

who read national newspapers or no newspapers at all. The effect is significant at the p<.05 level.[18] This supports Hypothesis 3, and is observed in Table 3-5/Figure 3-6.

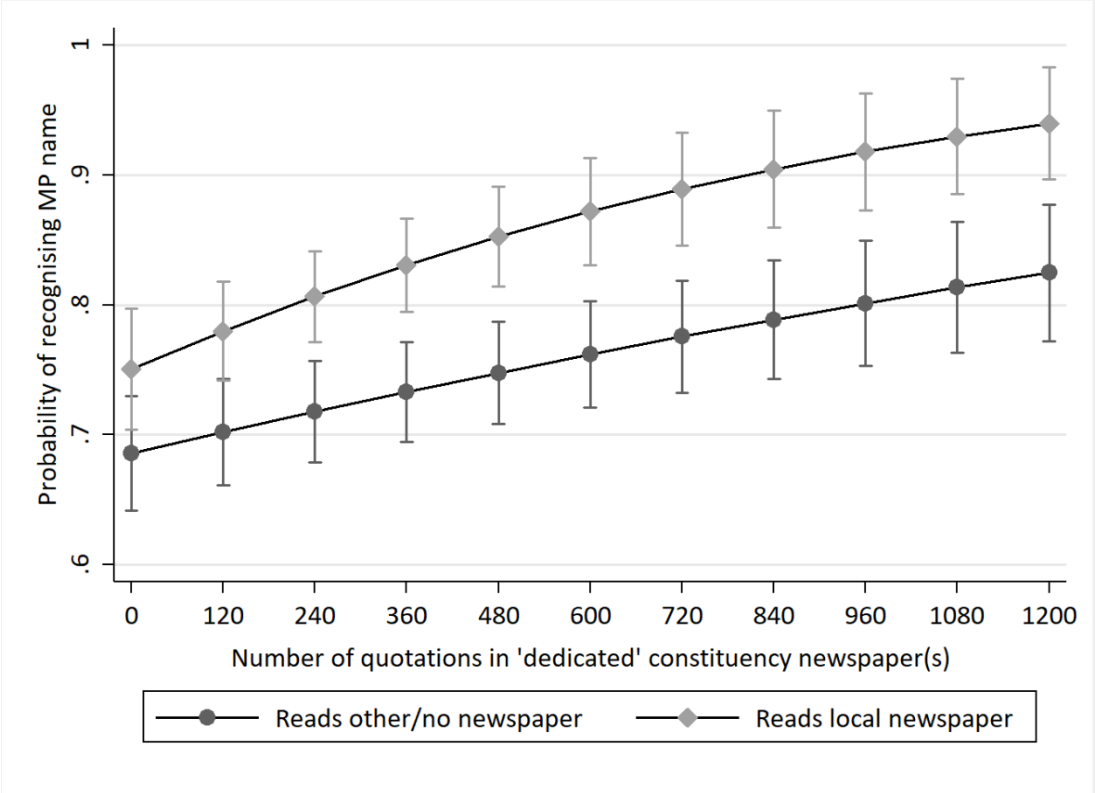
Table 3-5. Moderation models of the quotation effect

	[4]: recognized MP name
Comms: newspaper quotes (10s)	.013*** (.002)
National newspaper quotes (10s)	.001** (.000)
Newspaper readership: (base: national/none)	
Local	.368*** (.094)
Newspaper readership * quotes (base: national/none)	
Local	.010* (.005)
MP/Const. characteristics	
Seniority	.024*** (.003)
Majority	-.014*** (.002)
2010 campaign spending	.001 (.001)
Population density	-.004* (.002)
MP: female	.029 (.057)
MP: BME	.214 (.143)
Individual characteristics:	
Age	.040*** (.001)
Respondent: female	.038 (.044)
Level of education	
GCSEs	.485*** (.079)
A-levels	.704*** (.085)
University	.931*** (.080)
Political attention	.172*** (.011)
Days discussed politics	.101*** (.011)
Political knowledge scale (base: 3/3)	
0/3	-.965*** (.081)
1/3	-.693*** (.077)
2/3	-.315*** (.050)
N (observations)	16,946
N (respondents)	6,434
Level-2 unit	Newspaper combinations
N (L2 units)	62
Log-likelihood	-7653.69
AIC	15351.37
BIC	15521.61

** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

[18] Unfortunately, no existing statistical package can apply the more robust test for logit interactions recommended by Norton et al (2004) – which I do utilise in Chapter 5 - to multilevel models. However, this affects statistical significance in a small minority of cases and Sommet and Morselli (2017) suggest that for multilevel models the significance of the product term is generally appropriate.

Figure 3-6. Effect of newspaper quotations by respondent newspaper readership.



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted probability. Local newspapers= 'other local daily morning newspaper', 'The Western Mail' and 'The Herald (Glasgow)'.

Readers should note that 'Profile variables are collected at intervals determined by YouGov and therefore should not be assumed to be measured at the time of a wave'(Fieldhouse *et al*, 2016).

Taken together, the above findings are a clear illustration of the MP's ability to enhance their profile among their constituents. Even among low interest and engagement voters, they can make headway. If it is accurate that MPs are unknown to a great many of their constituents - and that the problem is worsening – the findings above point to relatively achievable means of redress.

Nonetheless, thus far, this has been looked at in a relatively narrow sense. While name recognition is of independent interest, the theory outlined above suggests that it may, in itself, have positive effects from the point of view of perceived representation. In Part III, I will assess whether this is indeed the case.

Part III: the effect of constituent awareness on MP evaluations

Data and method

In Part III, I aim to assess the effect of whether respondents know their MP on how they feel about them, testing two hypotheses (H4 and H5). Here, I discuss the methodological choices involved.

Confronting endogeneity

Establishing causality is a particular concern here. It is, at least, plausible that the causal direction is the opposite to that posited in the hypotheses: i. e., people tend to learn about their MP's identity if they are well-disposed towards them. In the advertising literature, studies suggest (e. g. Kennedy, 1998) that liked advertisements lead to greater attention and consequently better recall. Likewise, when constituents are exposed to their MPs in between waves, their prior attitude might cause them to either pay attention or ignore the MP in such a way that some stand a greater chance of committing information about the MP to memory, to be recalled at a later time.

As such, I also specify a cross-lagged panel model (CLPM). This provides a single, simultaneous estimation for the effects of trust at t-1 on knowing the MP at time T; and vice versa, enabling the comparison of statistical significance for the pathways.

Because each variable is very different in nature (one being binary, the other ordinal), it is not clear whether comparing the strength of effect sizes (Bentler and Speckart, 1981, Newsom, 2015) will lead to valid causal inference. As such, what can be 'proven' here is limited: this analysis cannot, for instance, show that knowing one's MP has a larger effect on trust than the other way around. Rather, the aim is more minimal: to assess whether there is a statistically significant effect of knowing on trusting, and to thus ascertain that the relationship is not merely one of reverse causality. Full details of the model specification, results and interpretation are outlined in Appendix B. However, there are certain variables that are potentially important to the avoidance of omitted variable bias, but that only have measurements in a single BES wave, and as such cannot be included in the panel model. As such, there is added

value to the cross-sectional analysis, despite its lesser potential for the avoidance of endogeneity.

Control variables

Two principle risks stand out. For one, awareness of the MP and satisfaction with MPs are both likely to be related to how engaged people are more generally with the system.[19] Banducci and Karp (2003) show that taking an interest in political campaigns and paying attention to national media can increase 'system support', including improving views on whether MPs are 'in touch'. The BES measure utilised here refers to how much attention the respondent claims they 'generally' pay to politics, on a scale of zero to ten. However, engagement is not unidimensional, and cannot be fully captured by attention alone. Since, in the models above, political discussion and wider political knowledge also predict name recall, I include these in the models as a more comprehensive test of the relationship.

The second possibility that poses a risk for the analysis is the potential for both trust in local MPs and name recall of MPs to be biased by partisanship or feelings towards parties. It is well established in the literature that a particularly powerful determinant of satisfaction with representatives is partisanship: specifically, the match or mismatch with one's representative (Lawless 2004; Ripley et al 1992, Tate 2001, Jacobsen 2006). I create a binary yes/no variable for whether the respondent correctly identified the MP's party, and a categorical variable for the relationship between the respondent's own party identification and the party they thought the MP represented. Respondents who thought their MP represented the party they supported were classified as 'matching'; those who thought their MP supported a different party to them were defined as 'clashing'. Two further categories were created for respondents with no party identification and those who did not offer a guess of which party the MP supported. This also addresses the concern that effects could

[19] Indeed, this is partially borne out in Part 2, where political attention is a strong and significant predictor of name recall and recognition.

be driven by *party* recognition, in that those who know their MP's name might also be those who know their political party.

Furthermore, I control for whether the respondent had been in contact with their MP, which predicted name recall of MPs in Cain *et al* (1984). Finally, I include a variable measuring trust in MPs in general. The persistence of a relationship between name recall and perceived representation in the presence of this factor will be an especially strong indication of the robustness of this relationship.

Since my intention is to create a conservative test of the hypothesis, I also carry over several of the variables from the name recognition and recall models where a relationship to MP satisfaction is also plausible: even where existing literature and theory offers little in the way of guidance. In particular, this applies to several of the MP-related and constituency-related characteristics where there was a relationship to the dependent variable in one or more of the models in Part 2. In relation to MPs themselves, I control for gender, race, and seniority. In relation to MPs' constituencies, I control for population density and size of majority.

The effect of constituent awareness on MP evaluations: results

Does the MP's profile matter? I assess the importance of knowing the name of the MP to public perceptions at the individual level. I provide two tests of this relationship. In the first, I utilise cross-lagged regression to provide greater reassurance concerning the causal direction. In the second, I utilise data from a later, pre-campaign wave, which allows for the inclusion of a wider range of variables which serve to dismiss possibilities of spuriousness. Furthermore, this allows me to test whether, and to what extent, updating of views based on knowing the MP depends on shared partisanship.

As concerns the cross-lagged models, it is clear that – accounting for time-variant and time-invariant controls, as well as auto-regressive relationships – there are highly significant cross-lagged effects between perceived representation and knowing the MP (these were also confirmed by Wald tests). This provides some evidence that the

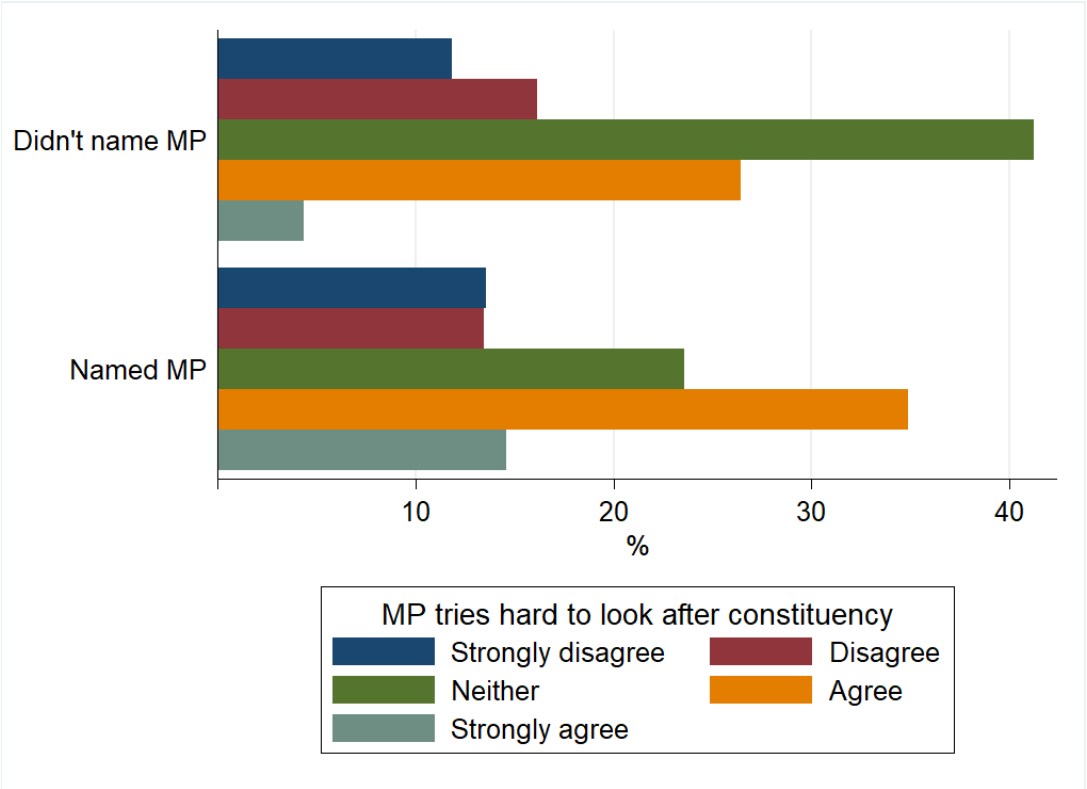
effect of knowing the MP is not merely an artefact of cross-sectional analysis. As such, we can conduct cross-sectional analysis with some confidence that any endogeneity problems in the data are not fatal to correct inference. Full details of the results are available in Appendix B.

Finally, I present the results of the Wave Four models, which include controls for having contacted the MP, for knowing the MP's party, and for the match between one's own party identification and the perceived party identification of the MP. Table 3-6 presents the descriptive statistics. Figure 3-7 presents the bivariate relationship between name recall and MP evaluations.

Table 3-6. Descriptive statistics for Wave Four models (n=2,658)

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
MP tries hard to look after constituency	3.14	1.19	1	5
Knows MP's name	.66	.47	0	1

Figure 3-7. MP evaluations by name recall (n=2,658)



Two things stand out here. Those who named their MP are substantially more likely to display both positive and very positive evaluations of their MP's representation than those who did not. However, people who cannot name their MP are not necessarily more likely to be their detractors: rather, they display a strong sense of ambivalence, with more than forty percent selecting the neutral response. In spite of this, Figure 3-7 is strongly suggestive of a relationship between the two variables.

Table 3-7. Models of MP evaluations (MP tries hard to look after the constituency)

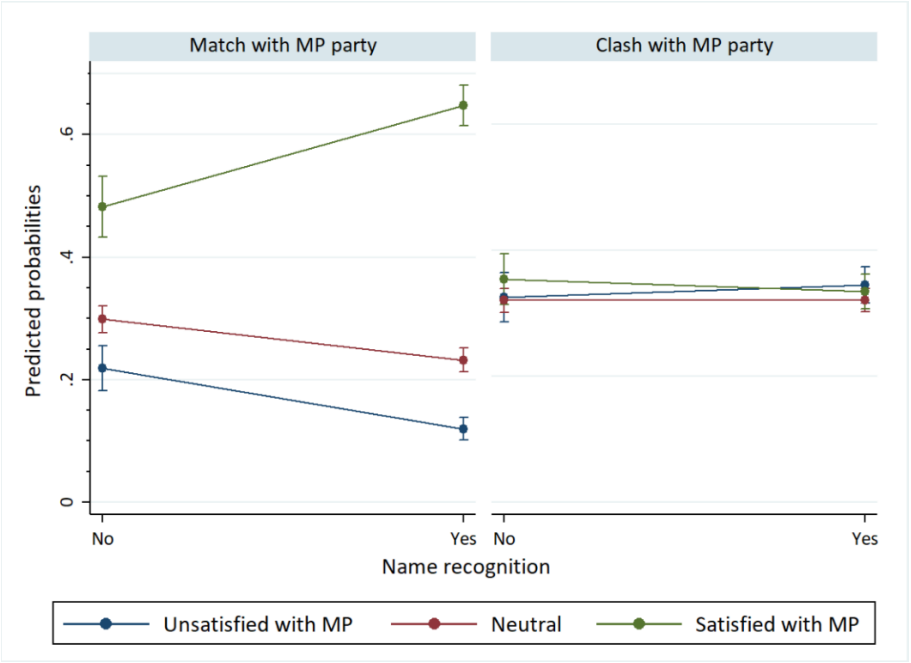
Model	[1]		[2]	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Knows MP's name	.269***	.082	.780***	.139
Match with MP's party (base: matching PiD)				
Clash with MP party	-.945***	.108	-.601***	.171
No party ID	-1.208***	.087	-.607***	.150
Didn't guess MP party	-.945***	.175	-.585***	.196
Knows MP's name # match with MP's party			-	-
Knows MP's name # clash with MP party			-.507*	.211
Knows MP's name # No party ID			-.880***	.180
Knows MP's name # Didn't guess MP party			-.762	.677
Gender: female	.319***	.073	.320***	.074
Age	.015***	.003	.015***	.003
Highest qualification				
GCSEs	.078	.139	.075	.139
A-levels	.146	.151	.155	.151
University	.200	.144	.199	.144
NS-SEC (base: routine)				
Intermediate	-.052	.109	-.079	.109
Managerial/professional	.009	.111	-.003	.111
Political attention (0-10)	-.024	.019	-.026	.019
Has contacted MP	.518***	.088	.525***	.088
Seniority	-.003	.004	-.003	.004
Minister/shadow minister	.135	.108	.144	.108
MP's majority	-.003	.003	-.003	.003
Trust MPs in general	.465***	.026	.465***	.026
N	*2,658*		*2,658*	

** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

Table 3-7 (column 1) reports the coefficients and statistical significance. The results here indicate that knowing the name of the MP is a highly significant predictor of feelings towards them. At this point – alongside the evidence from Appendix B that such a pathway exists in the panel data - it is possible to state that the evidence is consistent with H4: knowing the name of the MP is associated with satisfaction.

However, one final question remains: does knowing the name of the MP have the same impact on satisfaction for everyone? Or, alternatively, does it depend on how one's party identification matches that of the MP? In order to test this, I interact the name recall binary variable with the partisan match variable (based on the respondent's guess of which party the MP belonged to). Table 3-7 (column 2) offers some indication that the effect of knowing the MP's name does, indeed, depend on the nature of the partisan match, consistent with H5. For 'clashers', the negative effect of the interaction not only reduces the strength, but wipes out the positive effect of name recall. By combining predicted margins, Figure 3-8 plots the predicted probabilities of positive (4-5 on the 5-point scale), neutral (3) and negative responses (1-2) by name recognition for 'matchers' and 'clashers'.

Figure 3-8. MP evaluations (MP tries hard to look after the constituency) by name recognition, for 'matchers' and 'clashers'



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted probability.

In each model, controls largely produce the expected effects. In line with previous studies, the less educated tend to be more dissatisfied with their MPs, but older people tend to be more satisfied. There is a strikingly large effect of respondent's gender: women appear to be much more satisfied with local MPs than men are. As found by Cain *et al.* (1984), those who had had contact with their MPs expressed higher satisfaction with them on the whole (although on closer inspection, this occurred only amongst those who were satisfied with their MP's response to their enquiries). This analysis also finds no evidence that other MP or constituency-related factors appear to matter, such as seniority or electoral majority. Against expectations, political attention had no effect on trust.

Conclusion

Before reflecting on the results obtained above, it is worth offering some overview of the initial state of knowledge and understanding provided by the literature. This chapter has relied on three pillars of existing literature. Firstly, a literature around how representatives use their resources, which, in particular, takes a focus on the factors influencing MPs in terms of motivation and context. Secondly, a literature which evaluates constituent awareness of politicians operating locally – though often candidates rather than incumbent MPs. Thirdly, a literature assessing trust and satisfaction with local representatives in light of constituent awareness.

This research has identified specific limitations to each of these literatures. In terms of the determinants of resource use, quality studies do exist – in particular, Auel and Umit's recent (2018) study of use of the Communication Allowance in the late 2000s. However, the total revamp of the system in 2010 calls for further study: in particular, because reform was partially undertaken to limit electoral incentives to claim. In terms of constituent awareness, the literature is relatively slim, as noted by Giebler and Wessels (2017): for instance, in Britain, the determinants of knowing one's local MP were last studied by Cain et al (1984). Beyond its scarcity, this literature is frequently marked by a focus on party activity over member activity. Insofar as member activity is considered, existing studies have been reliant on self-report data of contact

with or exposure to MPs. While not intrinsically flawed, these studies cannot speak to the specific activities which result in constituent awareness, nor the volume of activity MPs would have to carry out to enhance their profile. Finally, evaluations of local representatives that account for public awareness are relatively rare and – for the British context – offer contradictory results. There is no understanding of who, specifically, does or does not adjust their evaluations when they become familiar with their MP. Furthermore, where constituent knowledge is modelled (e. g. Campbell 2019a) there is no apparent strategy for causal identification which, given the reverse causality risk, does hold some degree of importance.

However, equally as important as their individual issues is the absence of communication between these literatures. In resource usage, *effectiveness* is sometimes assumed to be a given. For instance, Auel and Umit state that 'communication [using resources] to signal trustworthiness is one way of securing that re-election'; similarly, although he is more doubtful that it has electoral effects, Negrine (2005) states that 'MPs are able to create sense of presence by regular appearances in the local press'.

In such a statement, there is a risk of being too quick to assign objective rationality to the pursuit of activities that may in fact be entirely *in*effective. This can only be judged with reference to outcomes as well as incentives. In prior studies of constituent awareness – as commented above – the MP's activity is an unknown quantity. Despite much comment about the activities that MPs take to enhance their profile (see, for instance, Lilleker 2005), there is no existing quantitative study that establishes the success of such activities, or its extent. In terms of the literature on MP evaluations, these have rarely, if ever, given consideration to the length of the causal chain and the mediating role that – as Campbell et al (2019a) argue - awareness might play in how MPs' activities translate into constituent evaluations.

This chapter has sought to deliver a synthesis, and its outcomes are both individually and collectively informative about constituency representation. The central insight, fundamentally, is that communication for MPs is valuable, affordable, and – in some ways – relatively simple. While some MPs may chafe under the limitations of the current expense regime, which forbids previous stalwarts such as the MP's newsletter, the evidence of this study is that even the limited repertoire available to MPs has

strong potential to enhance their link to constituents. While less true of using the local media, advertising surgeries and distributing contact cards are in many ways relatively simple tasks, insofar as they require no sophisticated grasp of messaging; no attractive policy offer; and no compelling catalogue of constituency service. Rather, they are extremely simple reminders of who the MP is, and where to find them.

By communicating more, they can inform or remind constituents of their identity. In turn, this may - so long as the constituent does not have a strong reason to oppose the MP, such as supporting another political party - translate into trust and a perception that the MP acts as a good constituency servant. In this sense, the evidence above – albeit limited – that MPs make little use of their resources is of concern, insofar as MPs are missing an opportunity to be perceived as good representatives. It must nonetheless be acknowledged that some of the effects found are of limited strength and sometimes only significant at the less restrictive thresholds. It must also be recognised that the results of the cross-lagged panel analysis do not entirely dispatch with endogeneity concerns in the relationship between awareness and trust: despite the existence of a pathway in the correct direction, in accordance with the theory proposed here, effects do cut both ways.

Constraints from within and without: why communication may fall short

Though this study has shown the plausible benefits, there are reasons to believe that certain factors are serving to limit the actual effect. For one, MPs are relatively restrained in their spending on communications. As discussed above, MPs claim for surgery advertising and contact cards out of the Office Costs budget, brought into existence in 2011. In theory, this forces MPs to make tough decisions about how spending should be allocated between tasks. In practice, only a handful of MPs come close to pushing the limits. Over the four years between the start of the Office Costs limit in 2011 and the end of the parliament in 2015, the average MP had 26% of their Office Costs allowance left over each year; or a sum of £24,000. By contrast, their

combined spending on advertising and contact cards, over the same period, had a mean of £1,754. Indeed, a large proportion of MPs (a full 178 of 632)[20] elected to spend nothing at all. In this regard, my findings closely echo those of Auel and Umit (2018), who show that MPs systematically underclaimed from the Communications Allowance.

Comparison to the reported data in Auel and Umit (2018), which concerns the 2007-10 period, also indicates that MPs as a whole may be spending less to advertise their surgeries. They find that, of the mean of £7133 claimed per year, 13% of expenditure under the Communications Allowance was used on 'advertising', which they define as surgery advertising and contact cards: thus, yearly expenditure on advertisements and cards had a mean of £927. In this study, I find an annual mean spend of just £428 – less than half, with further declines since, especially in contact card spending. Since contact card spending likely runs in tandem with MPs' ability to make direct contact with constituents, this may be a canary in the coal mine for the impact of forcing MPs to spend extra time in Westminster to work on Brexit legislation (BBC, 2019).

A degree of restraint over expenses may be important in restoring trust. Nonetheless, there are reasons to believe that communications spending specifically has public buy-in (Hansard Society, 2008), and that MPs are likely instead responding to media policing of expenses, as they evince concerns about attacks in the local press (National Audit Office 2011). If expenses are important, this side effect of the transparency agenda may have made some constituents feel more distant from their own MPs. A number of potential tweaks to IPSA releases have been suggested to disclose the same information without spurring sensationalism, yet these have not been pursued further. In the Conclusion, I discuss the modest policy fixes possible in this area.

The alternative concern is how far the decline of local media reduces the effectiveness of communications: including that of surgery advertising, which heavily uses local media. Local newspapers are closing at an alarming rate, with more than half of constituencies already unserved by a 'dedicated' daily local newspaper. Further, where local media hangs on, it may be providing less political news coverage. Hayes

[20] The spending of the 18 Northern Irish MPs is not considered here.

and Lawless (2018) give reason to believe that this matters for engagement: people know less and participate less where newspapers close. This has not gone unnoticed in Westminster: for instance, the Cairncross Review considered the impact on local democratic engagement. However, Cairncross, influenced by prior work, was more interested in councils than the constituency link, and its recommendations address the former concern, ignoring the latter. I expand on this issue in the Conclusion.

By using their available resources to communicate with constituents, this research indicates that MPs can raise awareness of their identity which may, in turn, serve to enhance constituent trust. While a cautious scepticism is still in order – no direct connection to trust can be proven here – there is cause for optimism regarding the value of reaching out to constituents. This leaves important questions about how institutions can sustain engagement with MPs at the local level, as I build on in the Conclusion. More immediately, however my focus turns to another substantive empirical question about the sources of perceived local representation in the here-and-now. This chapter has provided evidence that *whether people hear* from their MPs is important. However, does it matter *what people hear:* what message MPs send to constituents about how they represent them? I investigate this in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Champions in the chamber: constituency focus and constituent perceptions of local representation by MPs

Introduction

In a 2009 Hansard Society *Audit of Political Engagement* survey, from a list of ten options, the single most important activity people thought that MPs had to perform was 'Representing the views of local people in the House of Commons': nearly one in two chose it, beating out other critical aspects of their role, such as 'representing the national interest'. The notion of constituency focus in the Westminster system has loomed large, both in public expectations of MPs, and in the self-concept of the country's political class. While its importance has ebbed and flowed, an understanding has persisted since the earliest days of Parliament in England that its role is to enable 'the redress of grievances' held by constituents both as individuals and as a collective (Searing, 1985: 350). Crewe (2015: 83-110) highlights the extraordinary efforts that some MPs go to in Parliament in order to prove themselves as 'good constituency members', and over the years MPs have learned to exploit virtually every kind of Parliamentary activity to the goal of enhancing their local standing. Even so, the difference this has made is far from certain. In the same 2009 Hansard Society survey, just one in ten people said that representing local people in the House was something MPs made a priority. Thus, there is some reason to doubt that constituents notice their MPs' activities at all. What effect, if any, does an MP's constituency focus have on how people perceive their local representatives?

This question is highly pertinent because of the substantial turn towards a constituency focus among MPs: this is especially well documented for this chapter's specific case of Britain. This has occurred in response to both growing demand and supply.

Searing (1985) identifies the expansion and nationalisation of the post-war welfare state as a key factor in increasing demand: citizens' encounters with the state became more frequent, sometimes more complicated, and the fact that services were often organised at the national level meant it made sense to refer issues to MPs, who could have an influence at that level. The supply-side factor, identified by Zittel (2017) and others, is that MPs, observing the gradual 'dealignment' of British politics, saw that they could rely less on voting blocs, and felt increasingly incentivised to build a personal vote through working on behalf of the constituency. To these accounts, we might add a trend towards Parliament facilitating the discussion of constituency concerns. In 2010, the Wright Committee reforms created a Backbench Business Committee: constituency relevance is a criterion for selecting proposed business (Kelly, 2015).

In this chapter, I reassess the efficacy of constituency representation. As with the previous chapter, I also hope to be specific in what activities make a difference. In so doing, I refocus somewhat from the activities that are usually centred in the accounts of MPs' activity in the British context. Discussion of constituency-focused activity, whether it affirms or, more frequently, denies its importance to the attitudes and behaviour of the mass public, tend to be based around constituency casework, time in the constituency and so on. Data of this type has been collected for several decades, and though it poses certain challenges in its own right – such as access to MPs – it has also involved small, manageable datasets collected inexpensively.

Less well understood is the importance of 'speaking for the constituency as a whole', which Gay (2018: 274) states is something that 'many MPs consider… to be their most important job', and as Judge (2014) notes is built into the most basic conventions of the House, as MPs address each other by the names of the constituencies which they represent. MPs engage frequently in this form of advocacy, and take pleasure in it, which Gay (2018: 275) states 'gives MPs autonomy in contrast to a perceived 'lobby fodder' role in the formal Westminster environment', but also allows them to avoid 'incurring anyone's displeasure' by raising the issues of national controversy. Given how common this activity is, exploring its effects is an important contribution of this chapter. Yet it is natural that the impact of Parliamentary work is, as yet, poorly

understood. It is only relatively recently that the masses of Parliamentary data have been supplied digitally, and that analysts have had the tools to manipulate and connect it to public opinion surveys.[21] This study exploits these important data sources to explore how constituency-focused Parliamentary activity affects public perceptions.

In this chapter, I will first examine the fundamental trade-off MPs make between a constituency focus and a national focus, and the evidence as to how MPs choose. I will then explore public preferences towards local representation on the part of MPs. I subsequently examine the general matter of whether and how MPs activities can affect public perceptions, considering the enabling role of citizen 'competence'. I then interrogate how MPs' constituency focus can be discerned through their Parliamentary activity, theorising the meaning of this activity in terms of a 'representative claim' and advancing my own approach to produce measures of constituency focus. After validating this measure against certain criteria, I assess the actual impact of constituency focus in the MP's Parliamentary activity on how they are perceived by constituents and analyze how important name recognition is to the effect of their activity.

Literature review and theory

What is constituency focus? The trade-off in theory and practice

Constituency focus is relatively simple to define conceptually, though its alignment with practice is more complicated. As Deschouwer *et al.* put it (2014: 12), 'The focus of representation defines whom MPs represent or should represent: the electorate as a whole or a part of it'. Constituency focus merely denotes the extent to which MPs represent constituents above and beyond other possible groups. In the British literature, the topic of constituency focus has largely been approached through inquiries into MPs' role selection (Searing, 1994). Searing's typology, built through both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, identifies four roles backbenchers

[21] For instance, They Work For You (https://www.theyworkforyou.com) has existed since 2006.

take on: Policy Advocates, Ministerial Aspirants, Parliament Men and Constituency Members. The latter, he argued, were clearly identifiable through several characteristics: an orientation towards the local and away from the national, a sense of duty to constituents, and feeling competent through constituency service and advocacy. However, in recent years, scholarship has moved towards MPs' role definitions as being less clear-cut and more fluid (Rush and Giddings, 2011).

This shift is consistent with more recent empirical work on representational focus. Although MPs may have some underlying preference over 'focus', we may assume they want to represent several 'principals' at once. For instance, in the PARTIREP survey of Westminster MPs, they gave high scores to the importance of representing 'all people', their party, their own voters, and the constituency (Dudzińska *et al.,* 2014). The simple practicalities of political life, however, force them to emphasise some over others. For instance, limitations on resources may force representatives into choices. In the United States, representatives are typically forced to keep a full-time staff in their districts and Washington D.C. but have limited budgets. Studies have thus sought to access constituency focus through how the representative splits staffing between home and capital (Bond, 1985; Fenno, 1978; Fiorina and Rivers, 1989).

However, the most fundamental resource of MPs is time. This emerges particularly in Parliamentary debates, where, as Killermann and Proksch (2013: 7) argue, there is a fundamental trade-off between using one's time to participate in 'government-opposition debate' and as constituency representation. This trade-off is, however, not merely automatic, but part of an MP's calculus in deciding what to say in the House: Crewe (2015) finds that in practice, raising local issues is often a means to actively *avoid* issues of national controversy. This basic insight contributes to my choice of the parliamentary record as the raw material for discerning MPs' focus, building on other work about constituency focus (Soroka *et al.*, 2009; Blidook and Kerby, 2011; Martin, 2011; Kellermann, 2016; Bulut and Ilter, 2018.)

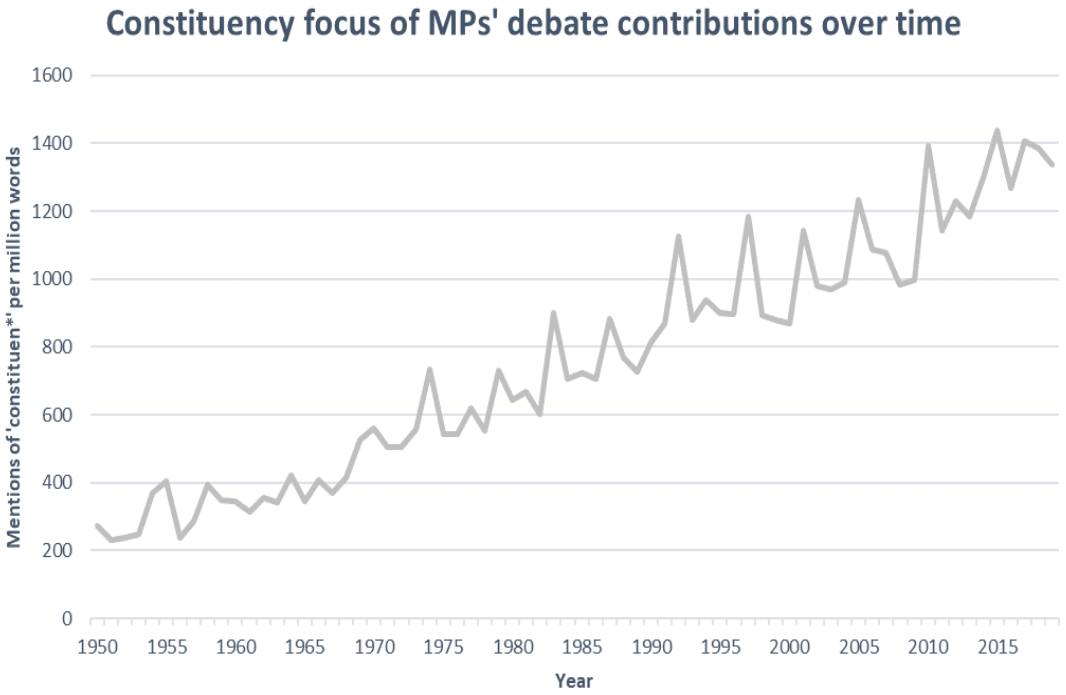
Evidence of constituency focus among Westminster MPs

Given that MPs must make this trade-off, how 'constituency-focused' do Westminster MPs tend to be? In relative terms, this can be assessed through international surveys of MPs, such as PARTIREP and the Comparative Candidates Survey. These generally ask respondents about both their subjective focus on the constituency and how they allocate time between constituency and the legislature. André *et al.* (2015) compare 14 advanced industrial democracies, finding that Westminster's national legislators are near the middle in time spent in the district. Similarly, Dudzińska *et al.* (2014) and Heitshusen *et al.* (2005) find that UK MPs claim to give constituency their highest priority, though they are unexceptional compared to other nations.

By contrast, André *et al.* (2014) found that UK MPs more clearly stood out in being constituency oriented. Two findings support this. UK MPs were much more likely to say they performed one or more of four constituency activities regularly, especially constituency surgeries. PARTIREP asked MPs to rank their top two of four tasks, two of which were non-constituency, and two of which were ('providing assistance to individual voters…' and looking after the area's 'social and economic needs'). UK MPs were much more likely to select either of the constituency-focused tasks than the international average. However, they were only distinctive in how much they embraced a 'welfare officer' role (helping individuals) and were more average in how often they adopted a 'local promoter' role (representing the constituency as a whole). UK MPs, then, render constituency service at regular intervals and are broadly constituency-focused. However, they are more exceptional in their service efforts than in their advocacy for the whole constituency.

MPs' constituency focus is not static, however: it is generally understood that constituency service has grown greatly over time. Before the 1970s, Norton and Wood (1990: 197) claim that many MPs visited their constituencies just once a year, while; Searing identified only 25% of backbenchers as 'Constituency Members'. However, service grew decidedly over the 1970s-80s (Norris, 1997), and this growth has not abated (Judge and Partos, 2018, p. 268). In terms of their Parliamentary work, this trend is replicated. MPs spoke more and more about their constituency over the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st, as Figure 4-1 shows, with a huge increase in the relative frequency of all MPs mentioning constituency or constituent(s).

Figure 4-1. Constituency focus of all MPs' debate contributions, 1950-2019 (words beginning constituen in Hansard per million words by year)*



Source: Hansard At Huddersfield.

MPs are, then, increasingly adopting a constituency focus. Yet the extent of adoption is not uniform. André *et al.* (2015) suggest that variation within Parliaments is more significant than variation between them, finding large differences in time-in-constituency among UK MPs. This is supported by André *et al.* (2014), who find in PARTIREP that only one-quarter of the variance in constituency focus can be explained at country and party levels, implying that a large majority of variance is between individuals.

The variation in the focus of activity, however, should matter to perceptions only if constituents *expect* local focus in their representatives. This has often been in dispute in the literature, as is discussed in the following section.

Public preferences for constituency focus

As Carman (2006, p. 103) argues, research has often neglected 'how the general public views the representational relationship they share with their parliamentarians', although interest has expanded since his time of writing. In the 1980s, it was an open

question whether constituents had 'clearly defined expectations' around legislators' roles (Jewell, 1985, p. 104), yet today, at a minimum, a body of literature supports the idea that 'individuals… have meaningful preferences' about 'legislators' district vs. national focus' (André and Depauw, 2018, p. 332). But which way does this preference fall, and are there particular kinds of activity that people prioritise?

Some research supports the idea that constituents prioritise the nation as a whole over constituency. The case here rests mainly on the descriptive analysis of survey data, where people rank priorities from a list of possible representative foci (or activities aligning closely to those foci). A 1990 survey analysed by Krasno (1994) found that casework for individual constituents and securing funds for the Congressional or Senate district were ranked lower priority than working on national legislation. Lapinski *et al* (2016) show that when people consider a Congressperson's job, work on local issues, bringing money to the district ('pork') and constituency service are given lesser priority than work on national issues. The authors argued that 'most voters assume that any member will perform… constituency service' but 'only one party will actually represent them on the issues'. Other questions – where there was some implied conflict between representing the constituency and the nation – revealed even broader support for national focus (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1995: 64). Other studies suggest that the national focus may prevail outside of the US, such as von Schoultz and Wass's study of Finns (2016).

Yet a variety of studies counter this argument, both by critiquing the methodology of prior research and by advancing new evidence. For instance, Grant and Rudolph (2004, p. 434) suggested that 'Constituents are not only concerned about pork-barrel projects' but also 'local policy concerns', which had not been addressed by previous survey questions. When respondents were also asked whether MCs should 'Work on bills concerning local issues', they found that a constituency focus was clearly preferred. Using survey experiments, Doherty (2013) mounts another critique, arguing that while people's *stated* preference is often for national focus, their *revealed* preference is different, finding (p. 239) that 'people evaluate legislators who prioritize district preferences… significantly more favorably'. Evidence from Europe also supports the notion of preference for local focus (Bengtsson and Wass, 2011; André *et*

al., 2017). British-specific evidence shows the general public expect MPs to split their time 60:40 towards constituency work (Vivyan and Wagner, 2015). In a survey fielded both among the public and among MPs, Campbell and Lovenduski (2015) also find that there is a substantial tendency towards preferring constituency-focused activity: this was stronger among the public than among MPs, although not by much.

However, an important source of data for Britain has remained largely untapped. The 7th *Audit of Political Engagement* asked respondents to identify, from a list of ten, two or three of 'the most important ways that MPs should spend their time'. Because of the range of options given, we can identify the specific ways that people think focus should manifest in an MP's activities. In a separate question, it also asked respondents how they thought MPs actually *did* spend their time. Thus, we can also judge whether MPs are seen to be insufficient in carrying out locally-focused activities.

People were equally likely to select at least one local-focused (73%) as to select at least one national-focused item (77%). There is thus not clear evidence of preference for local focus. However, the single most prioritized activity, named by nearly one in two respondents, was for 'representing the views of local people in the House of Commons'. Moreover, this was the issue where expectation fell furthest short of (perceived) reality: just 10% of people said it was something MPs prioritized, a gap of 36 percentage points. This was not because people thought MPs were shirking Parliamentary work full stop: 22% thought MPs prioritized 'debating important issues' in the House of Commons.

In Table 4-1, I show results for locally-focused activities specifically. While the survey asked about constituency 'representation', it also asked about the priority given to conventional 'service' tasks: dealing with constituents' problems, attending local events, and communicating with locals one-on-one. The *Audit* finds many more people (24%) thought that MPs prioritized one or more constituency service tasks than thought they prioritized constituency representation in the House: the sense of underperformance lies less with service and more with local representation more broadly.

Table 4-1. Public priorities vs public's perception of MPs' priorities.

Activity type	Activity	*Should be* top priority	*Is* top priority	Gap	One or more activities of this type *should be* top priority	One or more activities of this type *is* top priority	Gap
Constituency representation	Representing the views of local people in the House of Commons	46	10	-36			-36
Constituency service	Dealing with the problems of individual constituents	26	13	-13	48	24	-24
	Participating in local public meetings and events	20	11	-9			
	Communicating with constituents on the doorstep or by telephone	14	3	-11			

Source: Hansard Society (2010), *Audit of Political Engagement* 7.

This is important for three reasons. First, it is a further justification for studying Parliamentary activity: not only is it a very common public expectation, but it is also one that the public do not believe is generally made a priority. Second, as discussed above, prior evidence indicates that MPs are more devoted to constituency 'service' than to constituency advocacy: these findings about public attitudes may reflect this tendency. Third, Lapinski *et al* (2016) suggests that constituency-focused activities hardly improve public perceptions in the US because people expect they would be undertaken by any representative: an MC who engages in them does not mark themselves out. By contrast, people in the UK think MPs do not focus on their constituencies, and therefore an MP who does appear to make these efforts may leave a great impression on locals.

While there is evidence both for and against the idea that people prefer local focus, there is both a greater *volume* and more *types* of evidence suggesting that the median constituent will prefer to see a local focus in their representatives, while the studies dissenting from this opinion often have significant limitations.

Can constituency focus improve attitudes? The objection from complexity

Given that people prefer constituency focus, does it follow that where MPs do choose this focus, it should be beneficial for perceptions of MPs? At this point, a fundamental objection can be levied: just because an MP can choose to represent 'constituency' over 'nation' does not mean that they can represent for 'constituency' in a satisfying way. The principal concern here is with the complexities of any given constituency in the real world. As Judge argues, when the concept of 'constituency' is interrogated, it collapses into a set of diverse and often conflicted groups, rather than any singular 'community interest' or 'local identity' (Judge, 2014). In line with this, the evidence indeed suggests that people experience little attachment to their constituency: in a 2010 BES survey (Whiteley and Sanders, 2011), just 37% stated that they had 'fairly' or 'very' strong attachment to their constituency, as opposed to 73% for their neighbourhood.

Others stress how 'constituency representation' is plagued by practical problems relating to these complexities. As Crewe (2015, p. 107) states, a local MP 'has to respond to endless requests from constituents, whips, interest groups, local supporters, as well as proactively find out what they think and need, without having enough time to do justice to any of these demands… The better you represent, the more you sink under the weight of many voices'. The practical business of constituency representation, then, is choosing which to filter out and, ultimately, silence: even where MPs exhibit 'focus' by choosing the constituency as their priority. 'Constituency representation' – in the sense of representing the constituency as a whole - is thus a fiction, both in theory (Judge) and practice (Crewe). For Judge, in particular, this partially explains the 'democratic incongruity' between the diligence of MPs in discharging their constituency role and public dissatisfaction. However, this claim about public opinion is based on aggregate-level dissatisfaction, which can still exist where MPs satisfy constituents at a local level. In the next section, I assess how far

the existing literature can inform us about the likely impact of MPs exhibiting 'constituency focus' on their constituents.

Whether – and how – what MPs do matters to the general public

In this section, I consider how far the existing literature indicates a relationship between local MPs' activities and public perceptions. I first consider the field of research assessing how constituents respond to generalised legislative 'effort' expended by the MP. I then discuss the literature connecting constituency-focused legislative activity, public views of MPs, and the 'personal vote'. I finally assess prior work exploring the relevant mechanisms, asking what role there may be of citizen competence in the connection between members' activities and constituents' perceptions.

The link between generalised 'effort' and constituent perceptions is the best evidenced research question in this area, and the only one with a dedicated British literature (Bowler, 2010; Kellerman, 2013). Bowler considers the impact of Private Members' Bills (PMBs) on approval of MPs and vote share, finding a positive association, while Kellerman (p. 264) shows the same for Early Day Motions (EDMs); both suggest that this is explained by increased media visibility. Importantly, however, other forms of MPs' activity are not controlled for in either study, so each are appropriately cautious about what really drives the effect. In alternative national contexts, a creative research design claims to overcome this issue, taking advantage of the lottery system for proposing PMBs (Loewen *et al.,* 2014; Williams and Indridason, 2018). Thus, in theory, the hidden third variables that may explain a relationship between an activity and election outcomes do not apply. Both studies find a clear electoral advantage for those members who propose legislation, explained by their higher 'likeability' among constituents.

However, none of these activities are *necessarily* 'constituency-focused'. In the U.S. context, some studies indicate that these specific kinds of activities do matter. Grant and Rudolph (2004) find that an original measure of 'constituency focus' of U.S. House Members is associated with positive evaluations of the member. However,

Grant and Rudolph's measure of 'constituency focus' collapses indicators associated with traditional 'constituency service' together with indicators of representation of the constituency within the legislature, producing a single index, even though not all these measures are particularly highly correlated. We thus remain in some doubt which activities truly matter to constituents.

Greater specificity is provided by Box-Steffensmeier *et al.* (2003), who measure constituency focus by considering bills a House incumbent sponsored in a given two-year period. Classifying some bills as addressing local needs, they calculate the percentage of 'local' bills out of all bills introduced by a given member, finding mixed results for the effects of this across different dependent variables (such as whether the respondent could offer a reason for liking the incumbent). Their method is problematic, however, in that the focus measure is calculated from an infrequent activity. The median House member introduced just ten bills in the 1993-4 House, and just one 'local' bill: a large proportion of MCs introduced *zero* local bills and thus have zero local focus. It is implausible that there is absolutely no variance in the constituency orientation of so many MCs, as this measure would claim: using more frequent activities is important to establishing sufficient variance in focus.

Outside of the U.S. context, the sole analysis of the effects of the constituency focus of Parliamentary activities has been conducted by Chiru (2018), who considers the impact of the number of constituency-focused questions in Hungary and Romania. Chiru finds a positive effect on the personal vote for the latter nation, but no effect for 'parliamentary activity' more generally, implying that constituency-focused efforts do more for the reputation of the representative.

A significant limitation of this literature, for the purposes pursued here, is that the evidence for the link often rests on electoral effects rather than survey data on perceptions of incumbents. This can be problematic because there is an important *indirect* route by which incumbents' activities can improve their fortunes. In the US, incumbents with reputations for being hard-working, constituency-focused and for having 'personal votes' may ward off 'high quality' challengers, (Cox and Katz, 1996; Stone *et al.*, 2004), and tend to win when facing weak challengers (Hogan, 2004). As such, the electoral effects of activities (constituency-focused or otherwise) need not

run through positive perceptions from constituents, and studies demonstrating electoral effects are not hard evidence of the phenomenon considered here.

However, this criticism does not apply in open list proportional representation systems, where candidates receive 'preferential votes' despite contesting the same district and having the same challengers. For Slovakia, Crisp *et al.* (2013) and for Belgium, Däubler *et al.* (2016) show that the number of bills sponsored is positively associated with incumbent preferential votes. The effects of specifically *constituency-focused* activity have not been assessed in such systems, although Martin (2010) finds that Irish Teachta Dálas who in surveys *claim* a local focus and to spend more time on local matters are rewarded with more preferential votes. Thus, the effects of activity might indeed run through more favourable constituent evaluations.

Activity and perception: a simple theory

Given the above, we can set out some relatively strong prior considerations. British MPs often have a constituency focus, and this is reflected in their activities, including their Parliamentary work: however, there is a large degree of variance between MPs. The public generally expect MPs should be constituency-focused: in particular, they expect to see constituency focus in the MP's Parliamentary work (more so than through service). Finally, MPs' efforts are generally rewarded by constituents with more positive evaluations and often with a 'personal vote', and studies suggest that constituency-focused activity may be of particular importance. Considering this, I propose H1a:

H1a: *As the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity increases, constituents' perceptions of the MP's constituency focus increase.*

However, this DV only tells us so much. Respondents might plausibly evaluate MPs as more constituency focused than they are nationally focused, but this says nothing about the overall *valence* of their perceptions. I therefore consider the effect that constituency-focused activity has on *trust* in the local MP.

H1b: *As the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity increases, constituents' trust in the MP* increases.

The role of constituents' 'competence'

It is generally recognized that some level of citizen competence is required for people to connect MPs' activities and their perceptions of the MP. Some, such as Arnold (1993, p. 405) contend that the required competence is not at all common. Loewen *et al.* (2014, p. 190) state that 'only the most attentive voters are aware of representatives' efforts': a view supported by Stein and Bickers (1994), who find that only 16% of Americans could recall 'something special' achieved by one's representative, and that self-reported political knowledge was the strongest predictor. Data from YouGov (2013) suggests a similar picture among the British public: just 16% stated that they knew 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' about what their member of Parliament did in Westminster.

However, this view may be excessively pessimistic. For one, it is not easily consonant with the volume of literature suggesting that activities do have an effect, although it does not necessarily entirely contradict it. Secondly, the public may not recall specifics, but may nevertheless have a *sense* for their representative's activity level and profile. In the same YouGov survey, only one in three said that they knew 'nothing at all' about their MP's activities in Westminster: the modal response was 'not a lot'. Thirdly, it is possible that more minimal forms of competence enable activity to have an effect. Norris (2002) has argued that name recognition plays an important role in enabling constituents to evaluate their representative, and respond to new information they encounter about them. One such form of information is what MPs are (observably) doing: therefore, for both François and Navarro (2018) and Chiru (2018), the electoral reward for activity depends on the condition 'that the voters know who their representatives are'. For instance, if MPs' activities matter because they earn media coverage for the representative, then knowing that who one is hearing or reading about is the local member may be all that is needed for constituents to link activity and evaluation. Therefore, I propose H2a and H2b:

H2a: *When constituents know the name of their MP, the association between the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity and perceptions of constituency focus will be positive and stronger than for those constituents who do not know the name of their MP.*

H2b: *when constituents know the name of their MP, the association between the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity and trust in the MP will be positive and stronger than for those constituents who do not know the name of their MP.*

The 'focus' of representation is a familiar concept in representative democracy. One of the available 'foci' for representatives is their constituency, and surveys suggest this is a major focus for MPs, including in Britain, where constituency focus has expanded greatly over time. Studies, discussed above have shown that MPs are often expected to focus on their constituencies, and that people especially value the 'local promoter' role, who advocates for their constituency on a national stage. These studies have made significant contributions to understanding both the demand- and supply-sides of constituency focus. However, demand and supply have largely been studied in isolation. Consequently, it is unclear whether constituency focus leaves the impression on the public that would be predicted from these literatures. Where the effects of constituency focus have been studied (in the United States), the proxies used have been questionable: in various more recent studies, superior methods have been devised which can now be applied. Finally, while it has been argued that only the most informed will be responsive to their MPs' activities, this has not been properly tested. These are significant gaps, which this chapter intends to fill: the next section explains my approach.

Data and method

The independent variable: constituency focus

The principle of the measure

To measure constituency focus, I utilise a method similar to that employed by Blidook and Kerby (2011), Martin (2011) and Kellerman (2016). In this formulation, an MP's constituency focus can be expressed by the number of their parliamentary contributions that mention the constituency as a proportion of their total contributions.

It must be stressed that constituency focus, as measured in this form, is not synonymous with 'substantive representation' of the constituency. Scholars of Parliament have noted that while MPs often discuss constituency 'concerns and interests', often they are simply 'namechecking' their constituency as a signalling device. What, if any, is the common denominator of these activities? I regard them as unified by the concept of 'representative claim' (Saward, 2010)[22]. Indeed, exhibition of constituency focus is Saward's first example of a representative claim: 'the MP (maker) offers himself or herself (subject) as the embodiment of constituency interests (object) to that constituency (audience).' When quantified in the way that I have set out, what is measured is the cumulative strength of the claim that is being made. However, as Saward notes, claims can be contested, rejected or ignored: it is a live question as to what impression an MP's activities leave on their audience, to which this study may supply some partial and cautious answer.

Which Parliamentary activities?

Most researchers use some subset of parliamentary contributions to measure constituency focus. For instance, Soroka *et al.* (2009) use Oral Questions put during Canada's Question Period, a daily event analogous to Question Time in Britain. Bulut and Ilter (2018) meanwhile, in the Turkish context, use 'non-agenda related' speeches. However, it is less clear whether the considerations driving these choices

[22] Note that, based on this methodology, I make no distinction between a statement like 'I represent people in my constituency who are struggling' and 'people in my constituency are struggling': both would be counted as a 'constituency mention' and would contribute to the focus measure (the strength of the underlying claim).

This is intentional and beneficial, as Saward (2010: 60) argues that representative claims can be 'implicit', indeed, he argues this is especially true for MPs' claims to constituency representation, which are so familiar and rest upon accepted 'codes and institutions' (e.g. the already cited example of being 'MP for X constituency').

ought to weigh as heavily here. Sometimes they are chosen because of substantive interest in those individual activities; other times, in order to have a manageably small amount of data for manual coding, for instance, when researchers explore the issue content of MPs' parliamentary contributions. Here, however, I am interested in any activity which satisfies, to some extent, two separate criteria. First, does the activity give the MP a relatively free hand to express constituency focus? Secondly, does the activity provide a meaningful opportunity of sending signals about the MP's level of 'constituency focus' to those in the constituency?

Some of the activities considered in previous studies of how Parliamentary activity affects public perceptions of MPs and their 'personal vote' fail these tests, as, despite the strong cases made in these studies for their ability to reach the general public, they are better as indicators of overall effort than of constituency focus. For instance, Private Members' Bills, the object of which is to 'change the law as it applies to the general population' (Patrick and Sandford, 2012), do not denote local focus. Early Day Motions, meanwhile, may mention the MP's constituency but are relatively infrequent activities: the average MP tabled ten in the 2010-15 Parliament.[23] This makes them unreliable indicators: the activities selected should be significantly more numerous.

Here, therefore, I consider contributions in House of Commons debates. They indicate focus because the time limitations on a speech mean that MPs continually face a set of trade-offs (Killermann and Proksch, 2013). Crewe (2015) suggests that in practice raising local issues is often a means to actively *avoid* issues of national controversy. Thus, the trade-off is not just automatic but often a part of an MP's calculus in deciding what to say.

While in other studies, scholars have considered only a small subset of MPs' oral contributions to give an indication of their constituency focus – such as their contributions to Canada's Question Period (Soroka *et al.*, 2009) – there are good reasons to instead consider their contributions as a whole. Crewe (2015, p. 84-86)

[23] Using the search function at https://edm.parliament.uk specifying the dates of the 2010-15 Parliament returns 6714 EDMs for 650 MPs; roughly ten per MP.

highlights how nearly every kind of Parliamentary business can be an opportunity to talk about the constituency. The half-hour adjournment debate is the most common vehicle, and where MPs go into 'greatest depth about a constituency concern or interest'. However, she notes that 'Even the lesser-known rituals provide opportunities for constituency namechecking'. At Business Questions, where the Leader of the House announces the following week's agenda, backbenchers can raise any question, often 'plugging constituents' demands, requests or opinions'. In budget debates, MPs often show an interest in how a policy will affect constituents. Even Points of Order, which formally concern breaches of parliamentary rules, can be 'harnessed to the constituency cause'.

In terms of how parliamentary contributions can reach their constituents, Crewe shows several ways MPs magnify the impact of their parliamentary activities, such as press releases, websites and social media. This seems to be norm rather than exception: Franklin and Norton (1993) found that four in five MPs who asked a written question stated that they notified their local newspaper. Indeed, some might directly observe their MP contributing in the House on television, especially if it happens in the more widely viewed setting of Prime Minister's Question Time (Allen *et al.,* 2014). MPs in exit interviews indicate their belief that some of their contributions 'resonate with the people in their constituency' (Tinkler and Mehta, 2016: 13), perhaps because they are relatively confident about their capacity to earn media coverage: in PARTIREP surveys, UK MPs estimated that on average, over two in five of the 'initiatives (e.g. bills, written and oral questions)' they raised in Parliament were covered by the media (Midtbo et al, 2014).

One arguable downside of considering speeches is that Ministers and Shadow Ministers may have a purview of minimal constituency relevance, such as Foreign Affairs or Defense. This means the measure may understate the constituency focus of a select group of MPs. However, these constraints may meaningfully limit the MP's ability to present themselves as constituency-focused, and thus they should be understood as part of the problematic assessed, not as a confounder.

Indicators of constituency focus in debate contributions

As Martin (2011) has discussed, what it means to talk about one's constituency is not always easy to pinpoint. He identifies six categories of 'constituency mentions': (1) the constituency by name or reference, (2) geographic locations within the constituency, (3) individuals identified as constituents, (4) buildings or facilities within the constituency, (5) companies or organizations specific to the constituency, and (6) festivals or events within the constituency. As in other studies, some trade-off is generally required between a sufficiently comprehensive measure and a feasible and replicable measure. I build on the approach of Kellermann, capturing contributions in categories (1) and (3) in close to their totality, and many contributions in category (2).

While an ideal measure would capture within-constituency locations, buildings e*tc.* more exhaustively, available databases in the British context have limitations which are liable to perform unevenly across different areas, inducing error (see Appendix C for an explanation of this issue). Given the risk of error, others (e.g. Middleton, 2019) have chosen to manually code MPs' speeches, yet this is not practical given the size of the 'corpus' used here. It could be objected that a smaller corpus could be selected, by restricting to a smaller amount of time or a particular type of Parliamentary contribution: however, as argued above, it is important to have a large denominator to establish sufficient variance. Furthermore, being more selective builds in potentially incorrect assumptions: for instance, MPs' constituency focus may vary over the course of a Parliamentary session (Rush and Giddings, 2011). Nonetheless, given the method's limitations, I place significant emphasis below on validation.

Constituency mentions are identified in two ways, and a debate contribution which falls into either category is counted in the sum of constituency-mentioning contributions. First, by use of the words 'constituency' or 'constituent(s)'. Second, by use of whole or part of the constituency name.

The use of parts of the constituency name is unique to this study, and so it bears most justification and explanation. MPs may, in the interests of brevity, refer to their constituency in shorthand. Furthermore, constituency names will usually denote the

most significant settlements in a constituency. My specific approach is to decompose constituency names into a group of words, retaining only those which make specific local reference. I remove a set of common geographic references, such as compass directions, and typical 'stopwords' such as 'the'. For instance, from the constituency name 'Dulwich and West Norwood', only the geographic identifiers 'Dulwich' and 'Norwood' are retained, such that appearances of either of those words in the text denote a 'constituency-focused' debate contribution. I excise extremely short Parliamentary contributions which often amount to nothing more than failed interventions, and which rarely contained a mention of the constituency but do not indicate another focus because of their lack of substantive content. I chose to select only contributions of greater than fifteen words; however, the results are not at all sensitive to changes in the cut-off.

Validation of constituency focus

To validate the measure, I first test for the expected relationships with Member and constituency characteristics. As Blidook and Kerby (2011) find, MPs tend to be constituency-focused in their use of parliamentary speaking opportunities when their constituencies are more marginal.[24] I find a strong relationship to constituency focus. For 614 MPs[25], the correlation of constituency focus to Majority, meaning percentage majority at the previous election, is r=.26 ($p<0.001$). I also test that it is associated with being a backbencher rather than a Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet member (Kellerman, 2012): focus is indeed higher among backbenchers ($p<0.001$). Finally, I test whether those MPs who are more recently elected are more constituency focused. The longer the MP had been representing the constituency in Parliament, the less constituency-focused they were (r=-.37, $p<0.001$)

[24] It is true that Kellerman and Martin do not find such a relationship, but Kellerman provides a credible explanation for this: they use *written* questions for the measure of constituency focus, not debate contributions. Given the constraints on speaking in the House of Commons, they argue that MPs will be more strategic and electorally focused in how they use their time.

[25] Northern Ireland is excluded, as are non-NI MPs who did not serve for the entire 2010-15 period, for instance, having won or lost their constituency in a by-election.

The ranking of least and most constituency-focused MPs is also face-value credible. Near the bottom are Ed Miliband and Jim Murphy, then-leaders of the UK Labour Party and Scottish Labour respectively, who would be expected to speak to the widest possible audiences. So too are many ministers and shadow ministers with security and international briefs, whose day-to-day work presumably has little constituency relevance: Philip Hammond, Defence Minister (2011-14) and Foreign Secretary (2014-16), Douglas Alexander, Shadow Foreign Secretary (2011-15) and Alan Duncan, Minister of State for International Development (2010-14) all grace the bottom ten.

As a further test, the previous chapter suggests we can expect MPs' communications – within and without the constituency – to tell us something about their constituency focus. In the first instance, those who spend more on surgery advertising and contact cards may be more constituency focused. Since surgery advertising is designed to publicise constituency surgeries, MPs who do so may be holding more of these surgeries full stop: holding surgeries would be considered a typical indicator of constituency focus. Similarly, since contact cards are designed to invite people to contact them, MPs who hand out contact cards might be taking more calls and answering more emails from constituents. There are stronger reasons to expect constituency focus to be correlated with contact card spending than with surgery advertising, however. Printing of contact cards implies in-person efforts to distribute them, which more constituency-focused MPs might be expected to desire more: surgery advert spending does not carry the same implication. In line with these expectations, I find that constituency focus is positively correlated to contact card spending ($r=.19$, $p<.001$), though the correlation with advertisement spending ($r=.07$) was not significant at the $p<.05$ level.

Similarly, constituency focus may be revealed by how frequently an MP gives quotations to their local newspaper(s). Alternately, giving frequent quotations to the national news might reveal national over constituency focus. There are two main reasons to expect this. First, this may be reflective of the MP's own choices: MPs who are highly constituency-focused should consider constituents their most important audience, and should want to talk about local issues more, which they can do in the context of local but not national news. Second, it may be also that MPs who talk

about their local areas a lot are less newsworthy to national newspapers (Amsalem *et al.*, 2017) but more newsworthy to local newspapers: an MP quoted in Negrine (2005) notes that the local media would report anything they said provided it had 'some local significance'. However, we might expect that national figures are also newsworthy in local newspapers, which might attenuate the strength of the relationship. Indeed, I find that for 205 MPs (the subset with data on newspaper coverage), constituency focus is positively correlated to local newspaper quotes ($r=.14$, $p<.01$) and negatively correlated to national newspaper quotes ($r=-.36$, $p<.001$), the latter, as expected, being a stronger relationship.

A further test compares the measure against an MP's own self-reported constituency focus. Though more timely data (and a larger sample size) would be preferable, I use the 2001 British Representation Study (the most recent publicly available data). This contained an ideal set of questions, asking MPs to name a first, second and third most important reason for standing from a list of five: including 'to represent this particular constituency'. I compared those MPs (n=39) putting constituency representation in their top three reasons to those who did not (n=39). The mean percentage of constituency-focused debate contributions was 5.5 points higher for the former group ($p<.05$). To test whether this remained significant for a larger sample – albeit that many of those MPs were no longer present in the 2010-15 Parliament - I also calculated the equivalent measure of constituency focus in debates in the 2001-5 Parliament for all 216 MPs in the 2001 BRS, comparing 106 MPs who mentioned constituency representation to 103 who did not. MPs who mentioned constituency representation were indeed higher in focus on average ($p<.05$).

Finally, manual checks for false positives and false negatives were carried out. Of one-hundred debate contributions from those classified as having no constituency mention, just one had any mention of local matters in the constituency; a further two mentioned the county, but no more specific places. Out of one hundred classified as mentioning the constituency, no false positives were found.

Survey data

As in the previous chapters, I link this data, and various other sources of data on MPs, to the British Election Study Internet Panel 2014-2019 (BESIP). I utilise a specific battery of questions on local MPs from Wave Four, fielded in March 2015, before the beginning of the formal general election 'short' campaign that year.

Dependent variables

Perceived local focus derives from a question in the battery. Respondents were invited to place their MP on a seven-point scale, where one indicates 'focused on national issues' and seven 'focused on the constituency'.

Because perceived local focus is not intrinsically valenced (positive or negative), I also utilise trust as a dependent variable. Trust also differs from the former DV in that it is generally treated as 'affective' as well as 'evaluative' (Chanley *et al.*, 2000), i.e. accessing emotional responses and feelings as well as thoughts, beliefs and judgements (Breckler and Wiggins, 1989). The trust question asked in the survey is a general one: 'How much trust do you have in the MP in your local constituency?'. This trust measure reflects a common strain in trust research which 'leaves trustworthiness undefined, open to the interpretation of the potential truster' (Levi and Stoker, 2000). More specific conceptions of trust are also common in the literature (Levi and Stoker, 2000). However, the open question is the only trust question available in the BESIP.[26]

Although mainly selected out of convenience, this dependent variable nonetheless has its strengths for the purposes of this study. The way trust questions of this kind are expected to function are as 'summary judgements', which sample from a wide range of available considerations. The research discussed above suggests that constituency focus should be an important consideration, but not the sole consideration: whether an MP's constituency focus has a bearing on general trust thus represents a tougher test of its importance.

[26] The dependent variable used in the previous chapter – whether the MP 'tries hard to look after the interests of people who live in my constituency' was considered as an alternative. However, this was deemed too closely related to the 'perceived focus' variable, both conceptually and empirically.

For simplicity of presentation (especially of graphs), I treat each outcome as interval. For modelling I use multilevel linear regression, accounting for the clustering of respondents within constituencies and better identifying the parameter estimates and standard errors for variables at the MP/constituency level – including the key independent variable.[27] Since the dependent variables are similarly scaled, the beta coefficients for the effect of the IV can be easily compared.

Name recall as a moderator

I utilise a name recall measure for whether people 'know' their MP's name, included in the Wave 4 BESIP module. This requires substantial processing of the raw, 'text-box' data to generate the final binary variable: the process and data is as detailed in Chapter 3.

Control variables

In terms of respondent demographics, I control for age, which is a reliable predictor of positive evaluations of a local MP (Bowler, 2010; Frederick, 2008; Lawless, 2004; Costa e*t al.*, 2018), with minor exceptions (Branton *et al*, 2012). I control for gender, since some studies show that women are more approving of their constituency representatives on the whole (Gay, 2002; Bowler, 2010). I also control for level of education (as measured by highest qualifications), which has occasionally been found to have negative effects on evaluations of the MP (Lawless, 2004).

I include a control for the relationship between one's own party identification and the party they thought their MP represented. This is the one factor that the literature is absolutely consistent on: every study utilising individual-level data finds an effect.[28] As in Chapter 3, respondents who thought their MP represented the party they

[27] For all models, a likelihood-ratio test against a single-level model indicated an improvement in fit, confirming that this was an appropriate choice.

[28] It could be objected that as my first dependent variable, perceived focus, is not intrinsically a valence evaluation, it is less clear that the 'partisan match' should have a strong bearing. This is fair, but constituency focus is likely seen as a positive trait on the whole, and is sufficiently linked to valence views that a link to 'partisan match' remains likely.

supported were classified as 'matching'; those who thought their MP supported a different party to them were defined as 'clashing'. Two further categories were created for respondents with no party identification and those who did not offer a guess of which party the MP supported.

I further control for trust in MPs 'in general', on a 1-7 scale. Though this chapter is focused on uncovering the agency of individual MPs to shape constituent perceptions, any realistic model of how people judge their local MP must incorporate in some way evaluations of politics and politicians more generally. A range of studies have found generally large effects of this family of attitudes (Cain, 1983; Frederick, 2008; Bowler, 2010).

I also control for respondents' interest and engagement, using the 0-10 measure of political attention supplied in the BESIP. A valid reading of the results discussed earlier – that people value but are particularly unaware of MPs performing a constituency role – is that those higher in attention would be more positive about MPs. Though the reasons are opaque, several studies support a link between political interest, attention, and exposure to politics though the media on the one hand, and positive evaluations of MPs on the other (Box-Steffensmeier, 2003; Frederick, 2008; Parker and Goodman, 2009; Schaffner, 2006). However, Sulkin *et al* (2015) found the opposite relationship. The final individual-level factor is previously having contacted the MP, which has acted as a consistent predictor of positive evaluations where included in models (Cain *et al*, 1984; Wagner, 2007).

The more important set of controls are those relating to MPs' own characteristics and activities, which are likely to be correlated with constituent evaluations and crucially with the constituency focus of parliamentary activity. More senior MPs are, in general, viewed more positively (Box-Steffensmeier, 2003; Parker and Goodman, 2009; Stein and Bickers, 1994), although there are exceptions to this (Branton e*t al*, 2012). At the same time, they are thought to be less likely to engage in constituency-focused activities due to their greater sense that they are secure in their position. As such, a control for seniority (by years in the House) is essential. Formal roles, such as ministerial positions, have occasionally also been found to have the effect of more negative evaluations (Parker and Goodman, 2009), particularly where these

evaluations concerned constituency representation. Since ministers and shadow ministers are expected to be less constituency-focused (Kellerman, 2016), it is important to control for ministerial status. It is less clear how an MP's majority relates to constituent evaluations: this variable is often left out of models of evaluations, for the obvious reason that it may be endogenous to evaluations at an aggregate level. However, since electoral marginality is a major motivator of constituency focus (Heitshusen e*t al*, 2005), it is important to control for this, too.

Results

Taking this approach, do perceptions vary according to the constituency focus of MPs? Table 4-2 shows the results of linear regression models of perceived local focus and trust, where positive coefficients indicate that the variable is associated with perceiving the MP as more locally-focused, or with higher levels of trust. I first discuss the results for perceived local focus. Hypothesis 1a stated that *as the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity increases, perceptions of the MP's constituency focus increase.* As Table 4-2 shows, the main effect of constituency focus on perceived focus is positive and significant at the p<.001 level. I also confirm that adding the key independent variable improves the model fit, according to likelihood-ratio tests (p<.001).

Does the same apply to trust? Hypothesis 1b stated that *as the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity increases, constituents' trust in the MP* increases. Table 4-2 confirms that this is the case, and that we may reject the null hypothesis of no relation with 95% confidence. Again, adding the key independent variable leads to a significant improvement in the model fit (p<.05).

Table 4-2. Results of linear regression models of perceived local focus of MP and trust in MP, with and without interactions.

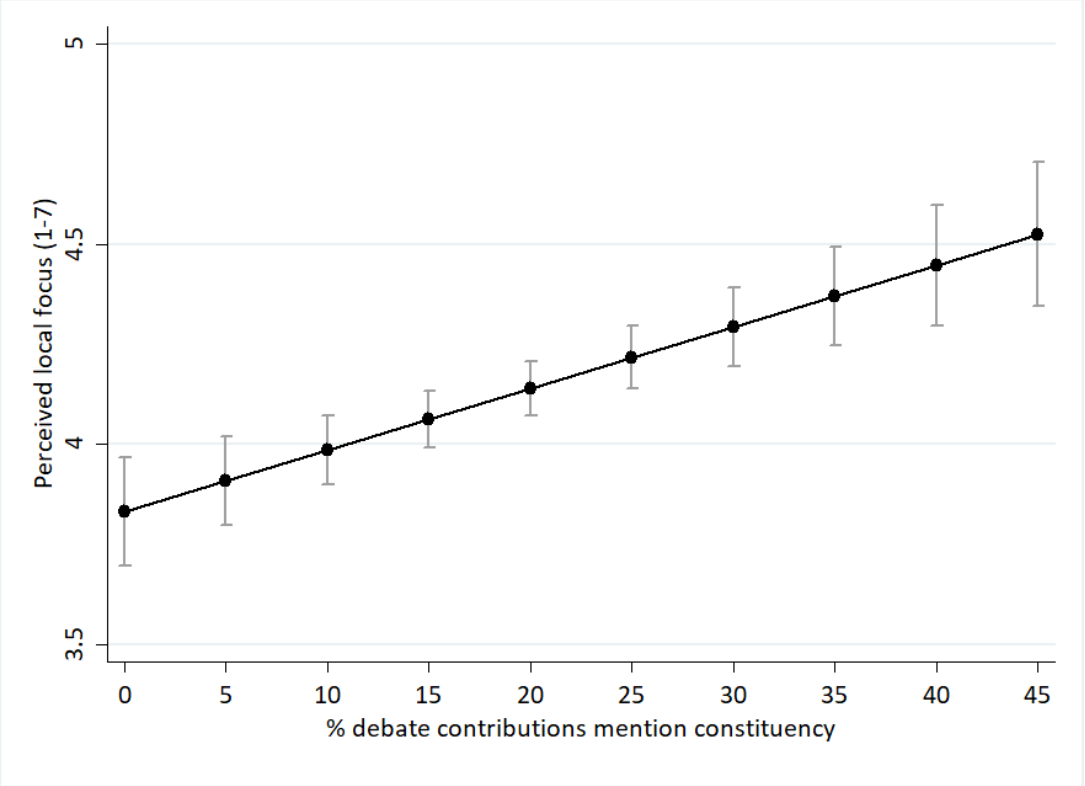
	DV: local focus (low-high)		DV: trust (low-high)	
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
% constituency mentions	.016*** (.004)	-.000 (.006)	.009* (.004)	.000 (.006)
Knows MP's name	-.016 (.085)	-.414** (.152)	.071 (.086)	-.142 (.156)
% constituency mentions * knows MP's name		.020*** (.006)		.011† (.007)
Match with MP's party (base: matching PiD)				
Clash with MP party	-.339*** (.079)	-.357*** (.078)	-1.311*** (.079)	-1.315*** (.079)
No party ID	.163 (.106)	-.165 (.105)	-1.078*** (.108)	-1.082*** (.108)
Didn't guess MP party	.129 (.250)	-.164(.247)	-1.389*** (.257)	-1.404*** (.257)
Gender: female	.453*** (.071)	.448*** (.071)	.376*** (.072)	.374*** (.072)
Age	.011*** (.003)	.011*** (.003)	.014*** (.003)	.014*** (.003)
Highest qualification				
GCSEs	-.049 (.142)	-.054 (.143)	.092 (.144)	.091 (.144)
A-levels	-.021 (.152)	-.021 (.153)	.071 (.154)	.073 (.154)
University	-.050 (.144)	-.049 (.145)	.205 (.146)	.206 (.146)
NS-SEC (base: routine)				
Intermediate	-.231* (.109)	-.245* (.110)	-.017 (.111)	-.024 (.111)
Managerial/professional	-.232* (.110)	-.247* (.111)	-.034 (.111)	-.042 (.111)
Political attention (0-10)	-.062** (.020)	-.063** (.020)	-.017 (.020)	-.017 (.020)
Has contacted MP	-.023 (.078)	-.024 (.079)	.189* (.079)	.188* (.079)
Seniority (years)	-.003 (.005)	-.004 (.005)	.010* (.005)	.010* (.004)
MP: Minister/ shadow minister	-.181 (.118)	-.182 (.117)	.108 (.119)	.109 (.118)
MP's majority	-.009** (.003)	-.009** (.003)	.000 (.003)	.000 (.003)
Trust MPs in general	.157*** (.024)	.157*** (.024)	.597*** (.024)	.596*** (.024)
N	1977	1977	1937	1937

*† p<.1, * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

The substantive size of effects is not, however, immediately apparent. In Figure 4-2, I plot the predicted value of perceived local focus, where a value of one represents the minimum and seven the maximum, taking the values of other variables as

observed in the dataset. I plot results from X-values of zero percent to forty-five percent, roughly the 95th percentile of constituency focus. The confidence intervals are relatively narrow, showing a high degree of certainty that evaluations of the MP differ over this range of X-values. Expressed as standard deviations, a one-SD increase in an MP's constituency focus is associated with a .13 SD increase in perceived focus.

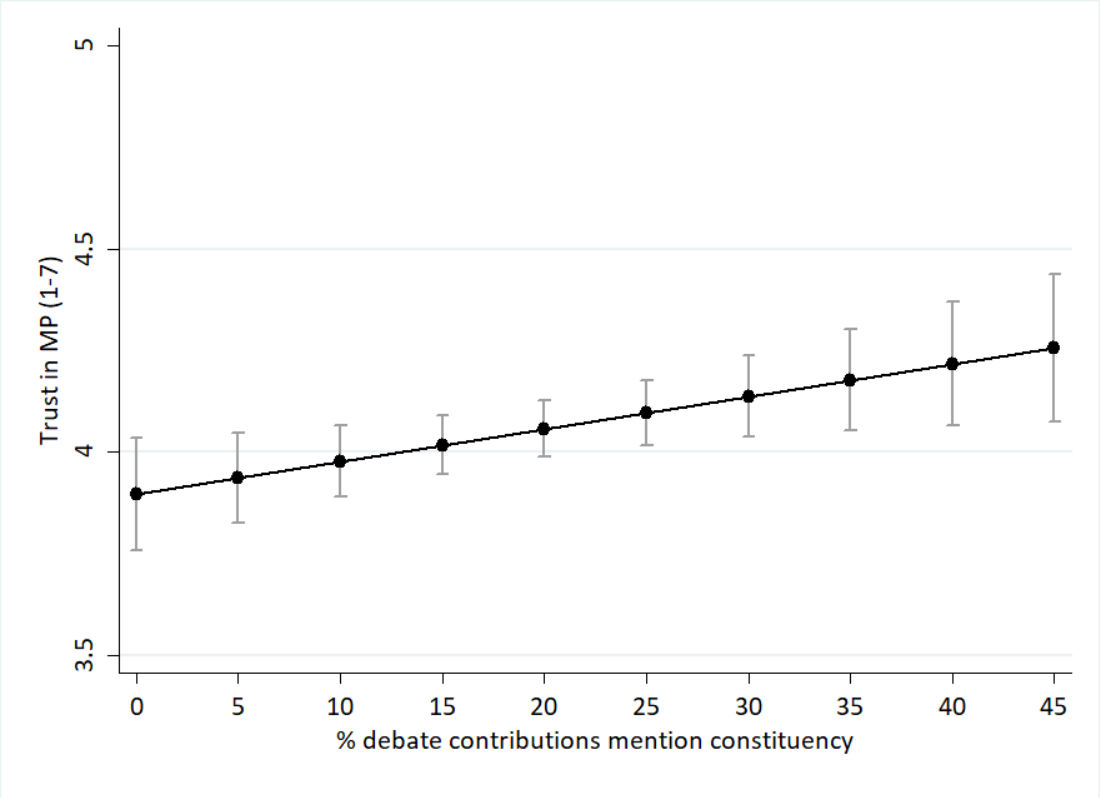
Figure 4-2. Predicted value of perceived local focus by MP's constituency focus.



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted values.

In Figure 4-3, I plot the predicted value of trust in the local MP, which is identically scaled to perceived focus, again using the same range of X-values and taking other values as observed. We can observe that the relationship is positive, but it should be noted that the slope is significantly flatter than for perceived focus. Figure 4-3 also helps to indicate that – though we can still be highly confident that there is such a relationship – the degree of confidence is lower ($p<.05$ compared to $p<.001$). There is no greater error in the predicted values, as the error bars are no wider: it is simply that the flatter slope means there is greater overlap in confidence intervals across the range of X-values.

Figure 4-3. Predicted value of trust in local MP by MP's constituency focus.



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted values

However, although these results most closely approximate the effect of constituency focus on the public at large, they are likely to mask significant heterogeneity concerning who responds to MPs' constituency focus. The literature suggests that these are likely to be concentrated among people who pay a lot of attention to politics, though I have suggested that a more minimal form of 'competence' may be all that is required. I have thus theorised one major moderator: knowing the name of one's MP. Table 4-2 therefore also reports, in Columns 2 and 4, the interaction effects between name recall of the local MP and the constituency focus of their Commons contributions.

Hypothesis 2a stated that *when constituents know the name of their MP, the association between the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity and perceptions of constituency focus will be positive and stronger than for those constituents who do not know the name of their MP.* Table 4-2 supports this expectation.

The interaction, where constituency focus is the dependent variable, is highly significant and in the expected (positive) direction: we can therefore reject the null. Using a likelihood-ratio test, model fit also improves compared to a model without the interaction ($p<0.001$). Moreover, the main effect of constituency focus is indistinguishable from zero, such that the effect of constituency focus occurs *only* for those who know the name of their MP. It should also be noted that the main effect of name recall here is negative, and highly significant ($p<.01$). More precisely, this represents the effect of name recall at the zero value of constituency focus. People who know their MPs, and who see them never talking about the constituency, develop more negative views than people who do not know their MPs at all. However, the negative main effect for name recall and the positive interaction effect imply the possibility of a crossover point, at which those who know their MPs become more positive than those who do not.

What do these effects look like? Figure 4-4 shows plots the predicted value of perceived local focus, with separate predictions for those who do and do not know the name of their MP and taking other values as observed. The picture suggested by Table 4-2 is confirmed here. The confidence intervals are somewhat larger, but they still show a strong degree of confidence that perceived local focus increases across values of an MP's constituency focus. Expressed as standard deviations, a one-SD increase in an MP's constituency focus is associated with a .16 SD increase in perceived focus among those who know the name of their MP.

As regards Hypothesis 1a and 1b, the same relationship was found using either local focus or trust as dependent variable. Does the same apply for the interaction effect? Hypothesis 2b stated that *when constituents know the name of their MP, the association between the constituency focus of an MP's parliamentary activity and trust in the MP will be positive and stronger than for those constituents who do not know the name of their MP*. No such interaction could be found at the $p<.05$ confidence interval, though at the more relaxed $p<.1$ confidence interval, there is such a relationship. Figure 4-5 graphs the predicted value of perceived local focus, with separate predictions for those who do and do not know the name of their MP.

Figure 4-4. Predicted value of perceived local focus by MP's constituency focus and constituent name recall

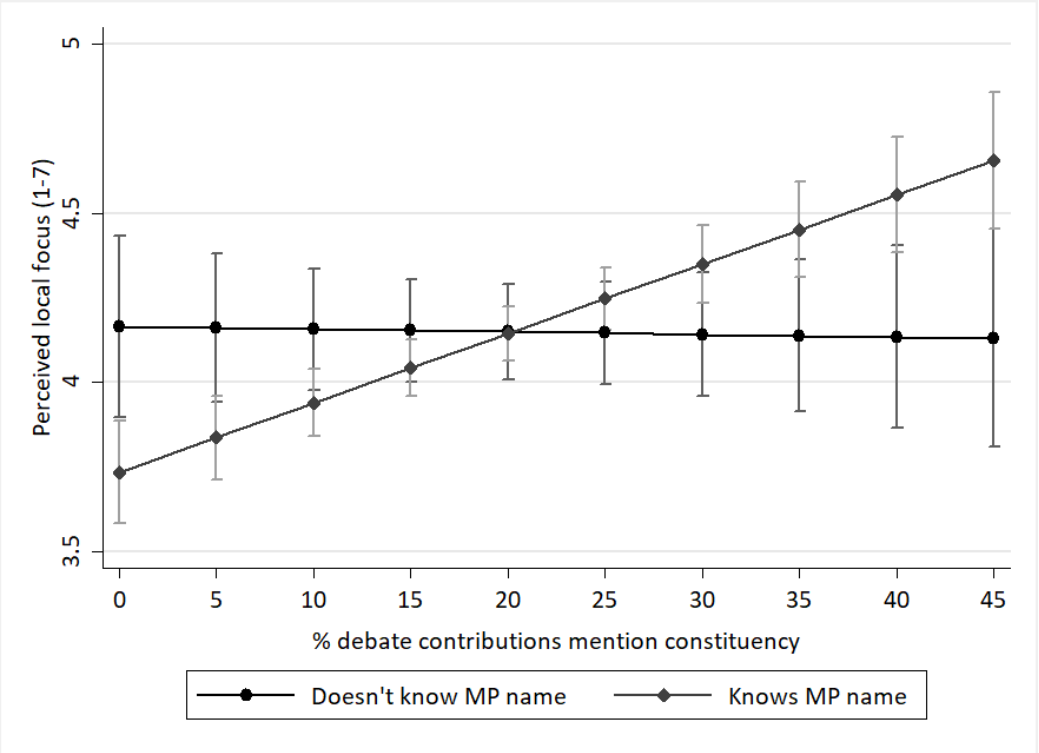
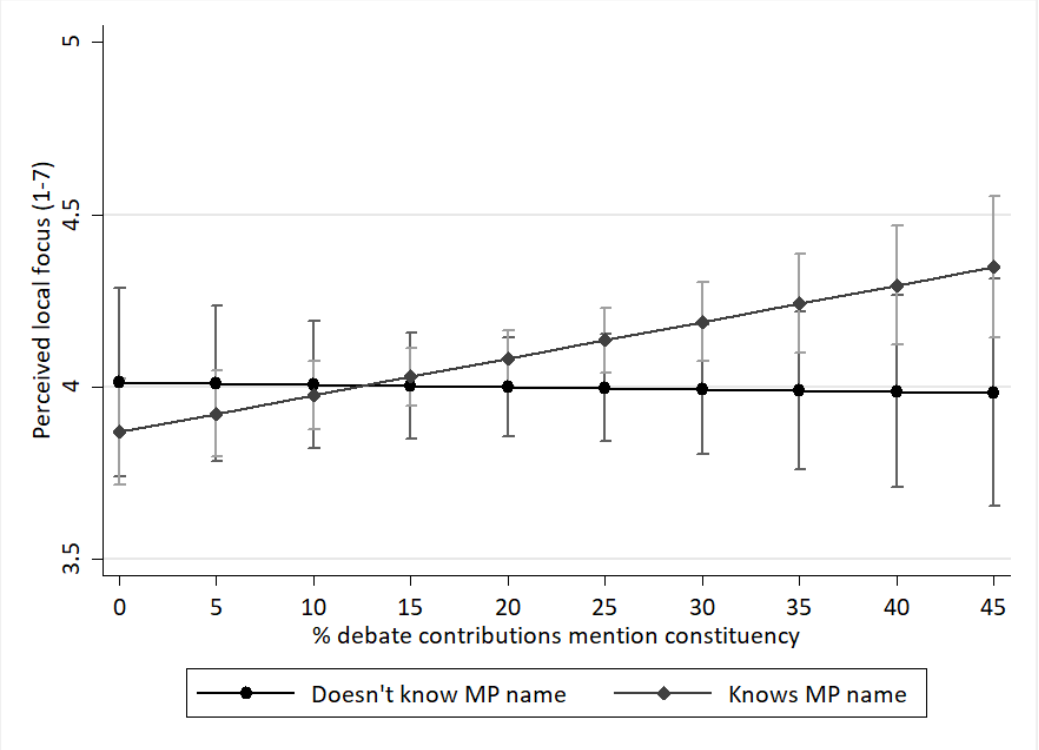


Figure 4-5. Predicted value of trust in local MP by MP's constituency focus and constituent name recall



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted values for both figures

Though the interpretation of slopes is relatively clear – focus only affects trust given name recall – the overlap of error bars makes a clear conclusion problematic. Substituting 'name recognition' for 'name recall' made no difference to the strength of the relationship, so the weakness of the relationship probably does not reflect measurement error in the variable chosen to capture knowing the MP's name. Subgroup analysis suggests that the result for trust could be understood as a Type II error associated with the larger standard errors caused by interaction. Using only those respondents who knew their MP's name [n=1,447], there was a significant effect of constituency focus on trust (β=.010, $p<.01$), but using those respondents who did not [n=490] there was no such effect (β=.001, $p>.1$).

In Figure 4-4, the cross-over point suggested by Table 4-2 does indeed occur: when around twenty percent of an MP's debate contributions mention their constituency, they are viewed as equally locally focused by both those who do and do not know their MP. It should be noted here that the mean value among MPs is that they mention their constituencies nineteen percent of the time. It seems that, on average, MPs are sufficiently focused on their constituencies to avoid drawing the ire of 'competent' constituents, but not enough to actively satisfy their expectations around MPs' local focus. This is consistent with the academic literature concerning the extent of local focus among MPs compared to the general public. As Campbell and Lovenduski found, there is a stronger tendency among the British public than among MPs to prefer constituency-focused activity. We may also note in this regard that in models of both focus and trust, the mid-point (4) of each scale is crossed when 'constituency mentions' occur in between 10-20% of contributions. Insofar as responses above four could be said to denote overall positivity, this is significant.

Since the dependent variable could technically be considered an ordinal variable, it may be objected that treating it as interval, by using linear regression, may alter the results. For this reason, I re-specify models as ordered logits. The tables, and predicted probability plots for the main effects, are shown in Appendix C (Table C-2, Figure C-1 and C-2). No substantive conclusions are affected by the type of regression chosen.

As a further check on the proposed mechanism – accountability – I interact with a third variable, local newspaper presence, according to Ramsay and Moore's classification of constituencies. As discussed in the previous chapter, local newspapers are the main sources of information about a local MP. In theory, 'competent' constituents, who know who their MP is, can better update their perceptions in line with an MP's activities where a local MP obtains coverage about those activities. Again, for local focus but not trust, I find that the interaction is significant only where there is a local newspaper ($p<.05$), with a correspondingly large effect (see Appendix C, Table C-1). While this is largely undertaken as validation, it is worth noting that MPs with local newspapers have a lot to gain from local focus, at least among constituents who know them.

A potential challenge to these findings is as follows. MPs who devote more of their time to talking about the constituency are likely talking about constituency more in absolute terms as well as relative. Is it really the *balance* that matters? To rule out the possibility that it is the absolute number of times MPs talk about their constituency that is causing the effect, I run alternative models substituting in this variable for the 'focus' variable. For neither perceived focus, nor trust, do I find any effect (Appendix C, Table C-3, cols 1 & 3 – also see notes on 'extreme values' of the 'absolute' IV). This differs from other findings: Chiru (2018) used an 'absolute' measure – the total number of constituency-focused questions – and found significant effects on the personal vote in Romania.

It may also be instructive to make a comparison with the effects of debate contributions *per se*. This bears the closest analogy to, for instance, research by Bowler (2010) and Kellerman (2013), who show respectively that PMBs and EDMs contribute to MPs' personal vote. It is also a useful exercise because some data collection and research is founded – implicitly or explicitly – on the view that MPs regular attendance in the House is seen as a desirable thing by the public at large. For instance, Besley and Larcinese (2011) use a ratio of expense spending to attendance at Parliamentary divisions as an indicator of 'value for money', while one of the key statistics reported by the website They Work For You, which is designed to help the public keep track of their MP's activities, is attendance. Therefore, I substitute the variable for total

number debate contributions for the 'focus' variable (see table C-3, cols 2 & 4). I find no effect on trust, but a significant negative effect on perceived focus: the more an MP spoke in the House, the less locally-focused they were seen to be ($p<.001$). This makes sense: very frequent speech in the House of Commons likely entails less time in the district. The implication is that time in the House of Commons can be valuably spent establishing a reputation for local focus, but too much time in the chamber and they will face diminishing returns.

Alongside the novel contribution around the effects of focus, this study also represents an opportunity to retest the broader findings of the existing literature on more up-to-date data and in the British context, due to the inclusion of various control variables. Demographics, for the most part, have the expected effects. Older people and women were more likely to trust their MP, consistent with previous literature. Occupational class is the exception (NS-SEC): those in higher-class professions saw their MPs as less locally focused. This may relate to higher expectations among these groups, though it is unclear why the same effect was not found for the trust models.

The role of attitudes to politicians and parties broadly repeat expected patterns, though with some nuances not detected in the existing literature. As expected, a powerful determinant of evaluations – particularly of trust – was the 'partisan match' with the local MP. Those who identified with their MP's party (or, more specifically, the party that they thought their MP belonged to), rated MPs higher in trust and local focus than those who identified with another party. Those with no party identification, however, trusted their local MPs nearly as little as 'clashers', even though they did not think them any less locally-focused than did 'matchers'. Unsurprisingly, trust in MPs 'in general' was highly correlated with both perceived local focus and trust in the local MP, though the link to the latter was much stronger than the former.

Political engagement – both with politics in general and with the MP specifically – were also included as controls. Contacting one's MP was correlated with trust, as would be expected from the literature (Cain et al, 1984; Wagner, 2007) though not

with perceived local focus. Political attention was not linked to trust, but high-attention respondents were less likely to think of their MPs as locally focused.[29]

The previous literature also suggested a role for MP-level factors. Time-consuming national positions – such as being a minister or shadow-minister – might have been expected to diminish perceived constituency focus and trust. However, this did not transpire. In practice, the effect of national office may affect the outcomes through their lesser local focus, but is driven out here by the 'real' focus variable. Seniority, on the other hand, was expected to increase trust (even though senior MPs are generally less focused on constituency). This was replicated here, although the effect is relatively weak.

Conclusion

One of the ways in which representation can be understood is in terms of the 'focus' displayed by local representatives, with constituency focus being one that they can choose to emphasise. Research on constituency focus has tended to show that it is something that constituents a) expect and b) respond positively to when it does occur, although this research has certain methodological issues and has not been carried out for the British context. Research also indicates that constituency focus of MPs can be captured through their Parliamentary work in one form or another, and that MPs use their Parliamentary work to portray themselves as constituency-focused.

The above formed the basis for the fundamental expectation tested in this chapter: that the more constituency-focused an MP's parliamentary activity was, constituents would be more likely to perceive their MP as constituency-focused, and to trust their MP more. This expectation was confirmed. I also test for moderating influences, based around a concern with citizen competence to assess representation. In line

[29] This may be a function of the popular interpretation of 'politics', which centres on national decision-making (Hansard Society, 2005). Stated attention to politics might then translate to seeing MPs in general, and one's own MP in particular, operate largely in a national context and work on national issues.

with expectations, I find that constituency focus in Parliament only affected perceived constituency focus among those who knew the name of their MP. In the following section, I discuss some important considerations, entailing both the limitations of this study – where and to whom might these findings apply? – and a broader reflection on the meaning, value, and costs of constituency focus, though several of the questions raised will be revisited in greater depth in the overall thesis conclusions.

First, we may question whether we are likely to observe the link here in other democracies, particularly because of differences in electoral system. Virtually all democracies have some constituency representation in their national parliaments. However, only eighty-five countries use plurality/majority systems with single-winner districts similar to the UK. By contrast, eighty-four use PR systems with multi-winner districts, and a further thirty-two use a mixed system (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance). In many PR systems, MPs are elected on a 'closed list', where they cannot express a preference for an individual candidate. Even in these systems, MPs may still make efforts to show a constituency focus (Poyet, 2014). However, it is questionable whether many hold meaningful attitudes about local representatives: name recall, for instance, is lower in such systems (Holmberg, 2009), which was a crucial enabling factor in this study. Despite this clear caveat regarding closed list systems, the connection found here could apply in 'open list' systems, where constituency focus among members is very common even by comparison to Westminster systems (Bowler and Farrell 1993; Carey and Shugart 1995). The findings of Martin (2010) suggests that constituency focus can reap benefits in such systems.

Yet within similar electoral systems, different political cultures may exist, which may place different amounts of emphasis on local focus. For instance, as Brouard (2013, p. 141) argues, 'MPs are expected to embody collectively the French Nation', despite the use of FPTP for the National Assembly. Where different expectations exist, one could imagine that the link between the constituency role and evaluations would be less clear.

There is also the question of whether MPs can exaggerate their constituency focus. This is meant in two senses. First, they may engage in 'tokenistic' behaviours. For instance, a regular feature of Prime Minister's Questions are 'soft' questions about the constituency, such as asking the Prime Minister to celebrate a local business or local NHS workers, which do nothing to actively advance constituency interests (Lovenduski, 2012). Interviews with MPs leaving Parliament in 2015 suggest that some MPs consciously engage in tokenistic behaviours of this kind to appeal to constituents (Tinkler and Mehta, 2016). Chiru (2018) suggests that constituents in Romania respond to both more and less substantive forms of constituency focus, but further work will be necessary to determine this. Second, judicious media 'spin' may be effective. Grimmer *et al* (2012) evaluate the effect of credit-claiming press releases for funding allocation to the incumbent's constituency. They find that Senators in the same states – receiving the same federal funds – who claim credit more frequently in their press releases receive higher approval than their counterparts. Future research could investigate this question by considering the insight analysis of MPs' media presence might offer.

A final consideration relates to the costs of 'constituency focus' from the perspective of MPs. Any claim that, to assure constituents of good local representation, MPs must do more of anything, and particularly more Parliamentary work, runs into the objection that it is an impossible demand. MPs are increasingly overworked: the House of Commons Committee on Standards (2013) noted that 'MPs routinely work 60 or 70 hours a week'. Furthermore, if MPs must do more in the House, then this is evidently traded off against personally rendering casework, which conventional wisdom would suggest is crucial to a good local reputation. Thus, while useful in understanding electorates, studies suggesting expansions of effort are required are poor guides to action for the MP concerned with his or her constituents' opinion. This study reaches a rather different conclusion, however. It is not so much the quantity as the focus of activity that matters. This finding implies that MPs can potentially surmount the issue of time constraint and casework demands: where other paths to being perceived as a 'good local MP' are often onerous, exhibiting constituency focus may be a practical and achievable route.

The costs of a 'constituency focus' may lie elsewhere. This chapter has discussed the role conceptions of MPs devised by Searing, in which the constituency role is at odds with serious political ambition, including becoming a minister in government or opposition. This represents a 'cost' in that MPs do, by and large, want to be ministers (King and Allen, 2010). 'Constituency focus' may be costly to ambition for two reasons. First, the constituency role may be held in lower esteem (Searing, 1994), although constituency-focused MPs may no longer be deprecated in the manner that Searing found, as the general expansion of the constituency role has likely led to its greater acceptance (Rush and Giddings, 2011). Second, a consistent focus on constituency is likely to constrain the opportunities to impress those making decisions over appointments, either through Parliamentary debate or through appearing on television (Heppell and Crines, 2016). Leslie (2018) shows that MPs whose speeches in the House in their first Parliamentary term were more constituency-focused were indeed less likely to be promoted to the frontbench in future. Yet the impression made on constituents may be perceived to be worth the cost.

A final implication concerns parliamentary monitoring. There is a global trend of growth in Parliamentary Monitoring Organisations (PMOs), which often create websites such as TheyWorkForYou providing key statistics to measure and compare the performance of individual MPs (Mandelbaum, 2011). These organisations, and TheyWorkForYou in particular, have been criticized on the grounds of privileging pure quantity over quality, thus creating perverse incentives for MPs to boost their statistics, and for failing to fulfil real information needs, such as informing on MPs' constituency advocacy (Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy, 2013; Edwards *et al*, 2015; Thompson, 2015). This study seems to confirm some of these fears: PMOs incentivize politically ineffective busywork, while failing to measure things constituents actually respond to. This will be expanded upon in the thesis conclusion.

This chapter has discussed the broad objections to 'constituency representation' in theory and practice. Constituency, for some scholars, is an empty signifier for a set of diverse and often conflicted groups, and it is not possible to give them equal weight. For all the merits of this account, however, this chapter suggests that talking 'constituency' retains some meaning to constituents that receive it: *what people hear*

from their MPs matters. This meaning, moreover, is almost without exception received as positive. 'Constituency representation' – representing the territory as a whole - might be a fiction, or at least a problematic concept, but it is a powerful one, nonetheless.

Yet the broader concern of this chapter, and the previous, has been to recover the agency of MPs in shaping public perceptions. As discussed in Chapter 2, narratives of the public mood which circulate within the political class converge on an apparent point of agreement: the relative unimportance of individual MPs in affecting the views of local people. On the one hand, some contend that the public are more-or-less uncritical fans of their local MPs, as captured by the cliché that people 'hate politicians but love their MP'. On the other, and a view that has become increasingly mainstream since the expenses crisis, is the view that individual MPs are passive victims of an 'anti-politics' age. This is in spite of the growing body of literature suggesting that local MPs can make a difference to constituent impressions (Bowler, 2010; Kellerman, 2013) through the effort they put in as parliamentarians.

These chapters likewise militate against such an understanding, recovering the role of MPs' agency in shaping constituents' perceptions of representation. This is particularly true of this chapter, given the greater strength and more direct effects of constituency focus as opposed to communication. The variation in perceptions is wide, and highly dependent on the MP's actual activities. While not all constituents can connect their activities to their perceptions, those armed with basic knowledge about who their MP is are capable of doing so. Furthermore, as established in the previous chapter, it is at least partially in the MP's power to provide people with that knowledge by communicating. In this way, local MPs have demonstrable potential to convince people that their local community is represented in the political process. I turn now to the role of structural factors: *what people see* around them, in terms of the socioeconomic environment in which they live.

Chapter 5. ‘Left behind’ people, or places? The role of local economies in perceived community representation

Introduction

Since the Brexit vote in the UK, the notion of political discontent reflecting geographic divisions has found a degree of favour within the discipline of political science. Coyle and Ford (2017, p. 67), in their discussion of Brexit, argue that political ‘alienation’ has become entrenched in ‘left behind’ areas since the 1980s, due to the fraying of the ‘economic and social fabric’ and the failure of successive governments to reverse this decline. Specifically, they argue for ‘the devolved nations and England outside of the southeast’ as being the locus of discontent – identifying regional divisions as the wellspring of political anger. However, while this chapter argues that this perspective has real value, the geographic account as it exists at present requires further explanation, examination and refinement.

The sole existing test of this thesis has been conducted by Jennings and Stoker (2016). They looked at two types of area, ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘backwater’, which they defined as having different levels of ‘access’ to high-skilled jobs and ‘connectedness’ to the global economy. Looking at fifty Parliamentary constituencies for each, they found that ‘backwaters’ were ‘more inward-looking, illiberal, negative about the EU and immigration, nostalgic and more English in their identity’ (p. 372). However, such differences did not extend to ‘expressions of anti-political sentiment’: from distrust in MPs and politicians, to dissatisfaction with UK democracy, ‘both sets of populations look remarkably similar to the average voter’ (p. 376). This leads them to reject the idea that local economies currently affect political discontent, although they do not shut the door entirely, emphasising instead that poor areas are nonetheless fertile for the ‘growth and spread of political disaffection’ (p.380).

This chapter re-examines the fundamental question posed by Jennings and Stoker. It does so in three ways. Firstly, there is reason to believe that a more discriminating analysis, based on much smaller geographic areas, may be required to properly identify the effects of economic context. A large geographic unit such as the constituency is not the 'context' that most people see in their day-to-day lives. Research on economic inequalities in Britain (e. g. Dorling and Pritchard, 2010) has emphasised the spatially concentrated nature of disadvantage, such that the economic context of one's 'community' may be very different to that of one's constituency or region. Equally, nor is it likely to be the 'context' they consider meaningful to themselves. Wong *et. al.* (2017) show that people tend to define community around their neighbourhoods, and the people and places they see most frequently: consequently, its physical size is often quite small. Secondly, the kind of attitudes which Jennings and Stoker expect to vary spatially may in fact be ill-suited to picking up real variations in underlying sentiment: attitudes that are more specifically about how the local community is represented are more likely candidates. Finally, the existing analysis is subject to the typical problems of ecological inference: properly analysing the contextual effect of local economies is of real importance.

Drawing on an innovative method of gathering public perceptions related to the local community embedded in a large survey of British public opinion, and integrating this with official small area economic data, this chapter provides empirical evidence of the relevance of the local, and proposes how these relationships should be conceptually understood. It innovates in using the local community as an analytical frame to study discontent and its causes: thus, taking up the challenge put to the discipline by Mutz and Mondak (1997, p. 302) that we should study how people relate to the 'countless subnational collectives' between the individual and national. It does so both with reference to the attitude put under the microscope, 'perceived community representation', and in terms of the causal theories proposed. This chapter finds evidence for three distinct mechanisms driving perceived community representation, demonstrating not just that context (real or perceived) matters but *how* it matters.

Specifically, these are as follows. Firstly, real economic contexts hold a degree of importance, since living in a low-income community is associated with more negative

views of 'community representation'. Secondly, I find evidence for a basic sociotropic dynamic at community-level: negative perceptions of the local economy are associated with more negative views of 'community representation'. Finally, I find negative views of 'community representation' are associated with 'grievance' that one's community is perceived to be facing worse economic conditions compared to the country at large.

Capturing the local in representation perceptions: introducing 'community representation'

In order to approximate the theoretical construct at hand, I use a dependent variable quite different from those used in the literature relating to political discontent. The stalwarts of the discipline (external efficacy, institutional trust, democratic satisfaction and so on) are poorly matched to the task. A central question in this area is distinguishing how people view different political 'subjects': government versus regime; parliament versus parties (Easton, 1975; Klingemann, 1999; Dalton, 2004; Esaiasson *et. al.*, 2015). However, scholars have shown limited interest in how people assess the 'relational element between the entity that represents and the entity that is represented' (Castiglione and Warren, 2006, p. 845). In order to make sense of public attitudes to their representation, research must address how said attitudes depend on what is presented as the 'objects': i.e., the represented group. However, this is a component of question design that has been given only perfunctory attention.

The issue is not confined to them, but for the sake of illustration, let us consider the classic 'external efficacy' items from the American National Election Study: 'People like me don't have any say about what the government does', and 'I don't think public officials care much what people like me think'.[30] There are two main ambiguities here. Firstly, do people bring 'egotropic' considerations – those related to how an

[30] In the British Election Studies, these questions are adapted by changing the subject, but not the object: for instance, successive iterations have asked respondents to indicate their agreement with the statement that 'politicians don't care about people like me'.

individual perceives their own situation - to the table, as Campbell et al. (1954) seemed to believe? Or, alternatively, are their responses based in perceptions of wider societal or 'sociotropic' conditions, as Ulbig (2008) suggests? Secondly, if their responses are sociotropic, the ambiguities in what is meant by 'people like me' suggests that people can bring any one of their heterogenous identities to bear, which they in some way sample from or weigh-up (Zaller and Feldman, 1992) in a way that is unknowable from the researcher's point of view. The role that local factors will play is unclear and liable to inconsistency. Furthermore, the survey context may activate some of these identities while leaving others dormant: asking dozens of questions about party politics could make someone who, day-to-day, thinks of themselves as a Mancunian or Londoner first-and-foremost, act as a down-the-line partisan in their responses.

This study is the first to position 'local community' as the 'objects' of representation. Specifically, the survey question used asks 'How much do you think the interests and views of people in your local community are listened to when important decisions affecting them are made by national government?' (Fieldhouse *et al*, 2016). This question, while innovative in some respects, mirrors Esaiasson *et al.*'s (2015) concept of 'perceived responsiveness', developed from theoretical literature on representation. It incorporates the insights of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2001), who state that the way policies are produced matters as much (if not more) to people than the policies themselves – giving reason to believe process questions such as this generate responses with real affective content. It also specifies that the decisions taken have real stakes for the local area. Thus, negative responses are more likely to communicate something about a failure to meet normative expectations.[31] For the purposes of this chapter I will refer to the construct measured by this dependent variable as 'perceived community representation'.

Specifying 'national' government is useful because it is should be easily understood that people's views of their *local* government – which, in the British context, are usually more positive than those of the central government (Hansard Society, 2019) –

[31] Although we do not know precisely where people's expectations lie, this is also an issue that affects most research on external efficacy, perceived responsiveness and so on.

are not sought here. I nonetheless acknowledge certain ambiguities in the chosen dependent variable. It may be that the concept of perceived 'community representation', as expressed through this variable, captures attitudes to both elected government officials and unelected officials such as civil servants. Scholars have noted that (senior) civil servants are increasingly part of the 'public face' of government in the UK and are sometimes drawn into effective advocacy for it (e.g. Grube, 2015). It is not undesirable if attitudes to non-elected officials are captured, however, as some (e.g. Jones and Stewart, 2012) have argued that Britain's central civil servants are to some extent responsible for the degree of responsiveness to local need (and why it is often lacking, as they are accused of operating a system of 'command and control' over their local counterparts).

A more genuine challenge in using this variable is that it is not entirely clear whether it refers to 'specific' or 'diffuse' evaluations: a negative response about representation by 'national government' could conceivably capture attitudes both towards the incumbent, and a general sense of a remote, uncaring state 'regime'. Because I am more interested in understanding the roots of the latter than the former, I control for government approval, which implies that the remaining variance to be explained refers to a more 'diffuse' attitude.

In short, perceived 'community representation' builds on existing literature while incorporating an original focus on community. It refers to perceived responsiveness in the policy process to local people by central government actors, potentially non-elected as well as elected. Where there are undesirable ambiguities in the question wording, these are addressed where possible by decisions around modelling and controls.

Bringing geography in

Britain is an appropriate test-case for the effects of spatial inequalities. Notably, this country is among the top ten OECD countries for inter-region gaps in disposable income (McCann, 2016). Long-term processes, related to the legacy of deindustrialisation and the increased importance of property wealth, are

compounded by shorter-term effects brought on by the Great Recession of the late 2000s and early 2010s. For instance, Forth (2017) finds that in the period between 2007 and 2011, the decline experienced by the economy of South Yorkshire (as measured by GDP per capita) was almost as large as that of Greece; and it has since experienced very little of the return to growth found in areas such as London. Wealth inequalities between areas are even more stark: as of 2013, in Kensington and Chelsea, the unitary authority in Britain with the highest property prices, these were nearly twenty times those seen in Blaenau and Gwent (Savage, 2015). It is recognised that these divergent economic outcomes have broader social impacts: Buchan et al. (2017) find compelling evidence of the North-South divide in a large and widening gap in early mortality since 1995. Surveys suggest awareness of the regional dimension of Britain's inequalities: in a 2014 survey, nearly half of respondents agreed that 'Britain's economy is more regionally divided than it was 30 years ago' (Johnson, 2015).

Yet the focus on inequality as a regional phenomenon may obscure how spatially concentrated disadvantage is in Britain. While it is generally the case that the North is home to most of Britain's poorest areas, the most deprived place in England is the Essex seaside village of Jaywick (Gill, 2015): parts of Thanet in Kent and Great Yarmouth in Norfolk join it in the top twenty. It is not merely that a large or well-populated area can have its outliers, but also that, in many areas, there is no 'normal': as Dorling and Pritchard (2010) put it, 'poverty and wealth are fractal in their geographies' (p. 90). At the level of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), a small statistical area comprising around 1-3000 residents, areas in Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester at the 5th decile of deprivation are on average bordered by at least one LSOA where 35% of people are income deprived and one LSOA where just 10% of people are income deprived. In the city of Glasgow, even areas with the least deprivation are on average bordered by at least one area where 30% of people are income deprived (Livingston et al., 2013). The extent of concentration means that, to explore the effects of people's lived reality, economic context should be considered in a more localised fashion than has so far been utilised in research into discontent.

However, it remains to be demonstrated what the relevance of local conditions really

is. Why is it that people should care about community conditions, rather than merely their personal situation? Do community conditions matter only in an absolute sense, or is the perception that one's area is being 'left behind' (by the country at large) also important? In the following sections, these questions shall be addressed by rethinking the existing literature on discontent that addresses economic factors. Since I have no strong theoretical priors about which 'discontent' attitudes perceived community representation is most related to, I draw from the literature liberally: while I recognise that there are important differences between (for instance) literatures on trust, democratic satisfaction and external efficacy, these may all give useful guidance as to how local factors may function.

Three theories of the economy and community representation

Resource effects and their application to communities

In the trust literature, scholars frequently invoke 'rational choice' explanations (Cook and Santana, 2018), wherein trust is based on self-interest. Such a view is echoed by Newton *et al.* (2018, p. 48) who state simply that the affluent – as society's 'winners' – should be less likely to be dissatisfied with 'social arrangements that have served them well', and thus more likely to trust the system. For the most part, existing studies suggest that this assumption holds.[32] In the United States, some studies have detected income effects (Soss 1999; Jackson 1995), which connected higher levels of household income to higher levels of 'external political efficacy' (i.e. more positive views of whether politics is responsive to people like oneself). Similarly, studies with large cross-national data sources have demonstrated some association of higher income with increased trust (Van Der Meer and Dekker, 2013) and higher satisfaction with democracy (Castillo, 2006).

It is notable that income appears to have the same effects across these different forms of political satisfaction/discontent. This is not the case for another key

[32] See e. g. Davis and Hitt (2017) for a counter-example in the context of the United States.

'resource', education, where higher education tends to increase 'external efficacy', but has been found to *decrease* satisfaction with democracy, in the sense of falling short of citizen expectations (Norris, 2011). As such, there may be something particular about the experience of living on a low income that catalyses a somewhat generalised discontent with politics.

This may be derived from various sources. In part, it may stem from inequalities of representation. Though not as comprehensively tested in the British context, Gilens and Page (2014) have demonstrated for the United States that 'economic elites' and business interests have substantial impacts on government policy, while 'average citizens' and mass interest groups do not. Peters and Ensink (2014) show for Europe that government welfare state effort is more responsive to the preferences of better-off groups than to the poor, especially where their preferences diverge most. Secondly, economic change, whereby those on low incomes have experienced stagnating wages (Lansley, 2011), may cause people to perceive that politicians fail to deliver for them, regardless of policy congruence. There may be an element of social distance from professional politicians: MPs — and cabinet ministers even more so — are high earners by definition and so may be seen by people on low incomes as less capable of understanding their needs. Allen and Sarmiento-Mirwaldt (2015) find that those with incomes below £40,000 were significantly more likely to feel a 'discommunion of interests' between themselves and MPs: that is, to feel that MPs were less affected by economic conditions and less reliant on public services. Finally, a phenomenon like political trust is partly 'anticipatory': trust is highest not only because of current conditions, but when one can also expect the best in the future (Scheidegger and Staerklé, 2011). Yet many people on low incomes are never far from circumstances of real poverty and tend to face greater challenges of employment insecurity: they may therefore have less confidence that any success they experience will be sustained.

Although we lack evidence on the effects of low income as a contextual factor, it is possible that it matters at a contextual level for much the same reasons: under-representation of the poor in policy, an apparent failure of politics to deliver for the community, a social distance from its people, and an inability to expect a good future

for the community. Indeed, it may be easier for the public to diagnose systemic failings from observing patterns of experience in their community (repeated job losses, business closures, homelessness, evictions and so on) than it is for them to connect their own, limited experience to political failure, as personal ordeals are often 'compartmentalized' (Sears, 1993, p. 144) and 'depoliticised' (Mutz, 1992).

While people will inarguably have imperfect knowledge of their community's 'resources', the spatial proximity of poorer and richer areas in Britain provides people with some means of gauging conditions: most people are likely to have some yardstick for what a community that is doing well or doing badly would look like. As such, it is likely that people have at least a broad understanding of economic conditions in their area. The above leads to my first hypothesis.

H1: *a higher average local income is associated with positive views of community representation.*

It is essential to acknowledge at this point that the take-home pay of locals may not be the proximate cause of an income effect. For the purposes of this chapter, any effect of income should properly be considered as a proxy for the effect of occupying a broadly higher or lower position in a hierarchy of local economies: that is to say, being advantaged in the distribution of economic resources. For this reason, I refer to this explanation as the *community resource* model of perceived community representation.

The role of 'sociotropic' perceptions and why the local should matter

While the processes I investigate here should not be devoid of a material foundation, how individuals perceive their world is crucial. Perhaps surprisingly, the evidence for the importance of economic perceptions to relevant evaluations is somewhat more circumspect than that for concrete individual 'resources'. At the macro-level, Alesina and Wacziarg (2000) provide a compelling explanation for the long-term decline of trust across most nations in the developed world, arguing that the end of the post-war years of growth and stability has led to long-term loss of confidence in the government's ability to provide good economic conditions, although Dalton (2016)

disputes this. In cross-sectional, individual-level studies, findings are inconsistent as to whether poor national economic perceptions are responsible for a lack of trust (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015): for instance, Citrin and Green (1986) found that their influence in the USA varied dramatically across a four-year period in the early 1980s.

While it remains an open question as to how far economic perceptions affect political discontent, there is a near-consensus that, if they do, rather than 'egotropic' evaluations – those related to how an individual perceives their own situation – it is 'sociotropic' evaluations – those that pertain to national economic conditions – that matter. Voters, in the view of Anderson and Mendes (2005, p. 9), 'blame the government less for their personal economic difficulties than for failing to produce good economic outcomes for the country as a whole' – only the former, they find, influences trust in government.

What is left mostly unaddressed by the literature is whether perceptions of the local economy also hold any importance. However, there is a firm theoretical foundation for this expectation. The basis for the importance of national-level evaluations is believed to be two-fold: first, it may be based on 'pro-social' concern for others; second, it may be based on an expectation that national conditions indicate the economic risks and benefits that one can personally expect in future (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981, p. 132). Both, however, indicate that perceptions of local circumstances should be of real significance. The pro-social factor should be present: if anything, in-group sentiment is likely to be stronger in the real community (populated by people we know and care about) than in the 'imagined community' of the nation-state. Secondly, since people usually work close to their home, people are likely to give some weight to local economic conditions when they consider their personal prospects.[33]

Beyond the theoretical, this argument is supported to some degree by existing empirical research. Firstly, in the context of the United States, Rogers (2014) demonstrated that 'communotropic' economic perceptions affected Congressional approval, controlling for both personal and national equivalents. Since Congress is a

[33] Over 60% of people work at home or under 10 kilometres from their home (ONS, 2014.)

relevant representative body, it is plausible that this reflects local circumstances shaping perceptions of the underlying quality of representation. Secondly, scholars in the field of electoral geography have shown that localised considerations – such as views of whether one's local area has been getting more or less prosperous than other parts of Britain – influence people's political judgements in a British context, namely their votes at General Elections (Pattie and Johnston., 1995, Tunstall *et. al.*, 2000, Johnston and Pattie, 2006). Thus, localised conditions have a proven importance in British politics, and have been shown (albeit in a different national context) to influence considerations connected to representation.

From this follows a basic proposition: evaluations of the representation of one's community should be influenced by so-called 'communotropic' perceptions of the local economy (Rogers, 2014). This general expectation takes the form of two specific hypotheses.

H2a: *negative views of recent change in the local economy are associated with negative views of community representation*.

H2b: *the perception of a higher rate of unemployment in one's community is associated with negative views of community representation.*

This explanation shall henceforth be referred to as the *communotropic* model of perceived community representation.

Distributive justice and a theory of 'grievance'

The final theoretical expectation I present here is derived from core principles of the 'distributive justice' literature, particularly the class of distributive justice theories focused on 'fraternal' or group-based 'relative deprivation', or RD (Runciman, 1966). Under principles of distributive justice, when a group is not conferred the benefits that accrue to 'salient others' (Tyler *et al*., 1992, p. 122), members of that group tend to experience a sense of *grievance*, which informs their confidence in the system that is perceived as responsible for distributing resources (in this instance, government or the political system as a whole). As Hooghe *et al.* (2017) have lamented, the distributive justice perspective is rarely applied in research on trust (and similarly, the

literature linking distributive justice to other discontent outcomes is rather barren). However, there is a substantial body of work connecting relative deprivation to engagement in protest (van Zomeren *et al*, 2008) and non-co-operation with authority (Verboon and Goslinga, 2009), from which feelings of discontent with authority can most likely be inferred. Indeed, recent work by Zhang and Zhou (2018) has made the direct connection: they show using experiments that trust in government mediates the effect of group-based distributive justice on non-cooperation with authorities. It should be acknowledged that RD, as operationalised in these studies, does not specifically refer to inter-group comparisons, such as the 'local-national' dynamic investigated here. Focusing specifically on intergroup comparisons, Smith et. al. (2012, p. 216) find that across nine studies, RD was 'solidly associated with negative attitudes towards the larger system', such as support for political authorities.

Applying this basic principle to the local/national dynamic, it follows that people may be especially likely to experience discontent with the representation of their community when they perceive the economic situation in their local area as worse than that which exists nationally. This does make an assumption that 'national conditions' are indeed a relevant 'reference group' for social comparison. However, this is also a common issue in the RD literature in general: as Budria and Ferrer-I-Carbonell (2019, p. 10) have noted, 'large-scale surveys do not contain direct questions about the composition of the reference groups'. Instead, the relevant reference group is often inferred from results (Delhey and Kohler, 2006).

One of the necessary pre-conditions for a 'grievance' effect is that people actually attribute the responsibility for economic conditions to government, in some respect. It is generally acknowledged that attributions are 'important determinants of judgements, decisions and behaviour' (Ige, 2014, p. 2180). It might be argued that the attribution of responsibility for the local economy is not as clear as for the national economy, and so people experiencing a poor local economy are less likely to blame the authorities. It might also be argued that, even if both the quality of the local and national economy were attributed to politics, people might not hold government responsible for unequal prosperity. However, Johnston and Pattie (2002), using the 1997 BES, show that most people (56%) do indeed hold 'government policies'

responsible for how economic development at the local level had compared to 'other parts of Britain' over the previous five years. The existence of attribution for local, national *and* relative conditions suggests that the 'grievance effect' is a plausible result of relative deprivation perceptions.

Although people frequently attribute responsibility to the government, I expect that they will do so in a biased way and this is consequential for the grievance hypothesis. Theoretically, this is based in 'group justification' theory, wherein people experience a psychological need to 'develop and maintain favourable images of one's own group', in this instance members of one's geographic community (Jost and Banaaji, 1994). People who believe they live in a poorly-performing area, and believe that the national situation is significantly better, might seek external causes for the relative deprivation of their in-group, which do not reflect on the qualities of local inhabitants. They may, therefore, be more likely to understand the area's underperformance as an unjust result of political failure. However, those who believe they live in a high-performing area, but that the national economy is performing poorly, may be less keen to attribute their relative advantage to political choices that have benefited their area and its inhabitants.

In other words, people tend to blame political processes rather than credit them, in line with the general perspective of 'grievance asymmetry theory' in the economic voting literature.[34] Indeed, Johnston and Pattie (2002) found that those who perceived the local economy to have got worse (compared to others) were substantially more likely to blame the government for what had happened in their area: as such, it seems that the asymmetries are likely to translate to 'communotropic' perceptions.

Thus, the following expectation presents itself: the more positive the view of national economic performance, the stronger the association between negative views of the local economy and negative views of community representation. This I shall term the *grievance* model of perceived community representation. Specifically, it is represented by the following hypotheses.

[34] See Mueller (1970) for the original statement of the theory.

H3a: *the more positive the view of the national economy, the stronger the association between negative views of the local economy and negative views of community representation.*

H3b: *the lower the estimate of national unemployment, the stronger the association between higher estimates of local unemployment and negative views of community representation.*

Data and methods

Data and dependent variable

I use a merged dataset, combining survey data on respondents in England and Wales[35] from Wave Three of the British Election Study Internet Panel (Fieldhouse *et al*., 2016: fieldwork September to October 2014) with official statistics at the Middle Super Output Area level. Wave Three applied an innovative survey method to elicit specific respondent considerations about their 'community'. Respondents are asked to draw on a digital map the area which they consider defines their 'community', with the map initially centred on their household. Respondents were subsequently asked 'How much do you think the interests and views of people in your local community are listened to when important decisions affecting them are made by national government?', rating this on a scale of 1-4 from 'not at all' to 'a great deal', along with a wider battery of questions.

Although the measure is ordinal, ordinal models violated the proportional odds assumption, according to common tests (e.g. Brant, 1990), potentially creating 'a misleading impression of how the outcome and explanatory variables are related' (Williams, 2016). Although certain statistical workarounds exist (such as generalised ordered logistic regression), these are cumbersome to present and often poorly understood (Williams, 2016). As such, I chose to dichotomise the DV. However, due to the distribution of responses, standard 'median split' practice for dichotomisation did

[35] Unlike other chapters, the empirical analysis for this chapter does not use data from Scotland. This is because the contextual data produced by the Office of National Statistics is available only for England and Wales.

not offer a single logical cut-point. The DV could be cut between 'none at all' and 'not very much', or between 'not very much' and 'somewhat'. I chose the former. Feeling 'not at all' listened to is a clearer signal that a democratic expectation is being violated than 'not very much' and should be more clearly associated with discontent. This is supported by the fact that 'not very much' respondents look more different to 'not at all' respondents than they do to 'somewhat' and 'a great deal' respondents in terms of their higher levels of more general 'discontent', as measured through efficacy, trust and democratic satisfaction.[36] From the standpoint of model fit, dichotomising between 'not at all' and 'not very much' also performed better than the alternative.

The choice of dependent variable is primarily justified on theoretical grounds. However, in Appendix D, I undertake an empirical validation of the dependent variable, using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to test the principle that it measures a distinctive attitude to those yielded by the existing repertoire of questions (satisfaction with democracy, external efficacy, government satisfaction, perceptions of politicians and so on: the full list is included in Table D-1). The analysis did not yield a satisfying factor solution (see Tables D-2 and D-3), but the analysis of Squared Multiple Correlations between the items displayed very high specific variance (Child, 2006) for the dependent variable. As Samuels states, this is often indicative of an additional factor that requires further items to detect in EFA. Considering this, it is unlikely that the variable taps a more generalised discontent, and more likely that it measures something genuinely distinctive.

Independent variables

The independent variables are as follows. Firstly, I model the effects of retrospective economic perceptions, for both national and community-related perceptions. The former is measured by asking 'How do you think the general economic situation in this country has changed over the last 12 months?'. For the latter, respondents are asked 'Thinking about your local community, how do you think the general economic

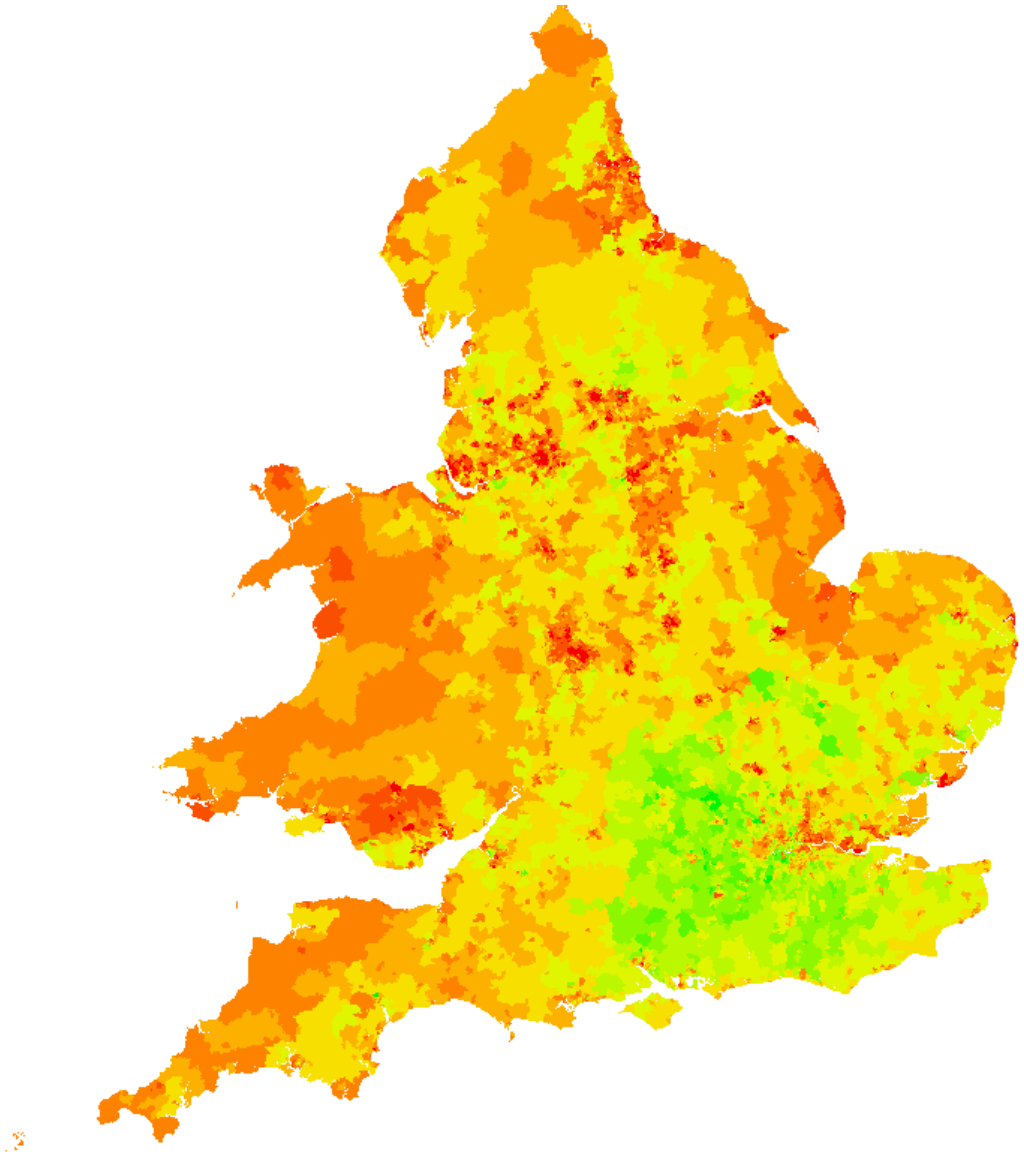
[36] For example, the mean of satisfaction with UK democracy (1-4 scale) is 2.05 for 'not at all' respondents, 2.48 for 'not very much' respondents and 2.68 for 'somewhat' respondents.

situation has changed over the last 12 months?'. These Likert scales are reversed such that higher numbers denote increasing negativity about each kind of economic perception. For simplicity of interpretation, these are treated as continuous in the models. Perceived unemployment rates in one's community/the country as a whole are measured by a question asking respondents to place a marker for each on the same slider from zero to 100 per cent, encouraging respondents to gauge one against the other.

In addition, objective context is measured at the Middle Super Output Area level for small areas in England and Wales: small census areas of between 5,000 and 15,000 people. The BES offers a wide variety of potential contextual 'containers', linking respondents to large Government Office Regions, local authorities, Parliamentary constituencies, and, at the smallest level, MSOAs. My decision to use MSOAs is informed by two factors. Firstly, MSOAs most accurately capture the scale of objective spatial inequalities within Britain, which is more evident the less aggregation is undertaken. Secondly, small areas are necessary because they most closely approximate the kinds of areas which people consider to be their 'community', according to prior research. Wong et. al. (2017) find that, using the mapping method replicated in the BES, Canadians' community maps had a median area of twelve square kilometres; MSOAs in England and Wales have a mean of twenty-one squared kilometres in area. By comparison, the mean constituency in England and Wales encompasses 263 square kilometres, which indicates the utility of far more granular data.

The specific variable at MSOA-level is the median net household income, based on model-based estimates produced by the ONS for 2014, which include all major income sources net of various outgoings such as taxes, rates and housing costs. Mapped across England and Wales (Figure 5-1), the nuances of economic geography become further apparent, again reinforcing the decision to use more localized contexts. However, despite this complexity, it is evident that any contextual effect would have a general tendency to make Wales, and the rest of England, feel less well-represented than the South East.

Figure 5-1. Median net household income deciles (after outgoings) by Middle Super Output Area, 2014. Dark red = lowest incomes; light green = highest.



Control variables

In all models, individual-level socio-economic controls are included, in order to assess the presence and magnitude of their effects relative to those deriving from local factors. The principle decision taken in this regard was to control for household income, based on the ordinal variable of self-reported gross annual income by income category in the British Election Study. However, as Pickett and Pearl (2001, pp. 119-20) have noted, 'in studies with only a single individual-level SES [socio-economic status]

variable, the neighbourhood-level SES variables may be capturing unmeasured individual-level variation'. As such, I also include a four-category variable for respondent qualifications, another important component of SES, and a three-category measure of working status (in work or study; working-age out of work; retired) Gender, age, and marital status are included as further demographic controls. Additionally, all models control for government approval (on a 1-4 scale), and for party identification, since the 'winner-loser gap' in levels of discontent is a 'consistent and persistent' feature of public opinion in democratic systems (Anderson *et al.*, 2005, p. 60).

At the contextual level, I include controls measuring urban-rural status of the community, which has been a particular concern in more recent research. This suggests that places outside of major cities in England often perceive 'relative social, political and economic deprivation' (Jennings, 2017). Specifically, I use a measure of the population density of the MSOA. While official measures of urban-rural status exist, the number of categories is too small – failing to capture, in particular, the differences between cities and small towns. Although a continuous measure of population density has its weaknesses – such as failing to identify a potential non-linear relationship whereby towns are highest in discontent (Jennings, 2017) – it ought to suffice as a control. Indeed, it is correlated – albeit weakly – to the measure of local incomes, such that the denser a place is, the worse-off it is. Thus, the inclusion of this control should aid in the measurement of the contextual effect of local economy.

Testing against 'cultural' factors

Drawing on the literature on radical right voting, I take a particular focus on testing against 'cultural' factors, which constitute a plausible alternative set of influences on perceived community representation. In practice, the cultural factors identified by these studies usually relate to ethnic diversity, foreign-born populations and immigration (Amengay and Stockemer, 2018). It is possible that, as in the radical right literature, the effect of the (real or perceived) economic context is overestimated if measurements of 'cultural' context are omitted.

The set-up of testing economic factors against cultural ones is not intended to imply

a total dichotomy between them: I acknowledge that perceived economic and 'cultural' context may be related, potentially reciprocally (Lamerís *et al*, 2018a and 2018b). Nonetheless, it is unclear how strong their relationship is and how applicable the underlying theory is to Britain, while empirical tests suggest that in my data there are only modest correlations between the two (Table D-4). These issues are explored and tested in Appendix D. As such, I maintain that the approach of using 'cultural' controls is preferable, regardless of the persistence of mild endogeneity concerns, given the alternate risk of omitted variable bias.

For the models which deal with the effects of perceptions of the local economy (i.e., the communotropic and grievance models), I use perceived cultural contexts as the relevant controls. Specifically, these are the respondent's estimate of the proportion of the local population which is White, the estimated proportion of those born outside the UK, and the respondent's perception of whether their community has become more diverse (on a 1-5 scale).[37] The last of these is of particular utility, because the nub of the cultural explanation does not hinge on numbers *per se*, but on a 'cultural backlash' against the perceived decline in the 'social centrality' of white natives (Gest *et. al.* 2017, p. 1698). Should economic perceptions still have explanatory power, we would be in possession of genuine evidence that culture does not trump economics in explaining why people feel their communities are poorly represented.

For the models that test the effects of real economic contexts, I include alternative 'real' cultural contexts. These are selected in order to parallel the perceived cultural contexts mentioned above. I use the percentage of the population of the MSOA in 2011 (the most recent census year) which is non-White and non-UK born. To estimate changes in diversity, I calculate the percentage point growth in the proportion of non-Whites between 2001 and 2011 in the MSOA. Due to the very large correlations between all three of these variables, separate models are specified.

[37] Although the reader might expect collinearity between these variables, the correlations are not high, ranging from .06 to -.26 and thus including them in the same model is not problematic.

Modelling contextual effects

The binary logistic models specified below are at the single-level, including those attempting to assess contextual effects. This choice is, first and foremost, a consequence of the sparse data structure encountered, which identifies 6,023 respondents in 3,526 MSOAs (for an average of 1.7 respondents per MSOA). The literature suggests that the utility of multi-level (ML) models may be compromised at such degrees of sparseness: for instance, Clarke and Wheaton (2007) recommends a minimum of five observations per group for ML modelling. Furthermore, it can be assumed that no local-level clustering (which would necessitate ML) occurs through the data collection method, as might occur with a multi-stage sampling method: for instance, where individuals are selected within neighbourhoods.

Utilising single-level models does result in one important limitation, in that it is not possible to estimate and compare the between-places and between-individuals variance, nor is it possible to assess the degree to which between-places variance is explained by economic context. As such, this chapter makes no claims as to the extent of the importance of context, nor whether economic context is the dominant factor in local context.

Results

The effect of real conditions

In the first instance, it is crucial to understand how far attitudes vary predictably according to real economic resources in the community – which should serve as the most direct test of whether spatial inequality is a genuinely important phenomenon determining how people feel about representation. In order to test the validity of the 'community resource' model, I specify Models 1a-c. (Table 5-1).

Models 1a-c deliberately omit the local economic perceptions (of change and unemployment), which are expected to be partly derived from the 'real' local conditions as captured through the variable for local average incomes. It should be apparent that

Table 5-1. The effects of economic context on the probability of high discontent with community representation.

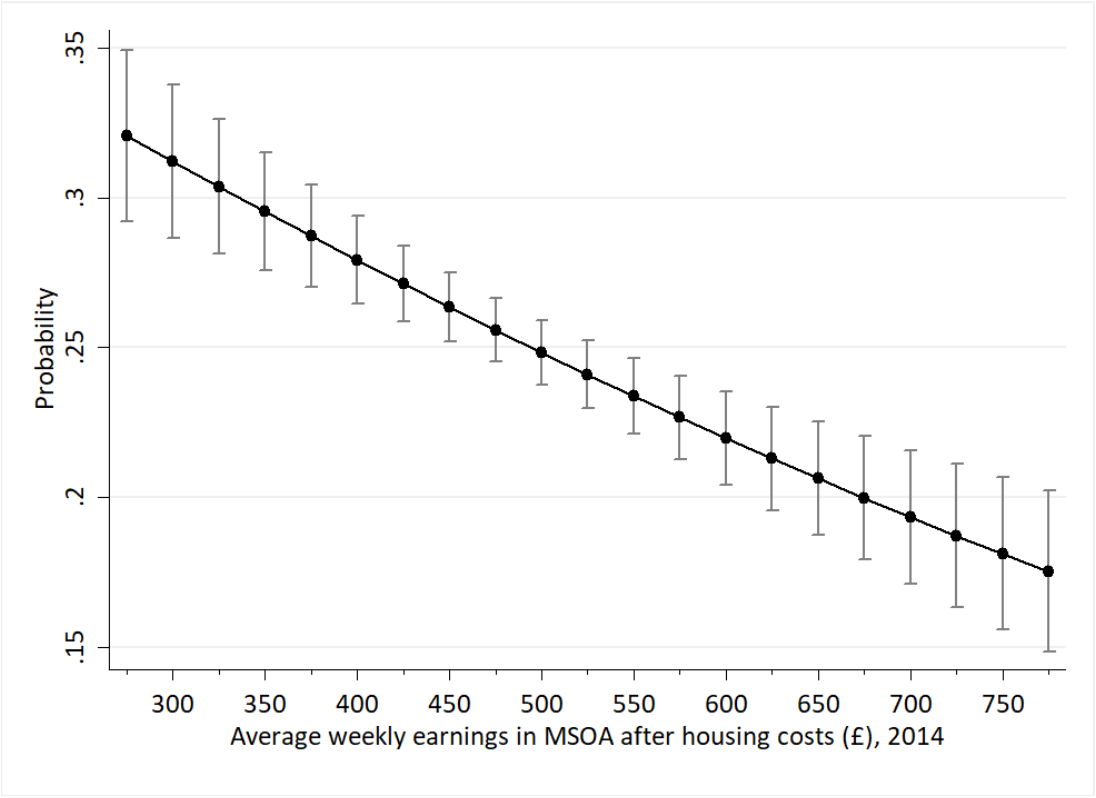
Variables	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c
Age (years)	006* (.003)	.006* (.003)	.006 (.003)
Gender: female	-.298*** (.064)	-.296*** (.064)	-.299*** (.064)
Education (ref. cat.: no quals)			
GCSE	-.098 (.122)	-.098 (.122)	-.103 (.121)
A-level	-.032 (.131)	-.033 (.131)	-.035 (.131)
University	-.012 (.123)	-.014 (.123)	-.012 (.123).
Household income	-.001 (.011)	-.001 (.011)	-.001 (.011)
Working status (ref: in work)			
Out of work	.096 (.100)	.095 (.100)	.098 (.100)
Retired	-.324** (.093)	-.324** (.093)	-.325** (.093)
Marital status: married	-.073 (.072)	-.070 (.072)	-.078 (.072)
Government approval	-.560*** (.037)	-.560*** (.037)	-.559*** (.037)
P.P. increase non-white in MSOA (01-11)	.004 (.007)		
% non-white in MSOA (2011)		.002 (.003)	
% foreign born in MSOA (2011)			-.001 (.004)
Population density in MSOA (2014)	-.004*** (.001)	-.005*** (.001)	-.004** (.001)
Average weekly earnings in MSOA (£10s)	-.017*** (.003)	-.017*** (.003)	-.017*** (.003)
R square	.078	.078	.078
N	*6,023*	*6,023*	*6,023*

Notes: Models include controls for party ID (not shown here due to number of categories and available space). ** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

the results also support the resource model. Models 1a-c show that we can reject the null in the case of H1, which proposed that *a higher average local income is associated with positive views of community representation*. Average weekly income after housing costs had a highly significant effect, and in the expected direction: higher local incomes are associated with a lower probability of believing one's community is 'not at all' listened to (see Figure 5-2).[38]

[38] Above (see 'modelling contextual effects') I discussed my decision to use single-level models. However, the reader may remain curious about the consequences of this decision. I therefore ran the models specifying the Middle Super Output Area(MSOA) as the level-2 unit. No substantive results, including the size of standard errors, are altered by the decision to use an alternative multilevel model

Figure 5-2. The effect of average weekly earnings in one's Middle Super Output Area on the probability of high discontent with community representation.



Notes: error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted probabilities.

Notably, this effect of income is not found at an individual-level: people who estimate their household income in the higher brackets do not tend to believe their communities are better represented. Together, these findings provide evidence of the relevance of community over individual circumstances in forming perceptions of the representation of localities.

Communotropic versus conventional

The second line of enquiry pursued here concerns the basic relevance of 'communotropic' *perceptions*. These shall be contrasted with the 'conventional' model, which expresses the contribution of the range of predictors discussed in the established literature.[39] Specifically, it encapsulates the effects of individual-level resources

[39] Albeit this this literature uses different dependent variables e.g. external efficacy, satisfaction with democracy, etc.

(household income, level of education, working status), personal experience (retrospective household finances), and national-level economic perceptions (retrospective general economy, and perceived national unemployment rate).

It was argued that negative views of the local economy should be associated with higher discontent with the representation of one's community by central government. This general theory was expressed by two specific hypotheses. Firstly, H2a stated that *negative views of recent change in the local economy are associated with negative views of community representation*. Model 3 (Table 5-2) indicates that it is indeed possible to reject the null hypothesis. The effect of more negative opinions about the local economy's performance in the past year is positively-signed, and highly significant: thus, negative views of the local economy are associated with negative views of community representation. Furthermore, Model 3 indicates that this relationship is not specific to any single item capturing local economic perceptions. H2b stated that *the perception of a higher rate of unemployment in one's community is associated with negative views of community representation*, and in this instance we can also reject the null hypothesis. From Model 3, we can observe a positive relationship between the respondent's estimated level of unemployment in one's community and negative views of community representation. Hence, Model 3 provides considerable support for the communotropic model.

To illuminate the contribution of communotropic factors, three further findings can be highlighted. Firstly, the effect size of local retrospective perceptions is substantial. Moving from the most positive to the most negative perception increases the predicted probability of expressing high negativity from 0.10 to 0.39. Secondly, the communotropic model appears to have substantially better fit with the data compared to the 'conventional' model, as displayed by all three fit statistics (AIC, BIC, and R^2). Thirdly, whereas in the conventional model (2) perceptions of the change in the national economy had a significant effect, this does not occur when the variables measuring communotropic factors (3) are included. It follows from the above, as well as from the support found for H2a and H2b, that the communotropic model is of significant value.

Table 5-2. The effects of economic perceptions on the probability of high discontent with community representation.

	Conventional	**Communotropic**	**Grievance**	
Variables	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Age (years)	.004 (.003)	.005 (.003)	.003 (.003)	.005 (.003)
Gender: female	-.179* (.072)	-.179 (.073)	-.240*** (.071)	-.197** (.005)
Education (ref: no quals)				
GCSE	-.272* (.134)	-.252 (.136)	-.238 (.136)	-.254 (.135)
A-level	-.176 (.144)	-.142 (.155)	-.100 (.144)	-.167 (.145)
University	-.257 (.136)	-.029 (.145)	-.175 (.136)	-.230 (.148)
Household income	-.002 (.012)	.021 (.013)	.011 (.012)	.002 (.012)
Work status (ref: in work/study)				
Out of work	.068 (.110)	-.032 (.119)	.042 (.037)	.054 (.110)
Retired	-.261* (.101)	-.241* (.109)	-.244* (.102)	-.276*** (.101)
Marital status: married	-.040 (.078)	-.109 (.085)	-.087 (.079)	-.038 (.078)
Government approval (low-high)	-.492*** (.044)	-.450*** (.045)	-.446*** (.044)	-.541*** (.041)
Perceived diversity increase	.153*** (.046)	.098* (.047)	.106* (.047)	.143** (.046)
Estimated percentage white	.006* (.002)	.006** (.002)	.006* (.002)	.006* (.002)
Estimated percentage non-UK	-.001 (.001)	-.002 (.001)	-.002 (.001)	-.002 (.001)
Negativity – household finances	.072 (.043)	-.015 (.043)	-.013 (.043)	.112* (.039)
Negativity – national economy	.134** (.042)	.035 (.043)	.042 (.097)	
Negativity – local economy		.462*** (.051)	.511*** (.119)	
Estimate national unemployment (low-high)	-.008** (.002)	-.013*** (.003)		-.007 (.004)
Estimate local unemployment (low-high)		007* (.003)		.017*** (.004)
National * local economic negativity			.012 (.037)	
Estimate of local * estimate of national unemployment				-.0002* (.000)
R square	.080	.098	.094	.082
N	*5,152*	*5,152*	*5,152*	*5,152*

Notes: Models include controls for party identification (not shown here due to number of categories).
** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

The role of grievance

The third theoretical proposition was the 'grievance model', which posited that people would make more negative judgements of community representation if they saw their community as being 'left behind' compared to the nation as a whole. In Models 4 and 5, I test the grievance model over two distinct variants of economic perceptions. Firstly, I include a variable for level of economic negativity: one relating to negativity about one's local community, and one relating to the national situation. H3a states that *the more positive the view of the national economy, the stronger the association between negative views of the local economy and negative views of community representation.* Support for the grievance model, in this case, would arise if the interaction term between these variables were negative, meaning the lower the level of negativity about the national economy, the larger is the effect of negativity about the local economy in increasing the propensity for negative views (and vice versa). From Model 4, we observe that the expected relationship is not found in the case of local and national economic evaluations. As such, we fail to reject the null hypothesis for H3a.

Secondly, in Model 5, I model the interaction of national and local unemployment. Similar to the above, H3b states that the lower the estimate of national unemployment, the stronger the association between higher estimates of local unemployment and negative views of community representation. Again, support for the grievance model would arise if the interaction term were negative, indicating that the lower the estimate of national unemployment, the larger is the effect of a high estimate of local unemployment in increasing the propensity for negative views (and vice versa). In this instance, the expected relationship does emerge, thereby offering support to the grievance model. It has been argued by Ai and Norton (2003) that interaction effects in logit and probit models can be misspecified by conventional techniques. To rule out the possibility of a false positive, I calculate the 'cross-derivative' using inteff in STATA (Norton, Wang and Ai, 2004). This confirmed that the interaction was highly significant, in the correct direction, and equivalent in size.

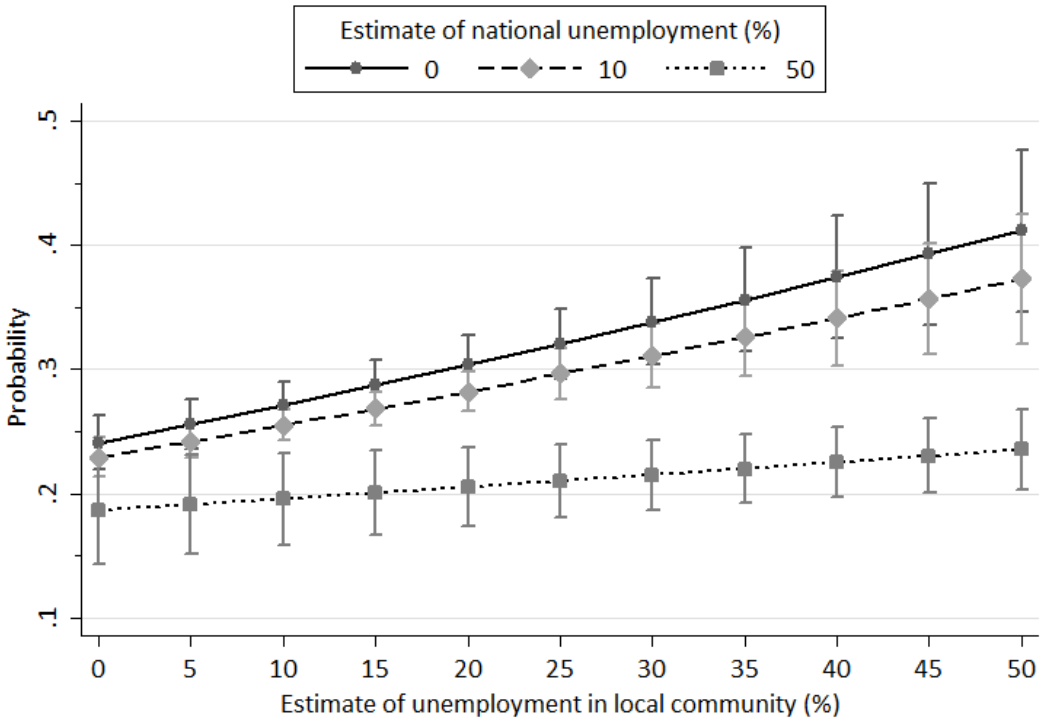
The grievance effect, both in direction and substantive size, can be better understood

from graphical depictions. It should first be noted that, although there are cases across the full range of estimates for both local and national unemployment, these are concentrated at the lower end: understandably, few people think that everyone or nearly everyone is unemployed. Therefore, I choose to plot the predicted probability of high discontent at low and high (but not extreme) values: for consistency with the previous chapter, I choose the 95th percentile, or an estimate of 50% unemployment, as the maximum value for both covariates.[40] I take zero as the minimum and plot a third slope holding the estimate of national unemployment at the median (10%). Figure 5-3 shows the predicted probabilities. When national unemployment is estimated at a high level, an increase in the estimate of local unemployment is associated with little-to-no increase in the probability of high discontent with community representation. By contrast, when people think national unemployment is low, the slopes indicate that higher estimates of local unemployment are associated with meaningful increases in the probability of high discontent.

Golder *et al* (2006) and Berry *et al* (2012) have argued that interaction effects can also be demonstrated by the inclusion of marginal effects plots, together with information on the distribution of the variable on the y-axis. In Appendix D, Figure D-1, I show the marginal effect of a unit increase of estimated local unemployment (X) for all values of estimated national unemployment (Z) – overlaid with a histogram of the distribution of national unemployment. The marginal effect of X is significantly greater than 0 for values of Z below 50 and from there to the maximum Z, is not distinguishable from zero.

[40] It might be imagined that high estimates, at a certain point, are so inaccurate that they no longer represent real underlying economic perceptions. However, research suggests that the estimates that people make reflect an understanding that can differ from the formal meaning of a statistic, but that can nonetheless be valid: for instance, Williamson (2018) shows that Americans overestimate foreign aid partly because they perceive it to include overseas military spending. It is possible to imagine an analogy for overestimates of unemployment: e.g. are the retired 'unemployed'?

Figure 5-3. The effect of estimates of local unemployment on the probability of high discontent with community representation given perceived national unemployment.



Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals of the predicted probabilities.

As proposed above, the most likely explanation for the interaction derives from the psychology of group attachment. People who see a much worse situation in their local economy than nationally will tend to want to displace the responsibility from the community itself and are likely to indict the government (or the political system) instead. However, those who perceive their communities to be succeeding ahead of the nation are likely to use this in a process of psychological bolstering that gives credit to the in-group of local people, rather than to assess this as an example of extraordinary success by political authorities.

In spite of the support for H3b, there is a real problem of interpretation here, insofar as H3a was not confirmed. There are two viable explanations. First is that the sense that one's area is falling behind on a 'getting better'/'getting worse' question is not as damaging as falling behind on the unemployment question. In theory, people could see their area as failing to flourish in the short-term, but still possessing

structural advantages over the rest of the country and thus retain the sense of being overall 'winners'. Indeed, I find that the ordering of 'better/worse' and 'higher/lower' unemployment rates were often at odds. Of those who rated the local economy as better than the national economy on the 'general' question, thirty percent deviated, and indicated that local unemployment was higher than national unemployment. Similarly, of those rating the local economy worse, some fifty percent thought there was lower unemployment locally.[41] It is unclear how much of this is due to respondents making a short-term/structural distinction, but it may be enough to blunt the impact of being 'left behind' on 'general' perceptions.

The alternative explanation is survey methodology. This is in two senses. First, the far more fine-grained 0-100 scale for unemployment perceptions may be more suited to the detection of interactions than the five-point Likert scale. For instance, respondents who think the national economy is poor, but the local much worse, are left with little room to indicate the real gulf in their perceptions on the 'general' question but a lot more on the unemployment question. Again, the data supports this. Nearly forty percent of respondents evaluated the local and national economies equally on the 'general' questions, but just eleven percent did so on the unemployment question. Of the forty percent, nearly nine in ten gave either higher or lower estimates for local unemployment than for national.[42] The unemployment question may also shake respondents out of survey-answering strategies which could suppress interaction effects – for instance, 'straight-liners' and 'midpoint stickers' may have to give more consideration to how they answer the unemployment questions than the general ones.

The second possible method effect is that the unemployment questions directly invited a comparison between local and national circumstances in a way that the 'general' questions did not. The local/national unemployment questions were asked

[41] There is a slight tendency on the unemployment questions to think that things are better locally; on the economy 'in general', however, the reverse is true. Though unclear why, one speculative suggestion is that it may reflect media prominence given to the idea of a widespread use of unemployment and other benefits by the 'work-shy', which is perhaps sometimes disconfirmed at a local level while being maintained as a belief about the nation as a whole.

[42] The variance in their estimates was also just as high as in the rest of the sample.

together, while the local/national general economic perceptions were asked in different parts of the survey. Some respondents could therefore use the unemployment scales in a more expressive way than they could the 'general' scales (and as suggested, they could draw particularly dramatic comparisons).

Cultural factors, demographics and other controls

In the results discussed above, I find no evidence to suggest that 'culture trumps economics' in its influence on perceived community representation. Nonetheless, cultural factors are not irrelevant: although none of the variables measuring cultural context had effects, there was a significant effect (in all models) of perceiving one's community as being more White on feeling the community was not represented, and perceiving a growth in community diversity had the same effect. How, precisely, a community's real or perceived cultural context affects discontent is an important question for future work. At the contextual level, I also observe an effect of population density. Specifically, this highlighted that people in less densely populated areas were more likely to be high in discontent, despite the relative affluence of rural areas.

In terms of the individual's demographics, two further points of interest emerge. The retired also appear distinct in their relative contentment with community representation – although age is insignificant. This may be linked to greater involvement in community activities among retired than working people in England (Matthews *et al.*, 2014) and the corresponding sense of influence that can come with local civic engagement (Johnson, 2014). Finally, gender stands out, with men more likely to perceive their communities as poorly represented. This has a potentially interesting implication. Gest (2016) suggests that political discontent is more acute among some men because they have struggled to adjust to both long and short-term changes in their local economy, often accompanied by the erosion of institutions (the union, the working men's club and so on) which they perceived afforded them status above their social class. This implies that gender and local economy may be interlinked in contemporary political discontent in the advanced economies. Given the role for local economies *and* for gender that emerges here, this is a plausible theory in the

British context which, although out of scope of this chapter, research might fruitfully explore.

Conclusion

I began by noting the way the narratives used to understand political discontent had begun to incorporate a spatial element in the political moment post-Brexit and Trump, but expressed concerns that this had not been accompanied by real scholarly understanding of this dimension. In this chapter, I have sought to identify the precise impact of community economies – both from the standpoint of their real economic conditions and the perceptions people hold about them – and the mechanism that links them to perceived community representation. Below, I summarise the major findings, exploring their potential implications for how the discipline could explore this further, and how they highlight the general value of paying attention to geographic inequalities.

Firstly, people appear to be influenced by community 'resources' — with low average incomes in one's area being associated with an elevated likelihood of discontent with community representation. Insofar as incomes are a good proxy for economic performance, this offers a counterpoint to the finding of Jennings and Stoker that the 'two Englands' were no different in their degree of political discontent. While they posited that this might be an 'emerging trend' that they could not yet discern, the evidence presented here suggests instead that it had already manifested in some form – albeit, not necessarily in more generalised judgements about politics and politicians, but instead in more particular perceptions of community representation.

Secondly, replicating a common finding in the political trust literature (see e. g. Anderson and Mendes, 2005), personal circumstances and 'egotropic' economic perceptions are of minimal importance in perceived community representation. This can be seen in terms of the non-significant findings over several variables that capture different egotropic dimensions (personal income, subjective class, and personal economic perceptions). However, this study diverges from some previous literature, including Rogers (2014), in that one's view of the national economy is also not a

significant factor. Despite its apparent utility in explaining political trust, the conventional 'sociotropic' perspective, which focuses on national perceptions, is not wholly satisfying in understanding why people perceive a poor quality of representation in their community.

Thirdly, this research has found that there is a substantial role for an explanation based on the 'grievance' associated with perceived relative deprivation between one's community and the country-at-large. This finding indicates that the common perception held by the public-at-large, that different parts of the country are on different economic trajectories, has tangible effects on the sentiment that one's community is ignored.

The analysis in this chapter has some limitations which must be acknowledged. In respect of the analysis of contextual effects, one arguable shortcoming is that the average local income is only a static measure of the local economy. While this may capture something important, it is nonetheless somewhat abstracted from how people actively experience the economy: that is, as a dynamic system in which trajectories in prosperity and hardship may be as important as their levels, and may powerfully influence community psychologies. Given recent studies suggesting that localised decline is linked to cultural 'threat' (Colantone and Stanig, 2018; Carreras *et al*, 2019), which may be in turn linked to discontent, advances in this area may be especially important both in uncovering new facts and connecting economic and cultural literatures.

Modelling the effects of change poses challenges of its own, of course: especially at small-area levels, where rates of growth are not estimated by official statistics. However, political science has recently begun to confront these obstacles. For instance, in order to study the economic drivers of Brexit, Jennings (2017) constructs an index of 'relative decline' at constituency level using a variety of indicators, including employment changes, business growth, population inflows and outflows, and changes in the proportions of degree-holders. Such a methodology may provide a useful precedent for how the relationship between economic trajectory and perceived representation might be approached.

It will also be valuable to explore how perceptions of 'community representation' can be better captured. This study used a single item, whereas for several reasons multi-item measures are generally preferred. Further, it would be useful to know to what extent people responsibilise and evaluate different political actors within central government for 'community representation', and in particular how they judge non-elected officials relative to government. In addition, the item used placed an emphasis on 'listening' - yet, as Esaiasson *et al.* (2017) argue, attitudes to representation also relate to how far governments 'adapt' policy decisions in line with public opinion, and to how well they 'explain' those decisions.

Most significantly, it will be crucial to improve on the methodology used here to access 'grievance'. In particular, it will be important to interrogate the claim that being 'left behind' is typically processed as an injustice: work by Jost *et al.* (2004) on 'system justification' suggests that this will not always be the case and that often people will justify their disadvantage rather than let it drive them to anger. More broadly, it will be important to discover the affective content in 'grievance'. As Van Zomeren *et al.* (2008) argued, the 'cognitive component' in 'relative deprivation' – the weighing up of one's own group's situation against another - is a far less powerful political motivator than the emotions of anger and resentment that may accompany such calculus.

Furthermore, there is a risk that working from people's national-local comparisons captures 'grievance' only in a limited sense. This study identifies those who feel their area is suffering compared to the country at large. However, an alternative source of grievance might be the sense that select areas of the country monopolise the fruits of economic growth. This way of seeing distributive politics may be potent politically, because it identifies specific beneficiaries in a way that might be associated with a degree of 'resentment'. Cramer (2016) shows how the resentment of big cities found in Wisconsin residents is profoundly connected to their views of representation: the relative economic failure of their own area is frequently explained by her subjects through a sense that successful places are subject to political favouritism.

It is not hard to see plausible parallels internationally, particularly in Britain. It may be that the high importance and ongoing ascendancy of London is especially important to the development and politicisation of grievance. Mandler (2016) has

written that, along with struggling former industrial areas and coastal towns, ostensibly prosperous parts of the country perceive themselves as un-represented and deprived of power because of its monopolisation in London, 'the home of all of Britain's elites' – financial, political, journalistic, professional. To acquire an improved picture of the nature and extent of grievance, as well as its ramifications for political discontent, future survey research might incorporate the perspective that people may see their area as struggling less in relation to the country and more so in relation to specific centres of economic power. I develop this insight in the thesis Conclusion, and suggest a promising approach for empirical testing.

The finding here that low income areas are more dissatisfied could lend credibility to the notion that investing in 'left-behind' places will cause them to feel better represented in politics. This would suggest that government policies, including the Stronger Towns and Future High Streets funds currently being implemented by the Johnson government, could have beneficial impacts in reducing the 'representation gap' that this chapter has highlighted. However, based on the arguments of this chapter, there are reasons to believe that this will only occur given a number of conditions. Not all of these seem likely to be met – especially given how the schemes themselves are becoming politicized and controversial. I expand on this in the Conclusion.

While the findings related to economic resources, economic perceptions, and the grievances of the 'left behind' are all of individual significance, the wider perspective offered by this chapter is to reflect another dimension of the politics of inequality: the fact of real geographic divides in *what people see* in the world around them. While political science has not entirely eschewed this perspective, its application to research concerning political trust, democratic satisfaction, and similar political attitudes has thus far been limited. I contend that attentiveness to the geographic divides, and how they come to be understood by the general public, constitutes a perspective of real value to the study of how voters perceive the representation they are offered. I now summarise this, and my other contributions to understanding and explaining the representation gap.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This thesis has posed the following question: 'how do we perceive the quality of representation offered to our local areas, and what is the role of the socioeconomic structure and the agency of our MPs in forming these judgments?'.

The underlying significance of attitudes towards local representation was established in Chapter 2. First, since political representatives are, as I argued before, trustees, their position as legitimate custodian of the interests of the represented should be substantiated at the level of public attitudes. On both sides, a representative relationship is optimised when the represented accept the legitimacy of representers. Representatives may function more effectively *as trustees* when they have greater confidence in their own legitimacy. The represented, meanwhile, can better manage the high 'cognitive costs' of political engagement in a complicated democracy, where many agents exercise power, when they can trust at least some of the actors involved.

The historical roots of British democracy in 'territorial' representation led me to a particular concern with how actors on the national stage (local MPs and central government) are seen to represent people's local communities. Most existing evidence would suggest that the optimal situation - positive perceptions of local representation - rarely exists in practice, given substantial and rising levels of political discontent in Britain, including decreasingly positive views of local MPs. This evidence has led many to diagnose a 'crisis' of representative democracy (e.g. Mainwaring, 2006), but, as argued in Chapter 2, the survey evidence used to make these determinations is a poor reflection of perceived representation *per se.* Representation involves a relationship between specific object (the represented group) and subject (the actor(s) engaged in representing), but these are often omitted or left vague in survey research. Furthermore, the importance of territorial representation – how people perceive their area to be represented – is generally neglected, despite its systemic

significance and importance to the public. In this thesis, I saw potential to marry empirical public opinion research more closely to a useful theoretical perspective on representation.

The core of this thesis is in understanding the determinants of these attitudes, and the selection of potential explanatory factors is critical. I sought to assess both the difference that MPs' agency can make, and the deep, structural determinants of perceived representation. Within these, I selected lines of enquiry on the basis of two criteria: contemporary significance, and capacity for original contribution.

My first two core chapters address how issues of MPs' agency are linked to perceptions of them as local representatives. First, I address communication – *whether people hear* from their MPs. MPs increasingly face constraints on constituency communications, potentially driving down the frequency of exposure. I suggest that this may be a potential factor explaining falling levels of 'name recognition' of local MPs, as observed by the Hansard Society, and may also influence perceived representation by local MPs. Various literatures suggest the importance of communication, but its consequences are rarely explored: this chapter is both an important and timely contribution.

Second, I address constituency focus – *what people hear* from their MPs. MPs have become significantly more focused on their constituencies in the long-term and this trend has likely only accelerated in the short-term. However, it has remained unclear from the aggregate time-series data that this has impressed constituents, as their public approval continues to ebb. Is constituency focus fruitful, achieving the logical results in terms of perceived constituency representation? Again, this is a significant gap in the literature, and ripe for proper empirical testing.

Finally, I address how structural spatial inequality between places – *what people see* in their local community - is liable to have a bearing on perceptions of how central government represents. I observe increasing interest in this kind of inequality, and in its political consequences, especially since the Brexit vote. Nevertheless, it has not been demonstrated that relevant representation attitudes are affected in the British

context, nor precisely how this might occur. I thus explore a third - highly salient - theme.

In this conclusion, I will first give an account of the core contributions of this thesis In the first instance, I will recount the results chapter by chapter, highlighting the specific gaps in the literature and how these were addressed, and drawing out the broader contributions to three political science subfields: political communications, parliamentary representation, and political geography. Having done so, I will progress to a discussion of the limitations of this thesis, and how future research could build on these foundations both to improve the confidence of existing conclusions and to move into new areas of inquiry. I will then address what I take to be the implications for the reform of policy and practice, before returning for some final thoughts on the significance of understanding and addressing the 'representation gap' between communities in Britain.

Findings and contributions

Constituency communication and the political communications literature

Chapter 3 first asks whether the volume of communication representatives use to publicise services is related, in the first instance, to constituents' awareness of their MP. I show that the level of communication that an MP carries out indeed predicts name recall and name recognition, controlling for various individual and MP/constituency attributes. In relation to MPs' use of parliamentary resources for communications, research in Britain had only considered their electoral effects, while studies more specific to name recognition are dated and ungeneralizable. I find that greater levels of MPs' constituency communications expenses (on surgery advertisements and contact cards), a good measure of *outgoing* communication from an MP, is associated with higher name recognition. Likewise, media effects are unexplored in the British context, and it is questionable whether the US literature addresses the effects of communication *per se:* I show that, using a unique approach to capturing

communication via the local media (count of articles with quotations), this kind of exposure is indeed important to constituents' ability to recognize their representative. I took numerous steps to increase the rigour of the analysis, which should engender greater confidence in the results. For the analysis of expenses, the effect was tested longitudinally: the constituents of high-spending MPs were more likely to learn their name between survey waves. Likewise, the fact that the media effect was significantly stronger for local newspaper readers may also indicate a causal relationship.

Though a significant outcome in its own right, the chapter was also concerned with testing the link between an MPs' profile and perceived representation by the MP. The literature rarely tests effects of name recognition on perceptions of representatives, and where it has done so, conflicting results emerge. Here, people who know their MP's name are more favourable about constituency representation, controlling even for strong determinants such as partisanship. Again, the use of cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis should increase our confidence about causality. Moreover, the literature does not identify the processes by which this occurs: doing so gives rise to well-justified secondary hypotheses. For instance, in line with the general weakness of 'mere exposure' when stronger considerations are at play, knowing the MP has no effect for those who identify with a different party.

My general contribution to the political communications literature is to assert the significance of *between-elections* communication at the local level. The local political communications literature generally concerns election periods, despite nods to the notion of 'permanent campaigns' (e.g. Giebler and Wessels, 2017). In so doing, I highlight MPs' significance as agents in political communication, something often lost in the emphasis on centralization of constituency communications in the hands of national parties (e.g. Foster, 2010). Nonetheless, MPs may reproduce the biases of national parties: for instance, this thesis confirms that, like parties, MPs communicate less (Johnston *et al,* 2010) in safe seats, potentially widening the 'representation gap' subjectively experienced by the public.

Methodologically, I highlight data that can be brought to bear on the effects of communications, including the relatively novel resource of IPSA data. I also show ways to meaningfully model their effects - often assumed rather than proven - whether by testing effects in panel data to assess change over time, interacting them with respondent's use of the relevant communication channels, or applying multilevel models to separate out structural factors. By refocusing on the results of communication, I suggest the significance of structures that facilitate effective communication, whether that be a healthy local media, or an expense regime that does not run the risk of shaming MPs for an ultimately productive use of resources. I will expand on this in the Implications section.

Constituency focus and the parliamentary representation literature

In Chapter 4, meanwhile, I show the role for MPs' representational 'focus' in constituent perceptions of their representatives. The literature suggests that the public expects constituency focus, and also that they respond to the activities of their MPs, but it is unproven that they respond positively *specifically* to displays of constituency focus. Where attempted, weak proxies for focus have been used, since superseded by the text-to-data method I apply. The higher their constituency focus, as measured through their House of Commons speeches, the more likely constituents are to say that their MP is, indeed, locally focused, and the more likely they are to trust the MP, controlling for several individual, constituency and MP-related factors and using alternate regression methods. The effect for the former dependent variable is especially strong.

A number of secondary findings provide nuance to this result. Though the literature anticipates that only the politically attentive respond to MPs' efforts, prior studies do not directly test this. By contrast, I show this occurs for constituents who know their MP – a group larger than just the highly attentive - underlining the importance of local profile established in Chapter 3. Notably, breaking with previous literature (e.g. Bowler, 2010), I show that overall effort, as measured through the number of House

contributions, has no effect: *what* MPs say matters more than *how much*. I also find that the effect on constituents who know their MP only occurs in areas with functional local daily newspapers, suggesting an important role of media access in how constituents learn about focus, something unexplored empirically in the prior literature.

To the parliamentary representation literature, I provide a rejoinder to contemporary work deconstructing constituency representation. Critical researchers of Parliament have reflected that, in both theoretical and practical senses, it is impossible to represent a constituency as a whole, as they are abstractions from a complex social world (Judge, 2014; Crewe, 2015). I instead argue that MPs can largely elide this complexity: in aggregate, displays of focus are less about the specific interests that MPs' interventions serve and more part of a strengthening of the 'representative claim' over constituents. This is borne out in the results: though constituents can in theory 'contest, reject or ignore' such claims (Saward, 2010), they largely accept them - when aware of and exposed (through a healthy local media) to their MP.

Saward's work offers a potential explanation of this tendency. Claims to constituency representation, in the first instance, will often be strong because of the availability of relevant 'cultural resources' (Saward, 2010, p. 72) to MPs: for instance, drawing on the dominant tradition of territorial representation in the British context. Moreover, the diffuse nature of the audience is actually *beneficial* rather than detrimental to the claims-maker: audiences that are less unified will have lesser capacity to contest representative claims (Saward, 2010, p. 56). Understanding the resonance of these claims draws attention, again, to structures for communication that facilitate the signalling of focus, but also to the risk of creating flawed incentive structures that incentivise busywork at the expense of focus: I explore these in the Implications section.

The local economy and the political geography literature

Finally, this thesis identifies a clear role for the local economy in perceptions of how local communities are represented by central government. People's sense of representation has increasingly been linked to spatial inequalities, especially since the Brexit vote (Marsh, 2018), yet this general proposition has not been tested rigorously. In Chapter 5, I find evidence for three mechanisms driving gaps in perceived representation between 'left-behind' and more affluent communities. The first, I dub the *community resource* model. The average income in respondents' local area had a significant and substantial contextual effect on perceived representation, net of individual-level measures of resources and other relevant attitudes. Though their results are not contradicted – for one, the construct of interest here ('perceived community representation') is not reducible to generalised 'discontent' - this finding provides a counterpoint to Jennings and Stoker (2016), whose major study of the attitudinal differences between struggling and thriving places in England highlighted no differences in 'political discontent' more generally.

The second and third mechanisms move from contextual effects to people's subjective evaluations. The *communotropic* model, showed that when controlling for individual and national economic perceptions, there was a strong effect of perceived economic conditions within respondents' self-defined 'community', measured in two different ways: perceptions of annual change and estimates of unemployment. Prior research in Britain has only considered the perceived local economy in relation to voting (Johnston and Pattie, 2002): extending this to representation attitudes has proved fruitful here. The third, the *grievance* model, describes the effect whereby the effect of the local economy (the unemployment estimate) was strongest for those believing the national economy was particularly good (low unemployment): as such, it is especially damaging to perceived community representation not merely to think that the local economy is bad, but to feel that one is falling behind the country economically. The prior literature has little considered how voters perceive and process spatial inequalities – an important innovation of this chapter.

This amounts to a significant contribution to the field of political geography. I show that a political geography approach can be applied to domains beyond voting and the specific outcomes that this literature generally considers (such as immigration

attitudes). Furthermore, though somewhat stronger on 'contextual' effects, research in this area has largely under-theorised how spatial inequalities can work at a psychological level: this is a key contribution of this chapter, rendered possible through exploring sociological literature (stressing group dynamics e.g. Tyler, 1992) and psychological literature (emphasising biased attributions of blame and credit e.g. Jost and Banaaji, 1994). Additionally, I show the value of certain approaches to collecting data on both the real context (for instance, a focus on small-area data) and the perceived context (using the principle of self-defined community and the mapping method of Wong *et al*, 2017). Finally, I suggest that, as much of the political geography literature highlights, there are risks of failing to address spatial inequality, but perhaps there are risks to naïve redistributive approaches, also: the Implications section explores this further.

Limitations and future research

It should be acknowledged here that this thesis has a number of limitations, both overall and in the individual core chapters. An important overall limitation is the clean division made between 'structure' (the local socioeconomic context) and 'agency' (the activities of MPs): it may be that these are not so easily separable. This is true in two senses. First, it is easy to imagine that MPs' activities are profoundly shaped by the structural conditions that face their constituents – perhaps in ways indicating 'substantive representation'. For instance, some research shows that representatives respond to local economic interests by raising them in parliament (Blidook and Kerby, 2011). What is less well understood is whether doing so can affect perceptions of representation. Since this thesis has established that the local focus can have such impacts, this seems plausible, and an important subject for new research. The second sense is that structure could plausibly alter the response to an MP's activities. For instance, if a poor local economy heightens local people's concerns about their area, an MP could be given greater credit for their local focus by addressing a strong local need. Many alternate possibilities present themselves: these are but two suggestions for future study.

We must also note limitations deriving from the temporal scope of the thesis. For one, it is unclear how stable these local factors are over time, and if their importance has increased or diminished. For instance, the effect of the local economy (real and perceived) could be wholly or in part a function of the rising salience of spatial inequalities (as discussed in the Introduction). Different dynamics altogether may apply to the effect of MPs' activities. For example, it is possible to imagine that the local MP's constituency focus was more visible to people in an earlier period. Franklin (1996) traces a dramatic decline in Parliamentary reporting after the 1980s, arguably reducing MPs' ability to reach their constituents by speaking in the House. Similarly, Chapter 4 found that name recognition of local MPs was crucial to MPs' focus having an effect: if name recognition has indeed declined, as a comparison of survey findings suggests, then so too should the effect of focus. Additionally, it may be harder to improve name recognition if, as is the case in aggregate, the local media is losing readership, since this is important to both the effect of media exposure and that of communications expenses.

Other limitations, and possible improvements, are specific to the individual core chapters. As far as communication goes, one limitation is that this thesis largely analyses analogue modes of communication. It will be important to assess the impact of digital communications which are growing in popularity: namely the use of social media by local MPs. As noted in Chapter 3, there are reasons to expect that social media cannot (yet) replace traditional media in its capacity to increase the MP's visibility to their constituents. However, this subject deserves further attention, and in much the same way as the literature on usage of Parliamentary allowances, there is more literature addressing how and why MPs communicate on social media (e.g. Jackson and Lilleker, 2011; Vergeer, 2013) than there are on the consequences for constituents' attitudes. A major reason this was not pursued in this thesis was the challenges involved in collecting social media data from the 2010-15 Parliament specifically, which was the necessary time-period to match the BESIP data on attitudes to local MPs. In this case, the project started too late to collect comprehensive Twitter data for the relevant period. However, sources such as the MPsOnTwitter website, which has

collected and archived MPs' tweets day-by-day since 2015, conceivably make this a more achievable task than it has ever been.

Chapter 4 on constituency focus, meanwhile, has an underlying ambiguity about what precisely constituents are responding to. The measure utilised here makes no differentiation between 'tokenism' – name-dropping the constituency to make a performance of concern and attention – and genuine advocacy. Chiru (2018) suggests that constituents in Romania respond to both more and less substantive forms of constituency focus, but further work will be necessary to determine this. Further inquiries in this area would likely rely on the development of a typology identifying the different ways constituency can be invoked in the House, and new measurement approaches to identify how individual MPs behave.

Furthermore, the theory in this chapter depends on the ability of speaking in the House to gain visibility for one's constituency efforts in the local media, and the findings here strongly suggest that a robust local media is important. It would then be intriguing to know what determines whether 'constituency-focused' speeches make the news, especially in light of the general decline in Parliamentary reporting observed by Franklin (1996). In particular, for the local media, does local relevance intersect with other well-known 'news values' such as conflict (van Santen *et al*, 2015)? This could also be a mechanism for the politicisation of place occurring in Britain, if MPs were rewarded for positioning their local advocacy in confrontational frames such as their community being 'ignored'. There are multiple established ways to interrogate questions of media coverage, including content analysis and surveys of journalists, that have shed light on similar questions in other contexts: these could be fruitfully applied to the issues I have raised.

Finally, in terms of economic factors, Chapter 5 of this thesis used only a static measure of the local economy. Yet in real life, the trajectory of one's community over time may also matter to perceptions of political representation, though this can be hard to measure at small-area level: the ONS recommend that small-area income data should be compared over time only with great caution (ONS, 2016). Second, the interplay of 'cultural' and economic factors could be usefully explored. This could

function through a variety of mechanisms, but one is particularly of note, since it falls within the spirit of 'social comparison' which the chapter has explored. A recent study (Green, Hellwig and Fieldhouse, 2019) argues that the apparent economic suffering of ingroups compared to outgroups can drive discontent, which is expressed in populist attitudes and in voting for Brexit. It could be that discontent with perceived representation is similarly driven by 'local people' seeming to do worse than 'outsiders' – where, for different people, 'outsiders' could mean immigrants, urban-dwellers, Southerners, Londoners, and so on. It would be particularly interesting to explore, in the context of increasing elite concern about 'London-centrism', whether grievance at London's success could explain a further part of the discontent felt by many Britons. Recent data (Centre For London, 2018) suggests that, although people do not necessarily dislike the capital, they see its economic fortunes as disconnected from those of their own communities: this could then be an important source of grievance.

Analysis in this field could be supported by methodological development, augmenting conventional survey data with survey experiments. There is a substantial precedent in the literature for experiments manipulating information about inequality, largely focused on how it affects policy preferences (e.g. McCall *et al*, 2017). More recently, Saxton (2019) shows that highlighting the gap between rich and poor can also decrease 'political support' outcomes such as satisfaction with democracy and political trust, and this occurred only for 'lower-class' people who would see themselves as victims of this inequality. However, as shown in the Introduction, other types of inequality are rising in prominence in the British discourse, which is likely spreading the accessibility of such information. A similar approach to Saxton's could then be taken for exposure to information about spatial inequalities, such as the North-South divide or 'London versus the rest'. This might go further to establish causality, as well as clarifying which social comparisons are most likely to fuel discontent.

Implications for policy, reform and practice

In Chapter 3, I suggest that more policy consideration needs to be given to the importance of communication to MPs. MPs' expenses on communication are important to constituents' awareness of them and thus, potentially, to their perceptions of being represented. Yet expenses on communication have fallen since the late 2000s. It is true that the public have been sceptical about MPs' expenses (Guardian, 5 Jan 2011), and some measure of restraint is likely to be important in restoring trust. However, the public endorses the specific provision of resources for communication: two-thirds of the public agree that 'MPs need sufficient resource to properly represent and inform their constituents' (Hansard Society, 2008). Similarly, IPSA found that three-quarters would be interested in annual reports from the MP explaining their activities in the previous year (Wright, 2013).

Communications spending, then, is reducing in spite of relatively high degrees of buy-in. Rather, MPs may be responding to the informal policing of claims by the media. A National Audit Office (2011, p. 17) report found that up to 90% of MPs were not claiming the allowances they were entitled to, fearing that they would end up 'near the top of the league table' of expenses, which would 'reflect badly on them in the media'. Though the transparency agenda may have been good for the reputation of Parliament as a whole (Kennedy, 2019), this side effect may have made some constituents feel more distant from their own MPs.

MPs have, however, suggested various ways to avoid expenses being dealt with in this way by the media: for instance, recommending that IPSA comment on data releases to explain why some MPs claim more than others, or to publish more frequently to avoid expenses being a 'media event' (House of Commons Committee on Members' Expenses, 2011, p. 31). Yet many of the questions raised by MPs lapsed, as after an initial raft of committee reports, scrutiny of IPSA has been fairly limited – restricted to oversight of appointments and budget estimates. Given the role for communications expenses proven here, it would be regrettable if there were unintentional disincentives to productive activities: as such, some of these issues might be usefully re-examined by Parliament.

The alternative concern highlighted by Chapter 3 is the extent to which the communications techniques considered will retain their effectiveness in future. This is true of both local media appearances and of surgery advertising, which mostly appears in local newspapers, as their decline threatens both the ease of access that MPs have and the size of the audience that they potentially reach. Since 2005, more than 200 local newspapers have closed in the UK: Ramsay and Moore (2016) estimate that 330 of 650 constituencies are not served by a 'dedicated local daily newspaper' with substantial household penetration or circulation in the constituency. Further, even where it does survive, the local media may be providing less coverage of political news (Howells, 2015). As Hayes and Lawless (2018) have shown for the United States, the decline of local media has negative impacts on constituency politics, causing reductions in knowledge of local representatives and candidates, as well as decreased participation.

Fortunately, the decline of local media is on the radar in Westminster: PM May's government established the Cairncross Review (2019, p. 114), for which a 'key consideration' was the effect on democratic engagement 'particularly in local areas'. However, Cairncross was principally concerned with coverage of councils, rather than of constituency MPs, influenced by Howells (2015), which showed decline in council coverage affected civic engagement. Its recommendations reflect this: for instance, for an expanded BBC Local Democracy Reporting Service to provide more reporters dedicated to covering council affairs. While a worthy enterprise, this study suggests that local media is also pertinent to the constituency link. Local media coverage generates name recognition for MPs, which has some impact on perceptions of how they represent. As well as raising awareness, it also conveys information about MPs which constituents who are aware of them can respond to: here, this is shown, by Chapter 4, for constituency focus, as constituents who knew their MPs only responded to their 'real' constituency focus if they lived in a constituency with a local newspaper. Future thinking on support for local media, as well as the general case in favour of such support - broadly rejected by the government in their response to Cairncross (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2020) - might benefit from taking this into account. Rather than 'democratic deficit' in the singular, we should be

talking of multiple 'deficits', whereby media decline threatens to distance people from multiple sources of political authority and representation.

This thesis – particularly Chapter 4 - also suggests the need for a reconsideration of what information it is beneficial for constituents to receive about their MPs. In particular, Parliamentary Monitoring Organisations (PMOs) have been an important source of information measuring and comparing the performance of individual MPs (Mandelbaum, 2011). As Thompson (2015, p. 70) notes, these privilege pure quantity: 'attendance, the number of contributions made to debates and the number of written questions tabled', potentially creating 'perverse incentives' (Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy, 2013). Edwards et al. (2015) questioned to what extent these websites fill true 'information needs' among voters, identifying a key unmet need as information about MPs' constituency advocacy. It is unsurprising that not all user needs are met: although they serve a wider audience, the activities of PMOs can be shaped around the interests of civil society funders rather than public desires more generally (Korthagen and Dorst, 2019). Regardless, data on public expectations of MPs would suggest a particular desire for information of this nature, as 'representing the views of local people in the House of Commons' is a major public priority (Hansard Society, 2010).

This study suggests a case that PMOs rethink their assumptions about what constitutes a worthwhile 'performance' statistic. In Britain, it is talk about the constituency that makes a difference. In a possible example of 'perverse incentives', sheer quantity has minimal real-world impression, besides eroding perceived local focus. If what an MP talks about matters more than how much they speak, then this perhaps furthers the case advanced by critics that PMOs should provide more qualitative information. For instance, the PMO Hansard At Huddersfield uses word clouds to display the discussions of Parliament as a whole: this could be applied to MPs as individuals in order to convey information such as their 'focus' without the use of dubiously precise statistics.

Finally, Chapter 5 allows for comment on whether the strategy to 'level up' poorly-performing regional economies can help to mitigate discontent with local

representation. This subject has been under wide discussion: as noted in the introduction, from politicians to civil servants, a diagnosis is broadly shared around the need to boost 'left-behind' areas to alleviate discontent. The apparent urgency is magnified by the need to replace European Union Structural Funds post-Brexit, which provide economic assistance to worse-off areas of the UK. The governments of Johnson and, formerly, May have proposed two schemes, the Stronger Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund, which are ostensibly aimed at the redress of spatial inequalities, while Labour has countered with offers of substantial investment: both branding their policies as an attempt to tackle the idea that Westminster does not care about places beyond the M25.

However, Chapter 5 suggests that this will only translate into more positive views of political representation under certain circumstances. First, real improvements will have to translate into favourable perceptions of the local economy, since the biggest effects by far come from local economic perceptions rather than the contextual effect of the local economy itself. This seems likely – objective and subjective local conditions are highly correlated (Holbrook and Weinschenk, 2019). However, it cannot be assumed - polarization around parties and the Brexit vote could worsen the accuracy of even local economic perceptions, as has occurred for national economic perceptions (Sorace and Hobolt, 2018). Secondly, since the gap between local and national conditions also drove the sense of under-representation, people may need to see the gap close to feel greater satisfaction. However, since governments expect to be judged on general economic growth, they will argue that they have delivered *national* prosperity, in a way that may make less prosperous areas continue to feel 'left behind' even if they experience parallel improvement.

Finally, political authorities should be able to take credit for improving 'left-behind' areas and/or reducing spatial inequalities. This is perhaps the hardest hurdle, for two reasons. First, 'group justification' theory implies that people will claim credit for their own community, not applaud external actors (Jost and Banaaji, 1994). Second, parties will likely contest the success of schemes and who deserves credit, especially given the importance of many of these 'left-behind' areas in the current electoral map (New Statesman, 8 May 2019). For these reasons, targeted investment may

struggle to tackle the sense of a 'representation gap'. Some precedent might be drawn from the failure of EU structural funds (ESF) to shore up support for the European institutions: Becker *et al* (2017) show that the per capita subsidies a constituency received from the ESF had no effect on the vote share to Remain in the EU.

How do the government's proposals measure up? Initial signs are not encouraging. The Stronger Towns and Future High Streets Funds are facing severe criticism, on two main grounds. First, the sums allocated are small compared to post-2010 losses from reductions in local authority grants (Arnold and Pendleton, 2019). Second, funding may be unduly influenced by Conservative electoral strategy, as it is disproportionately directed at marginal seats, especially those that are Labour-held and voted to leave the EU (BBC News, 30 September 2019). Thus, far from alleviating discontent, funding may reinforce previous grievances around austerity, and fuel a sense of unfairness in political processes that can negatively affect voters' perceptions regardless of outcome (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001). By contrast, targeted investment could succeed in improving perceived representation if relatively depoliticized, as advocated by the Institute for Government, allowing political actors to share credit and the public's partisan perceptual biases to be minimized (Atkins *et al,* 2017).

Final thoughts

This thesis began by noting that people in Britain, across demographic and political divides, care for their communities: they exhibit belonging, group ties and interest in local developments. They want to believe that these communities, as much as themselves personally, or their social class, or any other group they belong to, is represented in politics. As a consequence, *where you are* matters as well as *who you* are to how you perceive local representation.

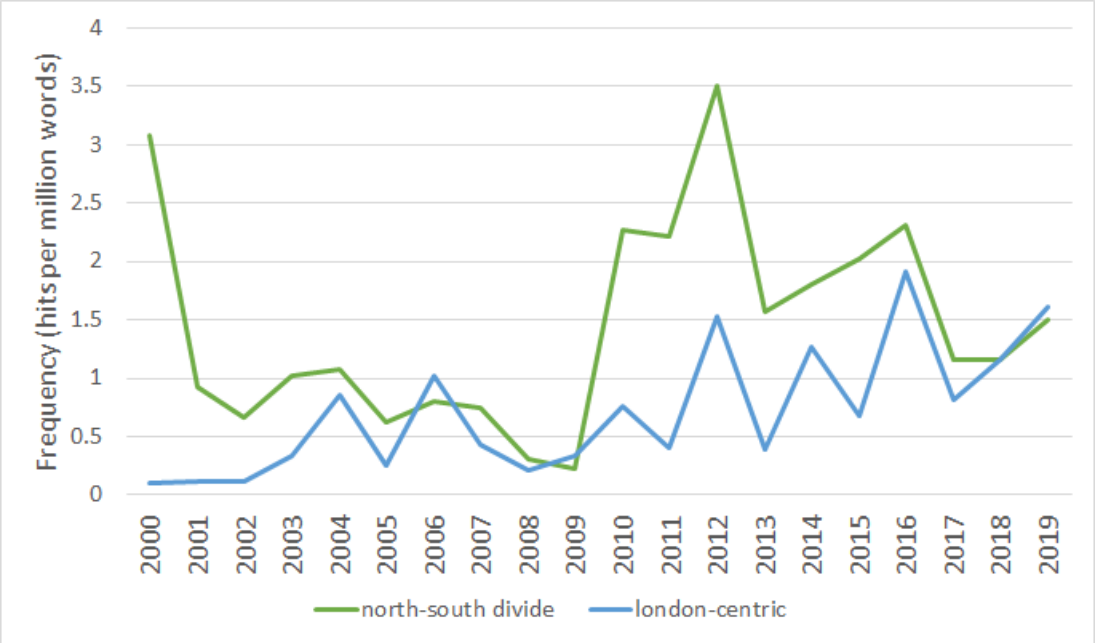
Both local MPs and central government are charged with responsibilities in this regard. Whereas local MPs are expected to be a well-known presence in the community

and to be focused on their area, the government is expected to ensure the good health of the local economy, and to make sure the benefits of growth are distributed fairly. Therefore, MPs who are both highly visible and locally focused make people feel more secure in their sense of having their area represented. Meanwhile, the sense of representation by central government is impacted by a community's structural advantage or disadvantage – and people's sense of their community's 'left-behind-ness'. At the same time, this thesis reveals a nuanced picture, with some of the relationships indirect, or conditional on some third factor: for instance, communication matters through increasing an MP's profile, while name recognition moderated the effect of constituency focus.

Beyond these discrete findings, a broad lesson is carried through this thesis: there is a genuinely local component to representation perceptions, both at the level of attitudes themselves – which are not reducible to more general 'discontent' – and to their causes. As this conclusion has reflected, this insight could be taken much further and, with the signs of growing concerns with the local among political researchers, I am hopeful that it will. Through this, the political class might come closer to not simply understanding, but acting on, the many dimensions of the representation gap.

Appendix A. Chapter 1

Figure A-1. Parliamentary usage of 'inequality tropes', 2000-2019.



Source: Hansard at Huddersfield.

Appendix B. Chapter 3

Validation of media data

The effectiveness of quotations as a proxy for effort: a possible objection and response

The effectiveness of this proxy could be questionable if either

1) a significant proportion of stories that quote MPs in local newspapers result from cases where journalists proactively searched out stories concerning local MPs, found and used relevant quotes without consulting MPs or

2) journalists rejected a significant proportion of possible stories that could result from MPs' efforts at communication;

AND if either 1) or 2) varied between MPs.

I respond to these possible objections in three ways. First, I believe that 1) or 2) are not common practices based on my understanding of how MP-media relations work. This is informed by the previous literature, discussed on p. 66-67. To repeat parts of the discussion there:

2) is unlikely, because local newspapers – especially daily newspapers – are 'news-hungry', not especially critical of their local MPs, and run almost any story that has a plausible local angle (Negrine and Lilleker, 2003; Negrine, 2005). MPs do tailor their press releases to local issues and thus few should be rejected (Jackson and Lilleker, 2004) and MPs report a very high strike rate for getting their press releases in the local news (Negrine, 2005).

1) is at least more plausible, however, it should be noted that MPs generally appear in the media owing to a press release (Negrine and Lilleker, 2003), backed up with frequent telephone or email contact to impart more information or respond to enquiries (both of which involve effort).

Secondly, in response to both points, empirically there is proof that number of press releases and quantity of coverage have a strong relationship in the U.S. context; ergo, the latter can proxy the former and my research suggests there are no obvious differences that would prevent this translating to the British context.

Thirdly, I would expect that, should processes 1) or 2) occur, they would be the result of practices at an institutional level that would equally affect all the MPs covered by the newspaper(s). Therefore, by using as a Level-2 unit the newspaper(s) that serve the constituency, this objection can be addressed at the modelling rather than measurement stage.

Validation of quotations-capturing method

The Lexis-Nexis database allows for searching for words or phrases that appear in the text, and others appearing in the same sentence. I search for stories in the relevant newspaper(s) for that MP which mentioned the MP's name – testing for colloquial and formal alternatives (and minor misspellings) where appropriate – where the words 'said' or 'told' appeared in the same sentence.

While using just these two terms may theoretically undercount the number of stories containing quotations, there was in practice very little lexical diversity in how newspapers introduced quotations, with journalists overwhelmingly using the word 'said' to set up a quote from an MP. For fifty stories mentioning five MPs, which were selected on the basis that they contained quotations, all but one used either 'said' or 'told' to introduce the quote, which suggests a low level of false negatives arising from the selection of words. I also chose 'told' to identify instances where a reporter used formulations such as '(MP name) told the *Northern Echo*'. Checks for false negatives uncovered little reason for concern.

Out of 100 stories identified for ten MPs, the 'said'/'told' method identified just three where there was no quote from the MP. For 100 stories identified just by searching for mentions of the MP's name, thirty-three contained no quote from the MP and indeed, often no constituency service component at all. For instance, the names-only

method identified reader letters about the MP, generic write-ups about who would be standing in certain constituencies, and even, in the case of one MP, their ranking on the website www.sexyMP.co.uk. For the ten MPs in the validation sample, there was a correlation of .83 between the number of stories gathered by the 'said'/'told' method and the 'mentions only' method. This suggests that the method used is producing some relevant variation that would not otherwise be obtained, but does not radically deviate on average from the underlying quantity of coverage. This is a good indication that the method is performing the intended function.

Notably, I find that for 205 MPs (the subset with data on newspaper coverage), local newspaper quotes are positively correlated with the constituency focus measure developed in Chapter 4 ($r=.14$, $p<.01$). This also suggests the quotes method is effectively proxying 'effort', as MPs who are constituency focused should be those making most effort to communicate with constituents.

Validation of names-capturing method

Stories will often feature the full name of the MP early in the article but when they are quoted just their surname will be used to introduce the quote. As such, the search parameters were chosen to identify stories where either the quote appeared in the same sentence as the MP's full name, or the quote appeared in the same sentence as the MP's surname in a story where the MP's full name also appeared. Allowing for quotes to appear with surnames substantially improved the search's ability to detect appropriate stories. For 40 stories concerning a random MP (Jo Swinson), 16 were manually found to contain quotations. Searching for stories with the MP's full name in the same sentence as 'said/told', seven of these 16 were identified, but searching with stories where just the surname could appear in the same sentence as the quote, 15 of the 16 were found.

Two-level model for assessing MP-related variance

As a sense-check for whether variation is occurring at constituency-level – and not merely because of differential levels of newspaper coverage of local MPs – I use a two-level model to conduct an analysis of variance components, where the level-2 unit is the sixty-two combinations of newspapers serving the constituency. I find that almost 50% of the variance occurs at constituency level (although the confidence intervals are relatively wide).

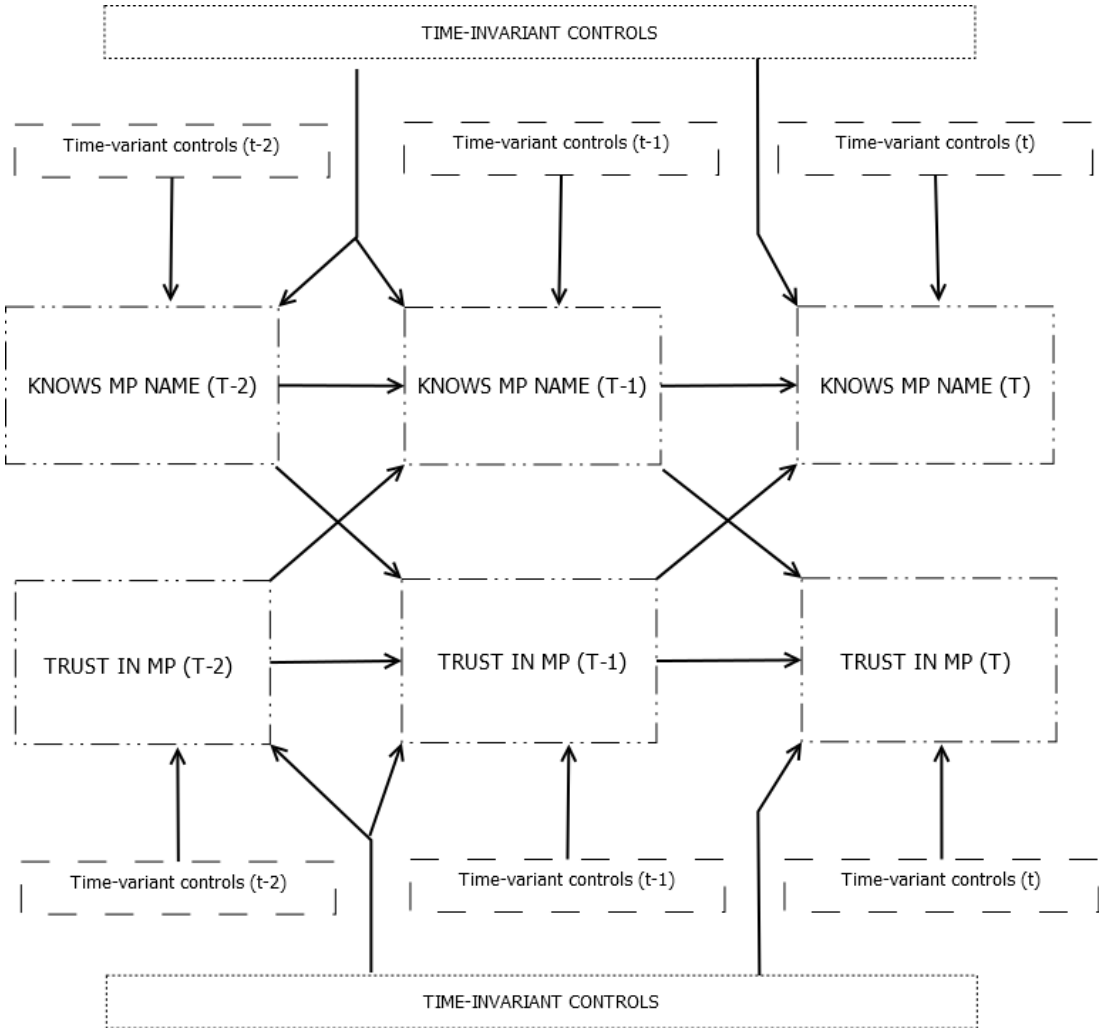
Notably, also, the constituency-level variance is substantially larger for the method allowing for surnames to occur with quotes than the method demanding full names. Using the latter, only 35% of variance was at constituency-level, which is further evidence that the more nuanced technique does a better job of capturing variance in MP communications effort.

Cross-lagged panel model

Specification

The full model specification is shown below.

Figure B-1. Cross-lagged model diagram.



In accordance with the literature, I include autoregressive paths (from each variable with its lagged measurement), as well as cross-lagged paths (Berrington et al, 2006). Autoregressive paths, as Berrington et al state, 'provide some protection against the effects of unobserved time-constant variables'. Where controls are time-variant

within the panel, these operate on both endogenous variables, using measurements taken at the same time-point (see, for instance, Kingdon 2015). Where controls are not time-variant – such as the characteristics of the MP, and basic demographic information about the respondent – paths are specified to each instance of measurement, providing a particularly stringent test of the lagged relationship at every wave.

In these models, two time-varying controls are utilised. The first, feelings towards the MP's party, represent the respondent's placement of the party on a zero to ten scale (where ten is most favourable). It is well established in the literature that a particularly powerful determinant of satisfaction with representatives is partisanship: specifically, the match or mismatch with one's representative (Lawless 2004; Ripley et al 1992, Tate 2001, Jacobsen 2006): like/dislike provides a closely related measure. The second, political attention, refers to how much attention the respondent claims they 'generally' pay to politics, on a scale of zero to ten. This is an obvious third variable that may be related to both awareness of the MP and satisfaction with them. Banducci and Karp (2003) show that taking an interest in political campaigns and paying attention to national media can increase 'system support', including improving views on whether MPs are 'in touch'.

Results

Table B-1 shows the results of the cross-lagged panel model, with cross-lagged effects operating between one wave and the wave immediately prior. It is clear that – accounting for time-variant and time-invariant controls, as well as auto-regressive relationships – there are highly significant cross-lagged effects between trusting and knowing the MP (these were also confirmed by Wald tests). However, the result is relatively unambiguous that effects run in both directions – supporting the notion of 'reciprocal effects'. As such, no great claims as to the predominant casual mechanism can be made. Nonetheless, the CLPM has provided some evidence that the effect of knowing the MP is not merely an artefact of cross-sectional analysis.

Table B-1. Results of cross-lagged panel model.

	β (SE)	*N*
Effect of knowing MP on trust		
$Trust_t$ ←		
Know MP_{t-1}	.100*	*16592*
$Trust_{t-1}$ ←		
Know MP_{t-2}	.134**	*9178*
Coefficients equal across waves?	*YES*	
Effect of trust on knowing MP		
Know MP_t ←		
$Trust_{t-1}$	.052**	*17356*
Know MP_{t-1} ←		
$Trust_{t-2}$	.060*	*9592*
Coefficients equal across waves?	*YES*	
Log likelihood	-69338.3	
TOTAL N	*27,744*	

Note: Stationarity determined using Wald tests for equality of coefficients.
**** = p<0.001; **=p <0.01; * = p<0.05.*

Appendix C. Chapter 4.

Challenges in automated measuring of within-constituency mentions

It would be preferable if one could also capture mentions of places within the constituency that did not appear in its name, akin to Fernandes *et al.* (2018) and Zittel *et al.* (2019). This can, in theory, be achieved using GIS software to first identify 'places' within the constituency. However, this approach has many complications due to the nature of available data on places. This mainly relates to how different data sources treat large urban areas. The idea data sources are 'polygonal', meaning that they mark out areas rather than specific points. However, available polygonal data for Britain– such as the Built-Up Areas census data and its Scottish/NI equivalents – treat urban conurbations as singular units: for instance, dozens of constituencies are deemed to contain only the area 'London', which would imply that Hackney's MP mentioning Hackney specifically would not be classed as a constituency-focused contribution. Alternative 'point' based data exists, such as Ordinance Survey Open Names data, which does not have this problem. However, by treating places as existing at a single point, this would claim that references to London made by the MP for Cities of London and Westminster was 'constituency-focused', whereas, for instance, references by the MP for Hackney were not. Ultimately, some solution might be possible, but there is a distinct risk that the best becomes the enemy of the good.

Additional statistical models and graphs

Table C-1. Local newspaper presence and the interaction models

	DV: local focus (low-high)
Local newspaper presence	.589* (.278)
% constituency mentions	.005 (.007)
Knows MP's name	-.147 (.184)
Local newspaper presence * % constituency mentions	-.017 (.011)
Local newspaper presence * knows MP's name	-.845*** (.315)
% constituency mentions * knows MP's name	.011 (.008)
Local newspaper presence * % constituency mentions * knows MP's name	.030* (.013)
Match with MP's party (base: matching PiD)	
Clash with MP party	-.342*** (.078)
No party ID	-.170 (.106)
Didn't guess MP party	-.186 (.250)
Gender: female	.454*** (.071)
Age	.011*** (.003)
Highest qualification	
GCSEs	-.053 (.143)
A-levels	-.038 (.153)
University	-.051 (.145)
NS-SEC (base: routine)	
Intermediate	-.240* (.110)
Managerial/professional	-.239* (.111)
Political attention (0-10)	-.067** (.020)
Has contacted MP	.007 (.079)
Seniority (years)	-.003 (.004)
MP: Minister/ shadow minister	-.181 (.108)
MP's majority	-.009** (.003)
Trust MPs in general	.159*** (.024)
N	1977

** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

Table C-2. Results using ordered logistic regression instead of linear regression

	DV: local focus (low-high)		DV: trust (low-high)	
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
% constituency mentions	.018*** (.004)	.001 (.007)	.009* (.004)	-.001 (.007)
Knows MP's name	.017 (.097)	-.441* (.174)	.122 (.098)	-.140 (.175)
% constituency mentions * knows MP's name		.023** (.007)		.013 (.007)
Match with MP's party (base: matching PiD)				
Clash with MP party	-.368*** (.091)	-.382*** (.091)	-1.485*** (.097)	-1.494*** (.097)
No party ID	-.157 (.122)	-.168 (.122)	-1.180*** (.126)	-1.188*** (.126)
Didn't guess MP party	-.235 (.277)	-.260 (.276)	-1.436*** (.279)	-1.462*** (.279)
Gender: female	.523*** (.084)	-.011** (.004)	.443*** (.085)	.440*** (.085)
Age	.012*** (.003)	.012*** (.003)	.017*** (.003)	.017*** (.003)
Highest qualification				
GCSEs	-.051 (.169)	-.056 (.169)	.116 (.171)	.114 (.171)
A-levels	-.075 (.180)	-.065 (.180)	.055 (.183)	.058 (.183)
University	-.088 (.171)	-.085 (.171)	.240 (.175)	.241 (.175)
NS-SEC (base: routine)				
Intermediate	-.274* (.130)	-.285* (.130)	.008 (.130)	.003 (.130)
Managerial or professional	-.261* (.130)	-.274* (.130)	-.033 (.131)	-.040 (.131)
Political attention (0-10)	-.070** (.023)	-.070** (.023)	-.001 (.023)	-.001 (.023)
Has contacted MP	-.011 (.092)	-.015 (.092)	.341*** (.095)	.338*** (.095)
Seniority (years)	-.004 (.005)	-.005 (.005)	.012* (.005)	.012* (.005)
MP: Minister/ shadow minister	-.201 (.126)	-.199 (.126)	.088 (.127)	.096 (.127)
MP's majority	-.011** (.004)	-.011** (.004)	-.000 (.004)	-.000 (.004)
Trust MPs in general	.174*** (.028)	.173*** (.028)	.718*** (.032)	.718*** (.032)
N	1977	1977	1937	1937

** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

Figure C-1. Predicted probabilities of scoring MP at each level of local focus [1 = lowest; 7 = highest: read down first.]

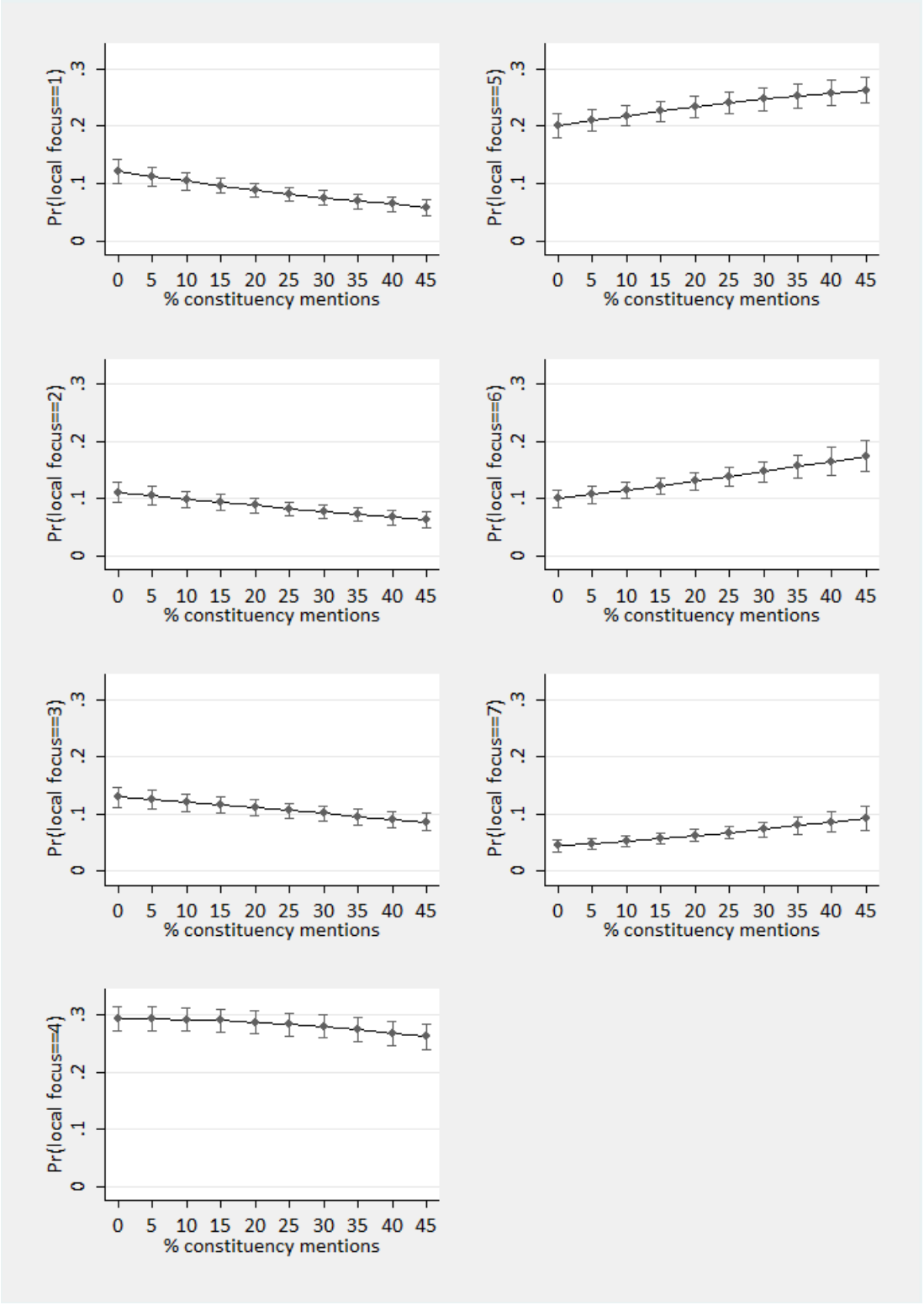


Figure C-2. Predicted probabilities of scoring MP at each level of trust [1 = lowest; 7 = highest: read down first.]

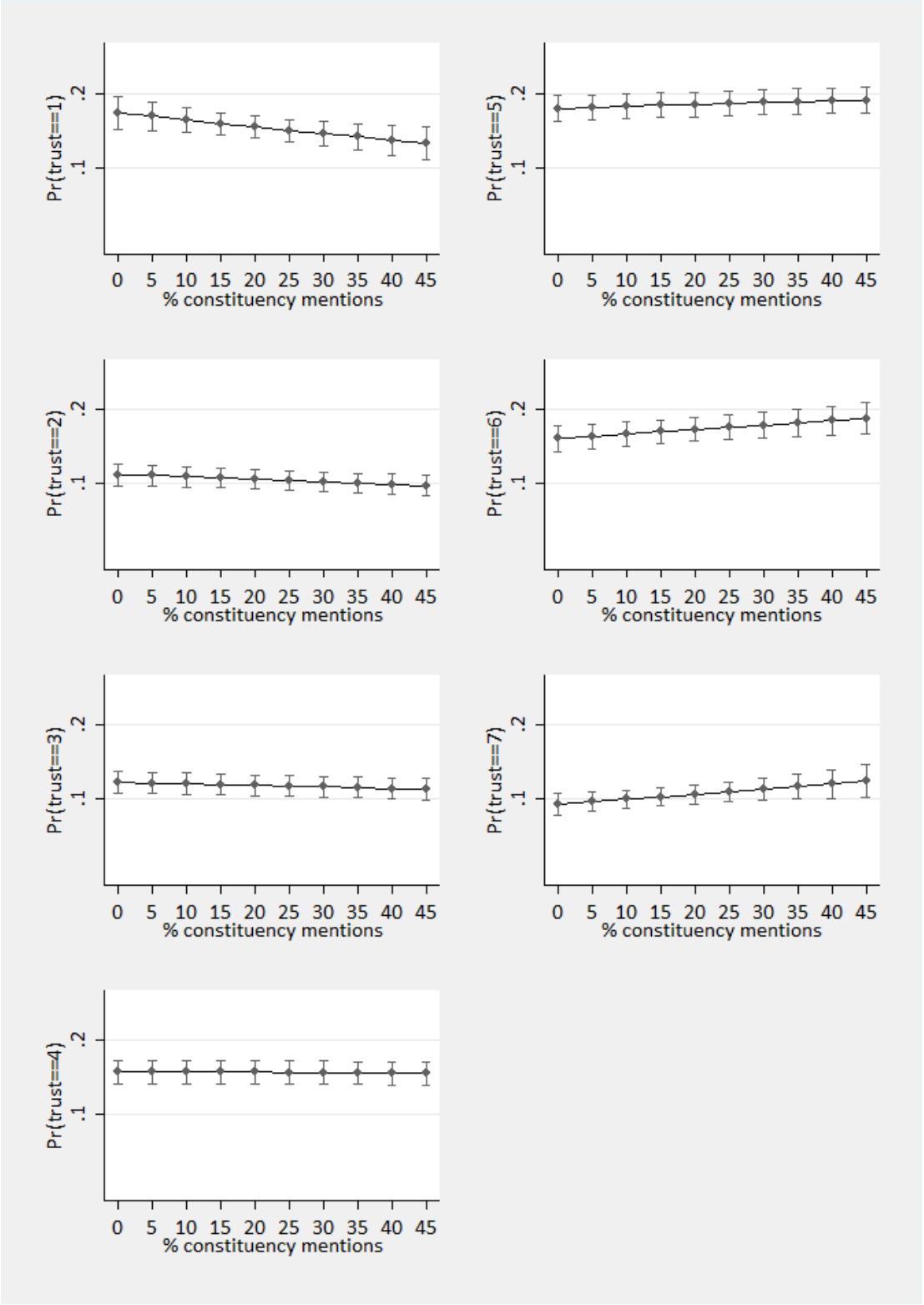


Table C-3. Models using alternative (absolute) IVs.

	DV: national-local focus		DV: trust (low-high)	
No. of contributions mention constituency	.001 (.001)		.001 (.001)	
No. of contributions (total)		-.000*** (.000)		.000 (.000)
Knows MP's name	-.036 (.085)	-.005 (.085)	.067 (.086)	.067 (.086)
Match with MP's party (base: matching PiD)				
Clash with MP party	-.349*** (.079)	-.355*** (.079)	-1.301*** (.079)	-1.304*** (.079)
No party ID	-.180 (.107)	-.172 (.106)	-1.079*** (.108)	-1.081*** (.108)
Didn't guess MP party	-.137 (.251)	-.146 (.250)	-1.333*** (.259)	-1.339*** (.259)
Gender: female	.469*** (.072)	.456*** (.072)	.371*** (.072)	.372*** (.073)
Age	.011*** (.003)	.011*** (.003)	.014*** (.003)	.014*** (.003)
Highest qualification				
GCSEs	-.044 (.144)	-.048 (.143)	.100 (.146)	.101 (.146)
A-levels	-.030 (.154)	-.039 (.153)	.072 (.156)	.071 (.156)
University	-.051 (.146)	-.055 (.145)	.221 (.148)	.221 (.148)
NS-SEC (base: routine)				
Intermediate	-.251* (.111)	-.258* (.110)	-.033 (.112)	-.036 (.112)
Managerial or professional	-.237* (.112)	-.227 (.111)	-.047 (.112)	-.048 (.113)
Political attention (0-10)	-.063** (.020)	-.070*** (.020)	-.012 (.020)	-.013 (.020)
Has contacted MP	.005 (.079)	-.009 (.079)	.200* (.079)	.202* (.079)
Seniority (years)	-.008 (.004)	-.010* (.004)	.007 (.004)	.006 (.004)
MP: Minister or shadow minister	-.321** (.105)	-.261* (.104)	.021 (.105)	.003 (.105)
MP's majority	-.012*** (.003)	-.011*** (.003)	-.001 (.003)	-.001 (.003)
Trust MPs in general	.154*** (.024)	.158*** (.024)	.594*** (.024)	.593*** (.024)
N	1977	1977	1937	1937

** p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001*

Extreme values

Due to the existence of a number of extreme values on these respective IVs (which were minimal for the 'focus' IV) these models were re-estimated after removing

highly influential observations. Specifically, I utilised the DFBETA measure, which focus on one coefficient and measure the difference between the regression coefficient when the *i*th observation is included and excluded, the difference being scaled by the estimated standard error of the coefficient. I utilise the standard cut-off of excluding observations where $|DFBETA_i| > 2/\sqrt{n}$, as recommended by Belsley, Kuh and Welsch (1980). This led to the exclusion of between 39 and 100 cases for the respective models: as expected, the observations omitted were mostly those with extreme values. For all models, neither the statistical significance, nor the sign, were affected. This leads to greater confidence that the inferences made about the respective value of 'focus' compared to pure 'activity' (constituency-related or all activity) are valid.

Appendix D. Chapter 5

Factor analysis

Rationale

Since this DV is novel, I conduct Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in order to test the principle that the variable of interest measures a distinctive attitude to those yielded by the existing repertoire of questions. Previous example provides mixed evidence about the dimensionality in representation attitudes, and British-specific evidence suggests that dimensionality in political trust attitudes in particular is low (Klingemann, 1999; Norris, 1999; Dalton, 2004; Hooghe, 2011; Allum *et al*, 2011; André, 2014). However, most of this analysis consists of varying the 'subjects' of representation (e. g. government versus political parties) without altering the 'object' (e. g. nation versus community). As such, it provides only a limited guide to whether 'community representation' is a plausible attitudinal dimension.

Items included

Thirteen items were entered into the EFA (n=10,182), covering as diverse as possible a range of related dimensions (see Appendix B for full details). Two items were expected to relate to satisfaction with democracy: one's rating of how democracy works in the UK, and in the European Union. Two items were expected to relate to external efficacy: 'politicians don't care what people like me think', and 'politicians only care about people with money'. Two further items measured sentiment about political actors: trust in MPs, and the view that 'parties and politicians in the UK are more concerned with fighting each other than with furthering the public interest'. At the 'specific' end of the spectrum, a variable was included to assess respondents' approval of the incumbent government of the UK. Three items were expected to capture the dimension of internal efficacy: 'I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country', 'It is often difficult for me to understand

what is going on in government and politics', and 'It takes too much time and effort to be active in politics and public affairs'. Finally, two variables were used to assess one's sense of society being unfair: these were included to more clearly discriminate the political factors and to ascertain that the grievance captured in the variable of interest was specifically political as opposed to a generalised social grievance.

Table D-1. Items included in factor analysis [n=10,182]

Item shorthand	Exact item question	Survey wave
Left-right (1)	Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth	(1-5; first taken by R)
Left-right (2)	There is one law for the rich and one for the poor	As above
Internal Efficacy (1)	I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country	3
Int. Efficacy (2)	It is often difficult for me to understand what is going on in government and politics	3
Int. Efficacy (3)	It takes too much time and effort to be active in politics and public affairs	3
Government approval	Do you approve or disapprove of the job that each of the following are doing? • The UK government	3
Politicians don't care	Politicians don't care what people like me think	3
Politicians only care for rich	Politicians only care about people with money	3
Trust in MPs	How much trust do you have in Members of Parliament in general?	3
Politicians prefer to fight	Parties and politicians in the UK are more concerned with fighting each other than with furthering the public interest	5
Satisfaction with democracy (UK)	On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that democracy works in the UK as a whole?	3
Satisfaction with democracy (EU)	On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way that democracy works in the EU?	3
Community representation	How much do you think the interests and views of people in your local community are listened to when important decisions affecting them are made by national government?'	3

Analysis of number of factors:

Literature suggested Comparison Data (Ruscio and Roche, 2013) and Parallel Analysis (van der Eijk and Rose, 2015) methods were best at estimating the number of factors in ordinal data.

Comparison data method: suggested a six-factor solution.

Parallel analysis: suggested a six-factor solution.

Conclusion: analysis should be attempted using a six-factor solution.

Specification

Principle Axis Factoring with polychloric correlations and direct oblimin rotation.

According to de Winter and Dodou (2012), Principle Axis Factoring is preferred when there are fewer indicators loading onto each factor, including when factors are composed of only one variable.

Polychoric correlations are employed, since according to Baglin (2014), 'researchers recommend the use of polychoric correlations for EFA performed on data from ordinal variables'.

The R-Factor program in SPSS is used to conduct the EFA, although STATA was used to calculate the Squared Multiple Correlations.

Results and conclusion

Before commencing with the factor analysis, an analysis was conducted of the Squared Multiple Correlations (SMC) of the items: the lower bound of the communalities (see Guttman, 1956). STATA reports that the SMC of the variable of interest with the others in the model were 0.174: by way of comparison, the SMC of the external efficacy and government approval measures was around 0.5. This signifies high specific variance (Child, 2006) and, as Samuels states, may be indicative of an

additional factor requiring further items to measure. As might be expected from the low communalities, the various factor solutions generated were problematic, none of them satisfying the criterion of 'simple structure' (Kline, 2002, p. 65) which demands that each factor have a 'few high loadings' with minimal 'cross-loading' of variables across several factors. The results of the EFA can be seen in Tables D-2 and D-3. In short, no single attempted factor analysis was able to credibly situate the variable of interest. In light of this, it is sensible to accept the implication of the low communalities: that it is unlikely that the variable taps a more generalised discontent, and more likely that it measures something genuinely new and distinctive.

In all results tables, loadings lower than 0.15 are omitted.

Table D-2. EFA with six factors, non-iterated.

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	Variable cross-loading
Left-right (1)	.885						
Left-right (2)	.845						
Internal Efficacy (1)		.765					
Int. Efficacy (2)		-.750					
Int. Efficacy (3)		-.372			.335		YES
Government approval	-.371				.524		YES
Politicians don't care	.170			.567		.248	
Politicians only care for rich	.380			.565			YES
Trust in MPs				-.470	.232	-.330	YES
Politicians prefer to fight				.628			
Satisfaction with democracy (UK)			-.483		.514		YES
Satisfaction with democracy (EU)	-.174		-.685				
Community representation						-.683	
Factor interpretation	Left-right values	Internal efficacy	Satisfaction with democracy	Attitude to politicians	?	Community representation	
Ambiguity	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	Low	

Table D-3. EFA with six factors, iterated.

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	Variable cross-loading
Left-right (1)	-.939						
Left-right (2)	-.826						
Internal Efficacy (1)		.929					
Int. Efficacy (2)		-.626					
Int. Efficacy (3)		.360		.155	.181		
Government approval	.201		-.157	-.166	.663		
Politicians don't care				.812			
Politicians only care for rich	-.331			.394	-.156	-.151	YES
Trust in MPs						.907	
Politicians prefer to fight				.168		-.343	
Satisfaction with democracy (UK)			.346		.533		YES
Satisfaction with democracy (EU)			.809				
Community representation				-.151		.293	
Factor interpretation	Left-right values	Internal efficacy	Satisfaction with democracy	External efficacy	Unclear	Unclear	
Ambiguity	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High	

The relationship of perceived economic and cultural context

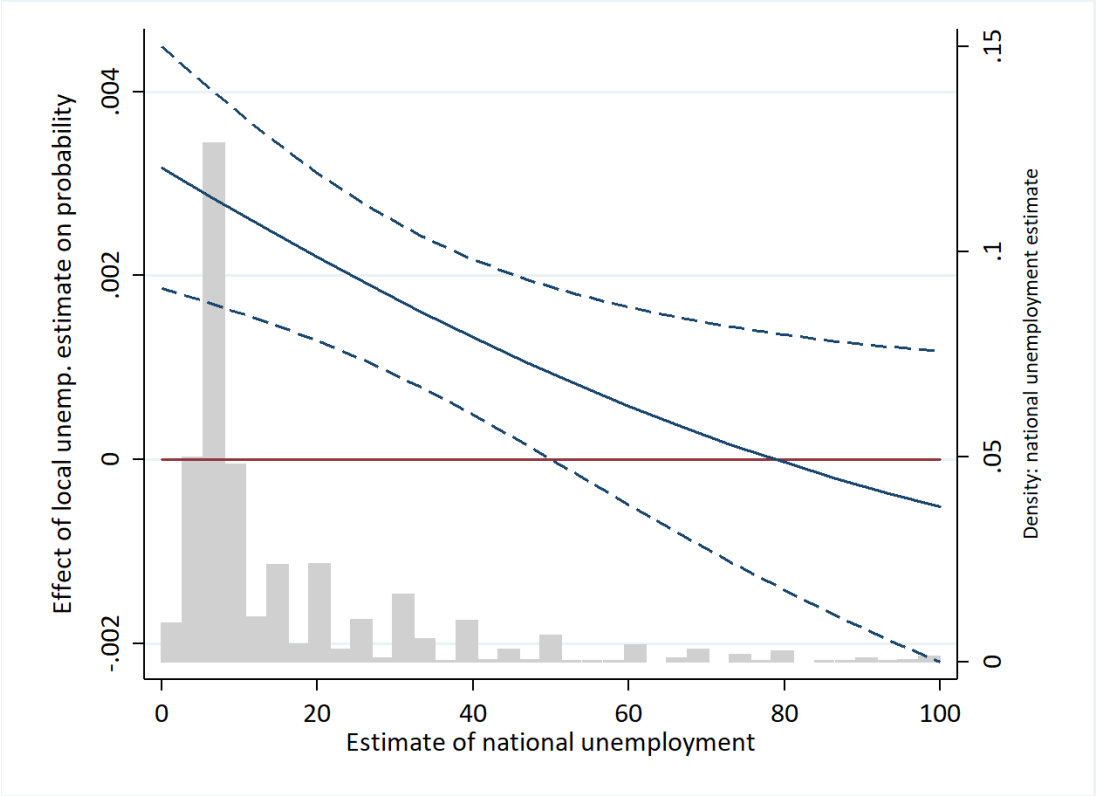
The set-up of testing economic factors against cultural ones is not intended to imply a total dichotomy between them: a dichotomy which scholars have forcefully advocated against (e.g. Cherlin, 2018). However, I maintain that there is utility in the approach taken here to control for perceived cultural context. The literature that considers or speculates on the interplay of these factors mostly implies relationships between economic and cultural *attitudes*, not perceptions of context (Carreras *et al*, 2019). There is nonetheless some evidence that the local economy drives perceived local diversity, and conversely that local diversity drives 'communotropic' economic perceptions (Lamerís *et al*, 2018a and 2018b). However, the effects in either direction are generally small. Thirdly, the link between perceived economic and cultural context is premised on a U.S. news media that connects ethnic minorities and poverty: this is less clear for the British news media, where some critical race scholars claim that the media links poverty to whiteness and erases that felt by minorities (Bhambra, 2017).

To clarify their relationship, I run partial correlations on the estimation sample (see Table D-4). These show that perceived economic and cultural context are indeed correlated, such that perceptions of high or increasing presence of ethnic minorities and the foreign-born are linked to more negative views of the local economy and perceptions of higher unemployment. However, these correlations are not especially strong, with the strongest (.17) still only qualifying as 'low' according to Cohen's standard classification and the weakest (.03) not significant at all. Meanwhile, in every case, their correspondence to the closest relevant 'objective' measures of economic or cultural context is far higher. The weakness of correlations suggests that it is safe to use 'cultural' controls regardless of the persistence of mild endogeneity concerns, given the alternate risk of omitted variable bias.

Table D-1. Correlation matrix of perceived economic and cultural context (grey highlights indicate relevant correlations)

	Perceived diversity increase	Estimated percentage white	Estimated percentage non-UK	Negativity-household finances	Negativity-national economy	Negativity – local economy	Estimate national unemployment (low-high)	Estimate local unemployment (low-high)
Estimate local unemployment (low-high)	.079***	-.172***	.141***	.154***	.227***	.245***	.604***	1.000
Estimate national unemployment (low-high)	.007	-.104***	.158***	.115***	.215***	.136***	1.000	.604***
Negativity – local economy	.128***	-.045	.028	.420***	.481***	1.000	.136***	.245***
Negativity – national economy	.043	-.058***	.042	.495***	1.000	.481***	.215***	.227***
Negativity – household finances	.078***	-.035	.040	1.000	.495***	.420***	.115***	.154***
Estimated percentage non-UK	.055***	-.171***	1.000	.040	.042	.028	.158***	.141***
Estimated percentage white	-.266***	1.000	-.171***	-.035	-.058***	-.045	-.104***	-.172***
Perceived diversity increase	1.000	-.266***	.055***	.078***	.043	.128***	.007	.079***

Figure D-1. The marginal effect of a unit change in estimates of local unemployment on the probability of high discontent with community representation, given perceived national unemployment.



Note: histogram shows distribution of estimates of national unemployment. Figure created using MARHIS program in STATA (Hernandez, 2016)

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