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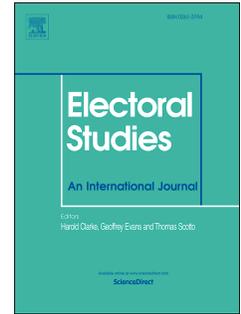
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Two Strategies for Building a Personal Vote:

Personalized representation in the UK and Denmark

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Two strategies for building a personal vote:

Personalized representation in Denmark and the United Kingdom

Abstract

Across parliamentary democracies, elected representatives constitute the link between citizens and government. MPs can connect with voters via the party label, or through personalized forms of representation, which is seen to be increasing in importance. However, scholars disagree on what explains variation in MPs' use of personalized representation strategies. In this article, we argue that politicians use different strategies to personalize the link between themselves and citizens: a *constituency-oriented* and a *person-oriented* strategy. To test our argument, we develop a new and novel dataset with behavioral measures of personalized representation. Using a content analyses of 698 British and Danish MPs' personal websites, we demonstrate that the use of personalization strategies is conditional on the incentives MPs face in terms of electoral insecurity, candidate selection procedures, and the electoral context of the system. Our findings show that the level and type of personalized politics vary across political systems and may pose different types of challenges to party democracies.

Keywords: personalized politics; party democracy; electoral incentives; communication strategies; MP websites

In parliamentary systems where the executive is not directly elected by voters, MPs constitute the most direct link between citizens and the state. This linkage can be established through the party, as described by the responsive party model (APSA 1950), or it can be established based on geographical, demographic or individual relations. Electoral dynamics such as increased electoral volatility and long-term decline in partisan identification and party membership (Dalton 2000; Drummond 2006) should make it less attractive for politicians to rely solely on the party brand. However, scholars have debated the extent to which personal linkages have become increasingly important, and whether they do so at the expense of party linkages. Existing evidence demonstrating the personalization of representation is inconclusive (Cross et al. 2018; Karvonen 2010; Kriesi 2012; Rahat and Kenig 2018; Rahat and Sheafer 2007); limited in focus on electoral campaigns; and relies on self-reported survey measures to estimate the level of personalized politics among politicians (André et al. 2014; Bøggild and Pedersen 2017; Cross and Young 2015; Zittel 2015).

In this article, we investigate the personalization strategies MPs employ post-election, using behavioral measures of MPs' communication with constituents from their personal websites. We integrate insights from the constituency-oriented literature of personal vote-seeking (Cain et al. 1987; Lancaster 1986; Norris 1997; Norton and Wood 1993) with newer literature on personalization of politics (Cross et al. 2018; Rahat and Kenig 2018; Zittel 2015) to identify two different strategies for personalized representation: *person-oriented* and *constituency-oriented*. We establish a framework to analyze the two strategies and test our argument that the electoral incentives provided by electoral systems, party nomination rules and seat marginality influence the extent to which – as well as the way in which – MPs personalize their representative roles and communicate with voters.

We test our hypotheses using new data from the personal websites of 698 British and Danish members of parliament. Our two cases allow us to investigate strategies for personalized representation between and within very different political systems. Unlike e-representation, which has been thoroughly studied among British MPs (Jackson and Lilleker 2011; Norton 2007; Umit 2017; Ward and Lusoli 2005; Williamson 2009), very few have linked it to personalization strategies (Krükemeier et al. 2015; Stanyer 2008). In Denmark e-representation in general as well as personalization strategies in particular are understudied phenomena (Sørensen 2016). Whereas the Danish political context is circumscribed by multimember electoral districts, proportional open-list electoral system, and minority coalition governments, the UK operates a single-member district, first-past-the-post system that produces predominantly majoritarian governments. We exploit the variation in political

and electoral systems in Denmark and the UK to test our general hypothesis that these factors shape MPs' personalization strategies.

Although the digital space for personal communications has broadened substantially (e.g. Twitter, blog/vlog, Instagram, etc.), personal websites remain an important element in the portfolio of communications MPs use. Personal websites offer a space for MPs to present themselves to their constituents – in detail, overtime, and directly – which make them a good data source for understanding representative styles (Stanyer, 2008: 414). Other platforms such as Twitter and Facebook consist of multiple updates and posts related to specific events which makes these platforms highly relevant for investigating interaction with voters, but less comprehensive and comparable for studying the strategies MPs use to communicate their representative role.

The research makes three significant contributions. Conceptually, we extend the literature on personalized politics by specifying two different personalization strategies available to politicians. Methodologically, we develop a coding scheme which can be used across different political systems to measure personalized political communication. Empirically, we show that incentives shape MPs' communication strategies: personalized representation is more widespread among British MPs, among MPs holding a marginal seat, and among parties with more decentralized candidate selection procedures. However, personalized representation is not a threat to traditional, party-based representation when we look to how they chose to portray themselves as political representatives. Overall, our analyses suggest that the intensity and type of personalized representation strategies varies across countries, potentially posing different challenges to party representation.

In the next section we develop the two-strategy framework for personalized representation and our argument of how re-election incentives influence representative appeals. We explain our coding of website content and operationalization of relevant variables before presenting our results. In conclusion, we discuss the implications of our findings with regard to how traditional party-based representation is challenged by personalized representation.

Two strategies for building a personal vote

Representative links can be formed in various ways. According to the responsible party model, political parties constitute the main representative unit (Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018). Competition between cohesive parties offering different policy programmes allows voters to cast a vote for their preferred party, independent of who the party candidate is.

Candidates will therefore pursue the party program, and will be a perfect party agent, oriented towards the party in her representative practice (Converse and Pierce 1986). There is a great deal of evidence showing that voters navigate politically with the help of party identification and party cues (Bisgaard and Slothuus 2018). In Britain, "elections are overwhelmingly choices about parties not candidates" (Norris, 1997: 39), and about fifty percent of all Danish voters vote for the party list, rather than a specific candidate on that list (Statistics Denmark 2016). In the legislative arena, parties vote as unitary actors in the majority of votes (Bowler 2000), although rebellion is increasing slightly in UK (Russell and Cowley 2016), but not in Denmark (Skjæveland 2011).

Party-oriented representation is thus strong, but has been challenged by voters becoming less attached to political parties and increasing electoral volatility (Deschouwer et al. 2014; Drummond 2006; Mair 2013). Legislators who deviate from the party line get more media attention (Kam 2009), are looked upon as having more integrity (Campbell et al. 2016), and receive stronger electoral support (Carson et al. 2010). Politicians therefore face electoral incentives to build a personal vote, especially where seats are won by a small margin, making even a few personal votes potentially decisive.

Personalized representative strategies can be defined as legislative behavior emphasizing personal connections to the electorate, at the expense of emphasizing party links (Rahat and Kenig 2018).[1] However, politicians can communicate personal connections in different ways. We argue that politicians can adopt two strategies: constituency-oriented and person-oriented strategies. Figure 1 shows the three representative strategies: person-oriented, constituency-oriented, and party-oriented. Adopting Rahat and Kenig's (2018) definition, we can measure personalized representation as the difference between the emphasis of the constituency/person and the party.

[Figure 1]

Constituency-oriented representation is a key aspect of MPs' work and involves advocating or intervening on behalf of a constituent, casework, fundraising, and being present in the constituency (André et al. 2015; Cain et al. 1987; Fenno 1978; Norris 1997; Norton and Wood 1993). Since these activities take time, and time is a scarce resource for most politicians, paying service to the constituency is an investment. To make the most of their investment in terms of votes, politicians draw as much attention as possible to the services they provide (Gschwend and Zittel 2015; Mayhew 1974). For instance, politicians may

inform voters about how they work to promote the interests of the constituency. They may also signal their links to the constituency using emotional cues, such as mentioning where they live in the constituency and/or their local ties/connections (e.g. via family, work, school), to connect with constituents (Shugart et al., 2005: 438).

Person-oriented representation involves highlighting the individual qualities of the MP. Person-oriented representation includes two aspects: individualized and privatized representation (Van Aelst et al. 2011). Individualized representation involves advertising personal competences, such as education or work experience. This is also sometimes called valence-based voter appeals (Adams et al. 2016). It includes the promotion of individual activities such as sponsoring bills, asking parliamentary questions as a private member of parliament or running campaigns. This signals to constituents that the MP is as hardworking and dedicated political representative. Privatized representation relates to how a politician uses his/her private life in their political career. By sharing information on family life, private events or preferences for leisure activities, politicians attempt to bridge the gap between themselves and their constituents. The sharing of private information is not directly relevant for politics, but it says something about the person behind the representative, and contributes to forming a more personal relationship with voters.

We propose that person-oriented and constituency-oriented representation constitutes two different strategies for personalized representation. This contrasts with Cain et al's argument that the separation of constituency work and evaluations of personal qualities is almost impossible (1987: 51). We agree that constituency work and personal attributes may very well be closely connected in terms of voter evaluations, but from the candidate's point of view, they constitute two different possibilities for maximizing personal votes.

Explaining differences in online personalization strategies

The opportunities for emphasizing personal and/or constituency linkages to the electorate has changed profoundly with the advent of online communication platforms (Norton 2007; Zittel 2003). Politicians use online communication opportunities to build relationships with their constituents, to promote the work they do for them (constituency-oriented representation) (Jackson and Lilleker 2011; Williamson 2009), and to manage their impression among voters – i.e. portraying themselves as ordinary, likable people who hold valuable personal qualities (person-oriented representation) (Lilleker and Koc-Michalska 2013). The availability of e-platforms provides "opportunities to intensify and renegotiate the link between political parties, candidates, and citizens" (Kruikemeier et al., 2015: 822) and provide an important

data source to investigate MPs' personalization strategies. However, technological developments do not automatically translate into personalized representation. MPs have to engage with the technology and decide on the information they want to supply on such platforms.

When deciding how to manage the information provided on websites, we assume that MPs act as rational actors motivated to be re-elected and promoted (Mayhew 1974). As a consequence, the information MPs provide is not random but aimed at serving these ends. We therefore expect that MPs' personalization strategies reflect their re-election incentives, which we argue are influenced by the electoral system, seat security, and party nomination rules.

The electoral system has long been regarded as an important factor for understanding and explaining the behavior of elected representatives, and importantly, for generating incentives for legislators to cultivate a personal vote or strengthen party reputation (André et al., 2015: 467; Shugart and Carey 1995). Two contradicting causal mechanisms connect electoral district magnitude and candidate behavior (Zittel, 2012: 106). According to the *visibility mechanism*, personal reputation and constituency work are closely connected in single-member systems as credit and blame can be ascribed to one candidate only (Cain et al. 1986; Lancaster 1987). The candidate can therefore make a stronger case for herself by promoting her skills and devotion as a constituency worker. However, in multi-member systems it is more difficult for voters to decide who to blame or credit for policies affecting the constituency. In these systems, politicians therefore have less to gain from portraying themselves as constituency servants. In contrast, according to the *intra-party competition mechanism*, Carey and Shugart (1995) argue that in open-list preferential systems, the incentive for building a personal electoral platform increases as the district magnitude increases. In this case, politicians need to highlight aspects of their representative service other than party brand to distinguish themselves from competing candidates running for the same party. Following this logic, André et al. (2014) argue that personalization is actually less likely in single-member systems since in this system, voters are not able to express preferences for individual candidates running for the same party.

We argue that the electoral system not only influences the incentives to personalize in general, but that it influences the way in which politicians are incentivized to personalize. We hold that even in single-member systems, there are incentives to personalize and not just promote the party brand. As partisan attachments among voters decline, candidates cannot rely on their party label alone to win the seat. They have to make efforts to

win unidentified or loosely-identified party supporters by promoting other aspects of their candidature than their party affiliation (Cain et al., 1986: 182). Following the visibility mechanism, politicians running in single-member systems should be especially incentivized to be constituency-oriented, while intra-party competition in multi-member districts incentivizes MPs to utilize a person-oriented personalization strategy.

We use Danish and British MPs' websites to study personalization strategies and explore the relevance of the two-strategy framework for understanding political communication in different countries. An important difference between these two political systems is that elections for the UK House of Commons are organized by the first-past-the-post system, while Danish elections for the Folketing are organized by a proportional system in multi-member districts. British candidates run in 650 single-member constituencies, and the candidate receiving the most votes wins the seat. Danish candidates run in ten electoral districts filling on average 13.5 seats.[2] While both countries are characterized by having strong parties (Rahat and Kenig 2018; Stanyer 2008), they vary on other factors – e.g. the magnitude of electoral districts such as political culture, socio-economic equality, and cultural homogeneity – which may influence the political behavior of voters as well as MPs.

Empirical investigations of the impact of electoral systems on representative behavior are challenged by the fact that political institutions cannot be experimentally manipulated and only change rarely and gradually over time. The most promising studies either include multiple countries making it possible to control for more relevant confounding factors (Andre et al. 2014) or they utilize intra-country variation in the mixed electoral systems (Chiru and Enyedi 2015; Gschwend and Zittel 2015) holding confounding factors constant by design. These studies are based on self-reported measures of legislative or campaign behavior, and show that candidates running in single-member districts are less focused on the party. Based on this, and our argument that constituency-orientation should be more prominent in single-member-districts, and person-orientation also prominent in multi-member-destricts, we derive the following hypotheses regarding differences in personalization strategies across the two countries:

H1a: Constituency-oriented relative to party-oriented strategies are more prominent in the British single-member district system
H1b: Person-oriented relative to party-oriented strategies are equally prominent in the Danish multi-member-district system

The need to campaign for personal electoral support is stronger if the MP sits in a marginal seat (Andre et al. 2015; Heithusen et al. 2005). If a politician can rely on party votes for re-election or already has a very strong personal platform, she may not engage as much in strategies for strengthening the personal vote further since building a personal vote requires resources which can be used for other purposes. Also, personalization may be costly: highlighting personal political goals or constituency interests may conflict with the party program and strategy, and thus, be a sub-optimal strategy for promotion or holding on to party positions. On the contrary, if a politician is just at the margins of being re-elected, their first priority is to hold on to the seat. Therefore, politicians in marginal seats will put even more emphasis on their constituency/personal qualities relative to their role as party agents, when portraying themselves as representatives. MPs in single-member districts will intensify the constituency-oriented relative to the party-oriented strategy, whereas MPs in multi-member districts will intensify a person-oriented strategy, since these are the strategies more like to pay off in the given system.

> H2a: Person- and constituency-oriented relative to party-oriented strategies are more prominent among Danish and British MPs in marginal seats
>
> H2b: Seat marginality increases person-orientation more among Danish MPs elected multi-member districts and constituency-orientation more among British MPs elected in single-member districts

Independently of the electoral system, MPs need to be re-selected by the party in order to compete for legislative office. Candidate selection is the most crucial function of political parties (Hazan and Rahat 2010) and the way parties organize candidate selection has been shown to influence the way MPs vote in legislatures (Kam 2009), how they understand their role as MPs (Önnudottir 2014), and how they run their electoral campaigns (Bøggild and Pedersen 2017). When making choices regarding building a personal vote, politicians are likely to consider the party nomination procedures. If the national party branch is in control of the candidate nomination, politicians need to pay attention to the national party and show party loyalty to an even higher degree (André et al., 2014). Our final expectation is therefore that the use of strategies for cultivating a personal vote varies across parties.

> H3: Constituency-oriented and person-oriented relative to party-oriented strategies are less prominent when nomination power is located at the national party level

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Websites as personal platforms

We study strategies for personalized representation by examining the way politicians portray themselves as representatives on their personal websites. Websites were the first online platform brought into use by political parties and politicians (Kruikemeier et al. 2015; Norton 2007) and enjoy widespread use (Ward and Gibson 2003). In our two cases – Denmark and the UK – 698 out of the 829 members of parliament or 84% hosted a personal website in 2016.[3] Although websites are an older platform compared to more recent innovations (e.g. Twitter, Instagram etc.), they are by no means dead as platforms for political communication, and they provide particular benefits to our investigation.

We define a personal website as a website with a personalized URL address, including the MP name, and other information relevant to the MP (e.g. biographies, policy domains, leadership roles, constituency services, etc.). Personal websites may follow a party template, but they are not subpages of the party or parliamentary website. Personal websites can have a number of intended audiences, first and foremost an MP's constituents (i.e. potential voters), but can also be used to signal other audiences, e.g. fellow MPs, party leaders, business and industry, media, etc. (Ward and Gibson 2003).

One potential criticism of using websites is that sites are not administered by MPs themselves but by their parliamentary assistants. While we agree that many MPs have assistants helping them update and manage their websites, we hold that the online public image of a MP is so important, that MPs will not leave it to assistants to decide which information should be shared (Corner and Pels 2003). Recent evidence shows that online communication varies systematically across MPs with given personal characteristics, for example, gender (McGregor et al. 2016). Interviews with Norwegian politicians has shown how they prioritize different types of information to share online (Enli and Skogerbø 2013), and in the US, interviews with campaign leaders from the 2016 presidential campaign illustrate how candidates participated actively in designing the online campaign strategy (Kreiss et al. 2018). Building online images is not a peripheral concern to politicians, but at the core of building links to voters.

Content coding

The websites were accessed through parliamentary websites, which often provided a link to the individual websites.[4] In a few cases where this was not true, we searched for the individual website using the MP name. The websites were accessed and coded in the spring 2016. We chose non-election years in both countries, observing personalized representation

when politicians and parliaments are at work.[5] To investigate how MPs portray themselves on their websites and the extent to which they are more party, constituency or person-oriented, we created a codebook designed to tap into these different styles of communication, which is generalizable to different political contexts. The categories are displayed in Table 1. The coding framework does not include the same number of codes for each representative strategy, since they are developed to include all constitutive elements of each strategy.[6] On the one hand, this could lead to a general overestimation of personalized representation since more codes are used for constituency and personal orientation. On the other hand, the codes for party-oriented representation are highly likely in democracies dominated by political parties. Moreover, we are especially interested in the relative emphasis of party or person/constituency across MPs rather than the absolute level of each style. Empirically, we handle the unbalanced coding framework by measurement standardization (see below).

The coding process was as follow. First, student coders entered information about the MP into the database such as name, party affiliation and gender. They then determined through parliamentary websites or web searches if an MP had a personal website. We coded information contained on the first and second pages of the MP's website. If information could be found by opening additional pages or using links to other pages, it was not included, since we wanted to know what MPs highlight and prioritize when describing themselves to voters. Most relevant information was provided on the main and 'about me' pages. Two rounds of pilot coding were used to adjust the codebook and align understandings among the three coders.

We tested for reliability by letting two coders code the same 125 units.[7] For codes shown in Table 1, Kappa values range between 1.00 for the coding of whether or not the website provides information about political successes won by the MP and 0.54 for whether the website provides information about the political career of the MP. We categorize all codes with Kappa values below 0.6 as having low reliability and constructed measures and ran analyses excluding these variables as a test of robustness.[8] The results are the same, so we include all codes in the final measures to keep as much information as possible.

[Table 1 here]

Based on the categories shown in Table 1, we construct measures of person-oriented, constituency-oriented and party-oriented representative strategies as shown in Table 1. All categories are dichotomous (1= information is present on the website; 0= information

is not contained on the website). We add all relevant categories creating additive formative indexes for each strategy. These indexes are recoded to range from 0 to 100 to give them similar weights. Last, we construct the final measures of the dependent variables by subtracting party-oriented information from the two other indexes to show the relative emphasis on party, constituency or person. The indexes are standardized on a 0 to 100 scale, where higher values indicate stronger emphasis on personalized representation.

Measuring electoral insecurity

The marginality of seats is most commonly taken into account in single-member districts. In the UK, marginality is simply the difference in the percentage of the vote share of the winner and the candidate in second place. For instance, if a Labour candidate wins 57 percent of the votes in her district and the second-best candidate representing the Conservatives wins 40 percent, the margin is 17 percent points. In multi-member districts, the marginality is harder to and less commonly estimated (André et al. 2015). We estimate the marginality of each individual Danish MP using the share of total party votes in a district won by the first loser as a baseline and then subtracting this share from the share of the MP. For instance, the Social Democrats won 96,753 personal and party votes in the Copenhagen constituency in the 2015 election. The candidate Lars Aslan Rasmussen had the largest number of personal votes of those that did not win a seat (2,368, equaling 2 % of total party votes). Hence, he was the first loser. The former prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt ran in the same district, winning 68,809 personal votes, equaling 71 percent of the total party votes (marginality score 71-2 % = 69 % points). Not surprisingly, she was in a very safe position. Using this measure, we take the total number of district party votes into account since the weight of personal votes depends on the absolute number of votes the party wins. We do not expect a linear relationship between marginality and security, since MPs with margins of 50 or 30 points may very well feel equally secure. Instead, we identify the most insecure seats setting the margin at 5 percentage points. In our sample, 14.84 percent of MPs occupy marginal seats (safe seat=0, marginal seat=1).

Coding of candidate selection rules

Nomination procedures of each party are coded based on Bille (2001). This coding is based on formal rules and an evaluation of how decentralized and inclusive the procedures for candidate selection are. The most decentralized and inclusive procedure is candidate selection though membership ballots, whereas the most centralized and exclusive candidate selection is

completely controlled by national party organs. Bille codes candidate selection rules into one of six categories. For political parties in the UK and Denmark neither of the extreme codes are relevant, thus we only report the three relevant codes in Table 2. We coded each party's nomination procedures linked to the party's constitution for the year of study and so we were able to include the newer parties such as the Danish Alternative and Liberal Alliance and UKIP in Britain. For the parties also coded in 1990 by Bille, we arrived at the same classification.

[Table 2 here]

In Denmark, parties not only control the candidate selection but also the ballot structure. In the 2015 election, all parties except for the Red-Green Alliance used open lists, where the personal vote of each candidate decides how the party seats are distributed. Therefore, individual candidates have incentives to increase their own personal vote on the party list. The Red-Green Alliance used closed-party lists, which should reduce the incentives to build a personal electoral platform (Carey and Shugart 1995). Table 4 suggests that this is the case, but since only 14 MPs represent the Red-Green Alliance, exploring the impact of this organization of the election in the multivariate analysis is difficult. We ran all analyses excluding the Red-Green Alliance and the results were robust.

Controls

We include control variables at the individual as well as the party level. At the individual level, we include gender and age.[9] We expect that women may be less likely to personalize and stay more party oriented out of a sense of loyalty to the party (Childs and Cowley 2003) or reluctance to make visible elements of their private lives (Pedersen 2016). Older MPs may be less likely to personalize since they are a different generation than younger politicians, and they may also be more likely to hold a party position and have safe seats if they have been in office for longer. Furthermore we include a dummy for whether the MP is also minister at the time of data collection, since government ministers may be more likely to hold a secure position and to host less personalized websites acting as officials on behalf of the government, and we include a dummy for whether the MP represents a rural or an urban district since it has be argued that politicians have an easier time targeting their local constituents in rural areas (Eder et al. 2015).

At the party level, we include party size measured as percentage of seat share since Kruikemeier et al. (2015) found that personalization was more widespread in larger parties. We also use data from the Chapel Hill expert survey 2014 (Bakker et al. 2015) on party ideology, measured as position on the left-right dimension, as socialist parties and, in general, parties further to the left have shown to be more party oriented (André et al., 2014: 101; Pedersen 2010). Experts were asked to indicate the position that best described the given national party on a scale ranging from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). In Denmark, 11 experts answered the survey; in the UK, seven experts participated.[10] Finally, we include a variable indicating whether the party was in government or not.

Unsurprisingly, some of the party-level variables are significantly correlated. At the time of data collection, parties of the left were not in government, and in Denmark, they have more centralized candidate nomination procedures. Tolerance values are below 0.2 for all party variables (nomination, left-right position, seat share and governing status). This reduces the precision of the estimated regression coefficients, which raises questions regarding model specification and interpretation of the effect of nomination procedures. We are therefore cautious when interpreting the results and evaluating our third hypothesis.

What explains differences in MPs' personal communication strategies?

Before turning to our main results, we show evidence that supports our contention that there are two distinct strategies for cultivating a personal vote. Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation, and correlation of the communication style indices. Constituency-oriented and party-oriented strategies are weakly, negatively correlated. The person-oriented strategy is also only moderately correlated with the constituency- and party-oriented strategies. This shows that MPs do not simply include more of everything on their websites but tend to prioritize some types of information over others when communicating with voters. We take this as evidence that constituency and person-oriented strategies are not just two sides of the same coin but rather conceptually distinct approaches. And, as shown by the standard deviation, there is substantial variation in approaches to communicating with voters across MPs' websites.

[Table 3 here]

To illustrate these differences further, Figure 2 displays three screen shots of coded websites. Panel A is an example of a website coded with the highest possible party-

orientation, which is also clearly illustrated by the picture of people holding posters for Labour. Panel B is an example of a website coded with a very high score on constituency-orientation illustratively showing the MP campaigning for a local care center and displaying the geographical boarders of the constituency. Panel C is an example of a person-oriented website showing the MP with his family and describing his family background. These examples illustrate how the content coding picks up the central variation in representative styles, we are interested in.

Table 4 shows means of the dependent variables across all parties. It is evident from the many means below 50 (tipping point where emphasis of personal is equal to emphasis of party) that it is still very important for MPs to communicate ties with their party. This is most strongly the case in Denmark. However, there are exceptions in both countries. Conservatives in Britain and MPs representing the Liberals and Danish People's Party in Denmark are, on average, less party-oriented. This makes sense since Danish Liberals and British Conservatives represent a less collective ideology, which may induce them to promote themselves more as individuals. For the Danish People's Party MPs, an important part of their image is that they are not part of the political elite but represent the ordinary voter, carrying experience from the labor market, having less education, and growing up outside of the capital. A similar interpretation could be provided for the single UKIP MP website. Overall, Table 4 shows that there is substantial variation – across parties and within parties – when it comes to designing the content of the MPs' personal websites.

[Table 4 here]

To test our hypotheses regarding variation in representation strategies across MP websites, we run OLS-regression analyses for each of the dependent variables. Standard errors are clustered by party as the individual MPs are nested in parties inflating the standard errors. Table 5 shows the results of three regressions for each dependent variable. The first model for each dependent variable includes only the independent variables related to our hypotheses; the second model includes control variables at the individual level; and the third model includes party-level control variables.

[Table 5 here]

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Our first set of hypotheses (H1a/b) relate to the differences across countries. The results in Table 5 (models 1-3) support the hypothesis that British MPs are more constituency-oriented relative to party-oriented than Danish MPs. The difference is substantial, constituting almost a third of the scale (27%), and statistically significant. In contrast to our expectations, British MPs are also more person-oriented relative to party-oriented compared to Danish MPs (Table 5, models 4-6). The difference in constituency-oriented communication across the two political systems is however significantly larger than the difference in person-oriented communication (χ^2=31.41; p<0.000). Hence, British MPs' website profiles are in general more personalized than Danish, though the difference is especially strong when it comes to constituency-oriented personalization.

Our second set of hypotheses (H2a/b) concern the impact of seat marginality on representative orientation. In general, MPs in unsecure electoral positions display a more personalized style of representation on their websites, which supports our expectations.[11] However, we also expected the impact of seat marginality on personalized representation to vary across electoral system. Figure 3 illustrates these interaction effects. Marginality increases constituency-orientation versus party-orientation in Denmark as well as UK and in contrast to our expectations, the impact is not stronger in UK. In accordance with our expectations, however, marginality only increases person-orientation in Denmark and not in UK. This indicates that person-orientation is a strategy used for managing electoral risks in Denmark, whereas it is part of a more general representative practice in UK not influenced by electoral risks. The interaction term is however not statistically significant in the models including controls (p= 0.12 and p= 0.24).

[Figure 3 here]

Regarding our final hypothesis (H3) on party nomination rules, the baseline for comparison is the most centralized nomination procedure, where the national level provides a list of names from which the local party organizations can select. According to the hypothesis, we therefore expect a positive relationship between the two categories of nomination rules and constituency-oriented as well as person-oriented strategies in Table 5. The results in models excluding party controls support our hypothesis. MPs nominated by the sub-national levels are more constituency and person-oriented relative to party-oriented. The positive relationship is stronger for those MPs whose nomination is fully controlled by the subnational level. Yet, the difference between the two more decentralized procedures is not

statistically significant. When we include party controls in models 3 and 6, the relationship between nomination procedures and constituency/person orientation turns statistically insignificant. This leads us to reject H3 regarding party nomination effects, but we note that this may constitute a Type II error of rejecting a true hypothesis since the multi-collinearity of the party-level variables makes the interpretation of models 3 and 6 uncertain.

Finally, we find only few statistically significant effects of the control variables in relation to constituency-oriented strategies (models 1-3). MPs representing rural districts seem more constituency oriented, but the effect is not robust when including party controls (model 3). Ministers are less constituency-oriented while MPs representing governing parties but not enjoying a minister office are more constituency-oriented. Overall, the party-level control variables contribute significantly to the fit of the model. Adjusted R squares thus increase from 0.25 to 0.33. This contribution comes from including any one of the party-level control variables. For person-oriented strategies (models 4-6), we find negative and statistically significant relationships for gender and age. Women and older politicians tend to be less person-oriented relative to party-oriented, through the effect of gender turns statistically insignificant in model 6 (p=0.06). The same goes for rurality: rural MPs are more person-oriented (model 5), but the effect disappears after including party controls (model 6). As in the case of constituency-oriented strategies the party-level control variables contribute significantly to the model fit. Including left-right position or government status increases the adjusted R square to 0.30. In model 6, only the coefficient of the left-right position of the party is statistically significant, MPs representing parties further to the right are more person-relative to party-oriented. This suggests that person-orientation in contrast to a constituency-orientation is influenced by personal characteristics such as gender, age and political values (measured here as parties' left-right placement) moving beyond strategic reaction to institutional, party organizational and district incentives.

Discussion and conclusions

In this article, we argue and show that two strategies can be used to strengthen personal representative links between voters and MPs. Personalized representation can vary in kind, as well as in intensity, and thus potentially involves different types of challenges to political parties (Cross, Katz and Pruysers 2018).

Personalized representation on MPs' websites varies across our two cases. British MPs are more person-oriented – and especially more constituency-oriented – than Danish MPs in the way they present themselves as political representatives. However, within

political systems communication strategies vary. MPs in vulnerable electoral situations are more constituency-oriented and also more person-oriented, though the effect on person-orientation is only positive among the Danish MPs. Our analyses also suggest that MPs' communication on personal websites is influenced by their party's nomination procedures: more centralized nomination procedures lead to more party-oriented websites. Finally, our analyses suggests that personal qualities such as gender and age are important to person-oriented representation but not to constituency-oriented representation. This suggests that we may need to consider personal qualities as predictors in understanding personalized representation. Chief among these explanations may be psychological (Chiru and Enyedi 2015) and personality traits, with more open and extraverted politicians choosing to emphasize personal over party links (Amsalem et al. 2018).

The arguments and findings of this study have important implications for understanding personalized politics and the possible consequences for party democracies. First, we need to move beyond an understanding of personalized politics as an automatic reaction to party decline and medialization. Personalized representation is a deliberate strategy deployed by MPs taking political circumstances into account. Here, we have suggested electoral marginality, district magnitude, and party nomination rules as possible factors influencing MPs choice to mainly focus on their party, their constituency or their personal qualities when building their image as political representatives. Our analyses support that these factors are indeed relevant, but also show residual unexplained variation. Moreover, the impact of the different factors are difficult to disentangle without panel data, preferably across multiple political systems. These limitations suggest avenues for future research.

Second, this article highlights that when we try to understand and measure the personalization of politics, we need to consider the type – as well as the level of personalization – to understand the nature and possible consequences of personalization. Party government may be challenged by personalization of politics in two different ways. Increased focus on constituency concerns in communications with voters may lead voters to expect (more) constituency representation from their MPs. In response, MPs may challenge party unity to represent the preferences of their constituency, and pork-barreling may become an increasingly important part of building intra- and inter-party coalitions. Party government will thus be challenged by short term horse-trade government. Increased focus on personal qualities in communication with voters may lead voters to expect specific interest representation of their MP, which may contradict the party program. MPs may be less likely

to follow party line to accommodate these expectations and hereby challenge the clarity of the party position potentially weaken voters ability to use parties as reference points for navigating politically and for assigning responsibility.

Finally, our finding that MPs on average are more party-oriented than person-oriented, and almost equally constituency and party-oriented show that even on personal on-line platforms, parties have not been abandoned by MPs but remain an important anchor for MPs as political representatives. A key contribution of this article has been to provide evidence on the relative balance of personalization vis-à-vis the party. We show that personalization may thus pose a challenge to political parties, but not to an extent where personal linkages have become more important than party linkages in British and Danish politics.

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Endnotes

[1] The personalization of politics has been defined as a process in which the political importance of individuals increases at the expense of political groups and especially political parties (Rahat and Sheafer 2007). We use this definition to define a case of personalized politics rather than a process of personalization.

[2] An additional four MPs are elected in Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

[3] There are 179 members of the Danish parliament elected June 18 2015, and 650 members of the British House of Commons elected May 7 2015.

[4] This project falls under a minimal risk category as established by the University's Ethics Review (i.e. it is a research that does not involve vulnerable groups, intrusive interventions, sensitive topics and deception). Data for the project are readily available and public facing. Although personal data are collected, they are reported entirely anonymously.

[5] The Danish General Election was held in June 2015; the UK General Election was held in May 2015.

[6] Mentions of party leaders are not included as part of party-oriented representation since focusing on the party leader may also indicate centralized personalized representation (Balmas et al. 2014). In a sub-sample of the websites, we found that 8 percent included a picture of the party leader or a link to the party leader's website, whereas 93 percent mention the party name, 45 percent include the party logo, and 33 percent include a link to the party website.

[7] The full reliability report and codebook are available on http://ps.au.dk/forskning/forskningsprojekter/repstyle/publications/.

[8] These are information about upbringing (not constituency related), political career, causes promoted for the constituency and constituency activities.

[9] We do not include seniority since it is correlated with age. It has no effect on the dependent variables, when controlling for age.

[10] For the UK, the positions of the Ulster Unionist Party, Sinn Fein, the Democratic Unionist Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party are not provided. In Denmark, no position of the Alternative is provided.

[11] In Models 5 and 6 the estimated correlation is still positive, but it does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance (p=0.08).

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Table 1. Coding Framework for Content Coding of MP Websites

Style		Presence (absence) of content on website
Personal	Individual	Information on education
		Information on prior occupation
		Information on political career
		Information on political successes
	Private	Picture of MP
		Information on civil status
		Picture of partner
		Information about children
		Picture of children
		Information on leisure activities
		Information about upbringing (not constituency related)
		Description of personal traits
Constituency		Name of constituency
		Information on whether the MP lives in constituency
		Expressions of belonging to constituency
		Information on political successes won for constituency
		Information on causes the MP promotes for the constituency
		Information on MP activities in constituency
Party		Name of MP party
		Party logo on first page
		Link to national party
		Information on MP party position
		Expressions of belonging to the party

Table 2. Classification of Party Nomination Procedures

	The national party provides a list of names from which the subnational party can select the final list (0)	The subnational party decides, subject to the approval of the national party (1)	The subnational party completely controls the process and makes the final decision (2)
UK	Scottish National Party	Conservative	
	UK Independence Party	Labour	
	Democratic Unionist Party	Liberal Democrats	
	Ulster Unionist Party	Plaid Cymru	
	Social Democratic and Labour Party	Green Party	
		Sinn Fein	
DK		Red-Green Alliance	Alternative
		Socialist People's Party	Social Liberals
		Danish People's Party	Liberals
		Liberal Alliance	Conservatives

Table 3. Measures of Styles of Communication

	Mean	SD	Correlation (r)	
			Constituency	Party
Person oriented (0-1)	45.33	0.68	0.26***	0.13***
Constituency oriented (0-1)	29.58	0.53		-0.11**
Party oriented (0-1)	42.95	0.86		

(Note: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01 in two-sided tests)

Table 4. Styles of Website Presentation across Parties, Mean (Std. Err.)

	Party	Constituency vs party	Person vs party	N
UK	Conservative	62.88 (0.83)	59.14 (0.95)	316
	UKIP	56.25 (-)	62.35 (-)	1
	Labour	52.31 (1.00)	42.76 (1.11)	219
	SNP	49.16 (1.95)	36.12 (2.22)	37
	Liberal Democrats	45.83 (5.27)	36.67 (6.37)	6
	Dem. Unionist Party	35.42 (4.17)	40.00 (3.40)	3
	Sinn Fein	43.75 (-)	30.59 (-)	1
	Plaid Cymru	43.75 (-)	45.88 (-)	1
	SDLP	43.75 (13.01)	32.55 (11.25)	3
	Ulster Unionist	43.75 (-)	60.00 (-)	1
	Green party	43.75 (-)	34.12 (-)	1
	All parties	57.54 (0.65)	51.03 (0.77)	589
DK	Liberals	51.56 (2.12)	34.31 (6.37)	20
	Danish People's Party	44.27 (4.89)	53.14 (3.59)	12
	Liberal Alliance	37.50 (6.25)	34.31 (6.37)	6
	Social Liberals	33.33 (6.97)	36.67 (7.74)	6
	Social Democrats	30.36 (1.88)	30.84 (2.19)	42
	Red-Green Alliance	28.13 (2.43)	24.45 (3.20)	14
	Conservatives	25.00 (7.13)	32.47 (6.46)	5
	Alternative	20.83 (4.17)	18.82 (3.59)	3
	Socialist People's Party	.	.	.
	All parties	35.59 (1.47)	36.24 (1.63)	108
Total number of MPs with personal website				697

(Note: None of the MPs representing the Socialist People's Party manage a personal website. The total number is 697 rather than 698 since table 4 does not include the single independent MP managing a personal website.)

Table 5 Explaining Personalized Relative to Party Representation, OLS-Regression

	DV: (Constituency orientation – Party orientation)			DV: (Person orientation – Party orientation)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
UK	27.42 (4.14)***	27.44 (4.46)***	18.42 (3.11)***	21.28 (6.62)**	20.02 (6.08)**	9.37 (3.16)*
Seat insecurity	5.86 (1.93)**	5.62 (2.06)*	4.33 (1.71)*	6.47 (2.90)*	5.64 (3.07)	4.12 (2.20)
UK*seat insecurity	-0.41(2.89)	-0.13 (286)	2.83 (1.80)	-7.07 (3.13)*	-5.52 (3.37)	-2.95 (2.38)
Subnat. decides, nat. approves	10.50 (4.03)**	10.91 (3.67)**	-2.70 (2.71)	14.94 (5.88)*	15.54 (5.13)**	-1.12 (3.08)
Subnational level fully in control	19.68 (7.86)**	20.11 (7.89)*	3.68 (4.95)	23.81 (8.43) *	24.90 (8.11)**	2.99 (4.00)
Controls individual level						
Woman		-1.37 (1.90)	1.02 (1.90)		-5.43 (0.96)***	-1.83 (0.90)
Age (years)		0.04 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.11)		-0.09 (0.03)*	-0.18 (0.05)**
Rural district		2.51 (0.99)*	-1.63 (0.90)		3.83 (1.18)**	-1.60 (0.95)
Minister		-0.48 (4.33)	-5.90 (1.87)**		-0.14 (3.89)	-7.14 (0.82)***
Controls party level						
Left-right party position			0.99 (0.83)			2.92 (1.03)*
Seat share			12.55 (10.49)			15.31 (11.89)
Governing party			7.36 (3.24)*			5.39 (3.90)
R^2	0.248	0.254	0.338	0.127	0.158	0.304
N	697	697	686	697	697	686

(Note: Standard errors clustered by party, ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05 in two-sided tests. Independent MPs (n=4) as well as MPs representing parties with missing values (n=31) are excluded from the analysis. This is the case for the Alternative in DK and UUP, SDLP, DUP and Sinn Fein in the UK.)

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Figure 1: Types of Representative Strategies
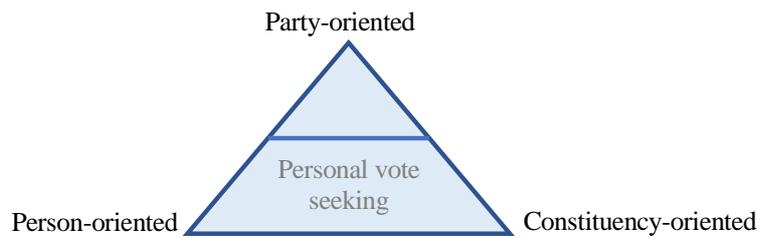
Figure 2: Examples of different representative focus on websites

*Panel A: Tom Watson: Party oriented website (https://www.tom-watson.com/ accessed November 29 2018)*

Panel B: Charles Walker: Constituency oriented website (https://www.charleswalker.org/ accessed November 29 2018)

Panel C: Graham Evans: Person oriented website (https://www.grahamevans.org.uk/ accessed November 29 2018)

Figure 3: Marginal Effects of Insecure Seat across Political System
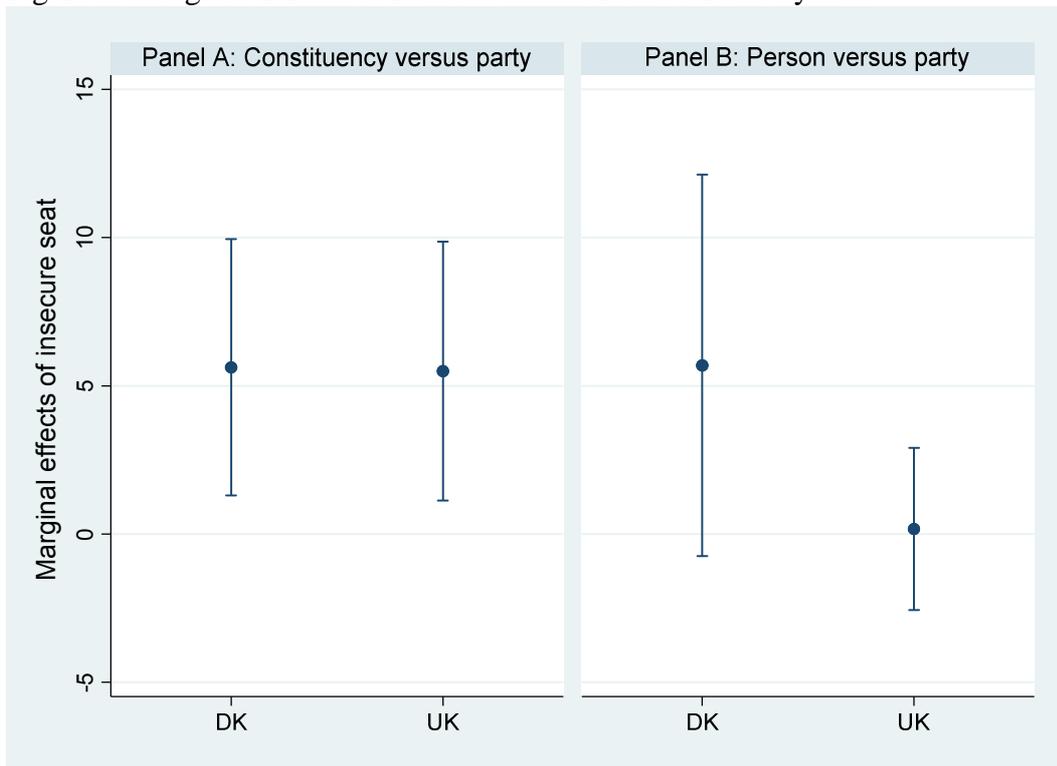
(Note: Estimates based on models 2 and 5 in table 5, 95 % confidence intervals.)