

# **Performing Identity: Descriptive and Symbolic Representation in New Zealand and the United Kingdom**

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## Abstract

Previous studies of identity and representation fail to fully recognise the complexity of identity and its inherent relevance to representation. In addition, they insufficiently acknowledge the institutional factors which mediate the performance of identity in representation. This thesis moves beyond this existing research by more critically analysing the relationship between identity and political representation through the lens of performative claim-making. Given that both representation and identity are concepts which have come to be understood as complex and multiply constructed, their interrelationship deserves a more critical and nuanced analysis. I argue that identity inherently shapes representative roles. Representation as a concept can be modelled as a series of *claims to* and *understandings of* representation. By applying Goffman's interpretation of identity as performance, *claims to* representation are therefore a series of performative moves which evoke identity strategically and vary according to context and audience. Through the examples of the two case studies of New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the thesis explores the ways that MPs perform their identities in three distinct contexts: web biographies, maiden speeches and interviews. These allow for comparisons of contexts or 'stages' for performance of identity by MPs and shows how claim-making plays out in reality for MPs.

I argue that performance of identity by MPs will vary depending on the method of selection of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture, and the audience. The potential for variation of performance due to contextual shifts requires an explicit consideration of the institutional factors which impact a representative's performative role. Political space - its rules and regulations and its culture and norms – needs to be incorporated in more depth into studies of representation, claim-making and performance because these factors impact the extent to which MPs will engage with and perform identity within their representative roles. By investigating the ways in which MPs perform identity in different contexts and with different audiences, we can better understand the relationship between the two concepts of identity and political representation.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

When Barack Obama was elected as President of the United States of America, history was made. The country's first black President took office amidst talks of new hope, not just for America, but more specifically for African Americans who had faced persecution, discrimination and oppression because of their race. Obama's election was seen not only as the dawn of a new era for all minority groups, but also acknowledgement that race relations had come so far that a black man could be elected President. Prior to his selection as the Democratic presidential candidate, Obama had competed for the nomination against Hilary Clinton in what became framed by the media as a battle between gender and race. Both would make history if successful, either as the first female President or as the first black President. Each were accused of playing 'the race card' and 'the gender card' during the lead up to the primaries of 2008, situating the choice of candidates squarely among the domain of identity politics.<sup>1</sup> But the racialised descriptions of Obama or the gendered portrayals of Clinton were not just important because of what they said about each individual candidate, each were seen as a symbolic representative of racial and ethnic minorities and of women; two groups who are traditionally under-represented in legislatures across the globe. The public representations of Obama and Clinton operated on three levels: the individual, the party and their group identities. Their racial and gendered identities assumed more importance because of their relative political scarcity and were considered in a way that was not seen in the previous Democratic primary where the nominees were all white men.

In a world of increasing social media, increased access to politicians, and a higher degree of public visibility for MPs than even before, the public has numerous opportunities to form judgements about who is standing for election. In a similar way, more and more academic attention has been paid to the composition of our parliaments – who 'represents' and what does this mean for the types of political decisions that are made? Who is present in legislatures and who is absent? Are there barriers which

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<sup>1</sup> A. McGinley (2009) "Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and Michelle Obama: Performing gender, race, and class on the campaign trail. Race, and Class on the Campaign Trail" *Denver University Law Review*, Vol. 86, pp. 709-725.

restrict some groups from equal political participation and representation? Do parties need to diversify the types of people who stand as political representatives?

The relationship between identity and representation has been traditionally absent from discussions of ‘classical’ democracy and political theorists have engaged with the concept of identity to a limited degree. Huddy notes that studies of identity have had less impact “than might have been expected” in the fields of political behaviour and psychology and Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou argue that normative theoretical work has “vastly outpaced empirical studies” on descriptive representation and the behaviour of minority representatives.<sup>2</sup> Analysis of constructed identity or essentialism has traditionally been left to fields of anthropology or sociology. And yet who we are affects what we do; thus models of representation are directly linked to concepts of identity.

From its roots in Athens, traditions of studying democratic representation have moved from models of representation (Burke, Mill, Locke), to Pitkin’s standing for/acting for dichotomy, which pays little regard to those forms of representation which involve *who* a representative is, rather than what they *do*.<sup>3</sup> A wave of theoretical advocates for group representation which emerged during the nineties saw group identity and political representation begin to be considered in a much more explicit way.<sup>4</sup> They advocated for the political presence of traditionally under-represented groups, used identity as a signifier of those who are excluded, oppressed or barred from political representation, and advocated for measures to improve this. Despite Young’s claim that “when such institutions privilege some groups over others, actual democracy requires group representation for the disadvantaged”, critics of identity politics point to the dangers of essentialist identity categories which inform discussions about ‘women’, ‘gays’ or

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<sup>2</sup> L. Huddy (2001) “From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory” *Political Psychology*, Vol. 22 (1), pp.127-156 (p.128); T. Saalfeld and K. Kyriakopoulou (2010)

“Presence and Behaviour: Black and Ethnic MPs in the British House of Commons” in *The Political Representation of Immigrants and Minorities: Voters, Parties and Parliaments in Liberal Democracies*, K. Bird, T. Saalfeld, and A. Wüst (eds.), Oxon: Routledge, pp.230-249 (p.231).

<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive study into representation and subsequent typologies and models that have been put forward by theorists see M. Brito Viera & D. Runciman (2008) *Representation*, Cambridge: Polity Press, or Andrew Rehfeld (2006) ‘Towards a general theory of political representation’, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 68, 1–21.

<sup>4</sup> A. Phillips (1995) *The Politics of Presence*, New York: Oxford University Press; I. M. Young (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; M.S Williams (1998) *Voice, Trust, and Memory: Marginalized Groups and the Failings of Liberal Representation*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press; W. Kymlicka (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press.

‘blacks’.<sup>5</sup> Feminists particularly have focused on the limitations that surround definitions of ‘women’ and ‘gender’ and the constructed norms that accompany these.<sup>6</sup> Identity politics, it is suggested, is limited because of the necessity of drawing boundaries around identities; the definition of who can ‘represent’ others because of shared identity markers creates rigid categorisation and essentialist discourse within political theory. In order to understand both political representation and individuals, we need to move beyond rigid identity labels and explore ‘other kinds of dreams’.

I think there is something deficient in the thinking on the part of anybody who proposes either gender identity politics or race identity politics as sufficient, because every single one of us is more than whatever race we represent or embody and more than whatever gender category we fall into. We have other kinds of allegiances, other kinds of dreams that have nothing to do with whether we are white or not white.<sup>7</sup>

Attempts to overcome these issues saw a rise in theories of performative identity, and thus performative representation. Increasing awareness on the part of political scientists to engage with representation as a relational process between representative and constituents, rather than a hierarchical top-down relationship, has also seen a greater focus on the intersection of constructed or performed identity and political representation.<sup>8</sup> Theories of representative claim-making, for example, argue that instead of considering representation through models and typologies, it should be thought of as a performance of individual claims to represent, made by political actors. These claims can be accepted, modified or rejected by an audience and can change depending on the context.<sup>9</sup> In this way, a representative’s role is directly influenced by the way they construct, perform and project their identity.

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<sup>5</sup> I. M. Young (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.191; W. Connolly (1991) *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

<sup>6</sup> S. Hekman (2000) “Beyond Identity: Feminism, identity and identity politics” *Feminist Theory*, vol. 1(3), pp. 289-308.

<sup>7</sup> J. Jordan quoted in P. Parmar, (1989) “Other Kinds of Dreams” *Feminist Review*, No. 31, pp. 55-65 (p.61).

<sup>8</sup> E. Goffman (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press; M. Saward (2010) *The Representative Claim*, Oxford University Press: Oxford; K. Celis, S. Childs (2012) “The Substantive Representation of Women: What to Do with Conservative Claims?” *Political Studies*, Vol. 60, pp. 213-225.; J. Butler (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge.

<sup>9</sup> M. Saward (2006) “The Representative Claim” *Contemporary Political Theory*, Vol. 5, pp. 297-318.

The role of an MP is further conditioned by parliamentary rules and customs, by the demands of their political party, by their personal goals and ambition, and by the voting public and all of these have been analysed in great depth by democratic theorists. What has been largely absent from these discussions is an exploration of how an MP's identity affects the way they perform their representative roles. This thesis therefore begins with the question "*How is identity performed through political representation in the United Kingdom and New Zealand?*" Instead of defining 'identity' by a series of categories, I argue that identity is fluid, multifaceted and intersectional and it can be therefore performed by MPs in a number of ways. More specifically, representative roles are inherently shaped by the way in which MPs understand and perform identities, the ways they use them to make representative claims, and the factors that constrain these performances of identity.

Building on the work of Goffman and Saward, the thesis considers political representation as a system of performative claim-making. Identity is used by MPs as a means of qualifying, empathising and identifying themselves with potential constituents through a series of claims to and understandings of representation. These 'uses' of identity are performances which can vary depending on the audience, the context and the MPs objectives. I draw on empirical data which focuses on MPs performance of identity in three distinct contexts: web biographies, maiden speeches and interviews. These allow for comparisons of contexts or 'stages' for performance of identity by MPs; biographies and maiden speeches are targeted to mass audiences and are constrained by to a high level by institutional norms and culture, while interviews have a single audience member and are more like a dialogue than a ritualised, public performance. In this way, the thesis shows how claim-making plays out in reality for MPs; it highlights the ways MPs discuss and perform identity in each context and considers the factors that increase or inhibit these performances. By investigating the ways in which MPs perform identity in different contexts and with different audiences, we can better understand the relationship between the two concepts of identity and political representation.

This thesis contributes to the literature on political representation in two key ways. Firstly, it explicitly considers the relationship between representation, identity, and performance. Who governs a country is a question which matters to all scholars of

electoral politics.<sup>10</sup> The word ‘represent’ has been described as “making present of the absent” and any study of representation should therefore involve reflecting on who is absent from political decision-making.<sup>11</sup> However, analysis of the intersection of identity and representation requires thinking beyond essentialist categories or conceiving of identity as fixed and immutable. Instead, this thesis combines Goffman’s theory of the ‘presentation of the self’ and Saward’s representative claim-making literature to see claims to representation as a series of discursive or performative moves which can evoke identity strategically and vary according to context and audience. Combining theory with empirical investigation into the ways that identity can be performed politically provides an analysis that is applicable to broader understandings of political representation.

Secondly, the thesis uses new empirical data to compare and contrast the experiences of MPs in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. While contributing to our understanding of the way in which MPs talk about and perform identity through representation, the case studies also offer an opportunity to compare the effect of political institutions and political norms and culture on the performance of identity. I argue that performance of identity by MPs will vary depending on the method of selection of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture, and the audience. The potential for variation of performance due to contextual shifts requires an explicit consideration of the institutional factors which impact a representative’s performative role. Political space - its rules and regulations and its culture and norms – needs to be incorporated in more depth into studies of representation, claim-making and performance because these factors impact the extent to which MPs will engage with and perform identity within their representative roles.

Chapter 2 lays the theoretical groundwork for this study by outlining the ways that performance, identity, and representation have been previously conceptualised and understood. Drawing particularly on the works of Erving Goffman and Michael Saward, the chapter argues that representation is a type of performance. Political actors make claims to represent identity groups based on shared qualities, and this performance of

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<sup>10</sup> S. Childs (2008) *Women and British Party Politics: Descriptive, Substantive and Symbolic Representation*, Oxon: Routledge; J. Curtin (2008) “Women, Political Leadership, and Substantive Representation: Evidence from New Zealand” *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 61, pp.490–504.

<sup>11</sup> K. Celis (2008) “Gendering Representation” in *Politics, Gender, and Concepts*, G. Goertz and A. Mazur (eds.) Cambridge: CUP, p.80.

identity is altered and affected by the audience, the context and the objectives of the actor. The chapter further investigates the institutional factors which influence the performance of identity by representatives such as methods of selection, role typologies and the influences of political parties.

Chapter 3 provides the research design developed for the purposes of this research. It explains the broad approach to the project and the basis for grounding the theoretical questions in empirical research. It outlines how identity and performance are operationalized within the empirical chapters of this thesis and describes the particular methodology undertaken throughout. It argues that representation as a concept can be modelled as a series of *claims to* and *understandings of* representation and identifies three distinct points of intersection between identity and representation: explicit representative claims, implicit representative claims and refuting descriptive representative roles.

Chapter 4 explores MPs public ‘representations of the self’ in web biographies and maiden speeches and the types of identity-based representative claims that emerge from these contexts. Public performances of identity and representation are heavily ritualised and formal and are governed both by political convention and tradition. The chapter subsequently examines the extent to which MPs make representative claims based on identity within these constrained environments. In contrast, Chapters 5 and 6 change the context of the ‘stage’ to a one-on-one interview setting. They focus on the ways that MPs perceive the relationship between representation and identity in two ways: the normative values assigned to descriptive and symbolic representation (Chapter 5) and the factors which constrain the performance of identity by MPs (Chapter 6).

Chapter 5 focuses on the relationship between claim-making and descriptive and symbolic representation. It compares the performances of identity between interviews and previous public performances by MPs which provides an opportunity to assess the degree to which MPs make explicit and implicit representative claims within discussions of descriptive and symbolic representation. The chapter further draws on the literature around descriptive and symbolic representation to examine the idea of ‘authenticity’ of representation. Authenticity is one of the theoretical justifications for increased parliamentary diversity and the chapter uses the language of authenticity to examine the value that MPs place upon descriptive and symbolic representation and

they perform identity within this context. Building on this material, Chapter 6 then investigates the factors which constrain descriptive representation and the performance of identity. These include the low status of the role of a group representative, the complexities of identity categorisation and institutional factors such as electoral systems, quotas and political space. By investigating what I have termed the ‘authenticity paradox’, the chapter highlights the difficulties actors (MPs) have in managing competing scripts and expectations within their representative roles.

Finally, the thesis concludes by drawing together the findings of all the chapters for an integrated discussion about representation and identity in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. It summarises the empirical findings and links these to broader implications about the nature of descriptive and symbolic representation and the extent to which MPs engage with group identification and representation.





## Chapter 2

### Analytical Framework

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the central analytical framework of this thesis with particular focus on the work of Erving Goffman and Michael Saward. The chapter argues that representation is a type of performance, whereby political actors make claims to represent identity groups based on shared qualities, and that this performance of identity is altered and affected by the audience, the context and the objectives of the actor. Identity is performed through the role of a political representative for a number of reasons; to win votes, to provide an authentic voice in parliaments, to act as a role model, institutional norms and culture, or the method of selection and election to parliament. Previous research on the representation of identity, both theoretical and empirical, has predominantly focused on the representation of specific identity groups such as sex, or race, or religion.<sup>1</sup> It will be argued here that identity is both fluid and complex and so too is the representation of identity groups, and this requires going beyond understanding representation or identity in the form of categories or typologies.

The thesis addresses the question of how identity is performed through political representation in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. These two concepts of identity and representation are viewed throughout this thesis through the lens of performance. The chapter therefore begins with an analysis of Goffman's work on performance and the 'presentation of the self'. It uses Goffman's ideas of social interaction as a form of front-stage performance to explore the idea that identity, either individual or collective, can be constructed and performed. The chapter then briefly examines theories of identity, of social construction and essentialism in particular, which are central to discussions of identity formation. Understanding why people adopt identities enables us to better understand why it is such an important part of political representation. Who

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<sup>1</sup> There is considerable debate around the use of 'race' and 'ethnicity' as terminology. Although the importance of these critiques are noted, these terms are used concurrently and interchangeably throughout this thesis. For more discussion of this issue see P. Aspinall (2007) "Approaches to Developing an Improved Cross-National Understanding of Concepts and Terms Relating to Ethnicity and Race" *International Sociology*, Vol. 22(1) pp.41-70 and K. Bird (2004) "Comparing the Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Advanced Democracies" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association Winnipeg.

representatives 'are' informs what they do, in the same way that identity plays a part in shaping all human action and interaction. The chapter then summarises existing literature on identity and representation and outlines the need for refinement of conceptions of descriptive and symbolic representation.

Focusing on the performative nature of representation, the chapter draws on theories of representative claim-making, and more specifically the work of Michael Saward, as a theoretical grounding for the empirical discussions of identity-based claim-making by MPs. Saward's work helps draw the connections between representation, identity and performance in a more distinct manner. It is argued that identity can be used as a basis for constructing and performing representative claims. A shared 'identity' can be used by MPs to empathise and identify with constituents and to establish their own credibility as a qualified candidate to act as a representative for a group. Viewing identity-based claim-making as a type of representative performance allows for a clearer understanding of how MPs understand and perform their own representative role beyond identity categories or role typologies.

Finally, it will be noted that representation of and with identity groups by MPs does not emerge from a vacuum. Rather, identification and representation of an identity group can be the result of institutional contexts, a history of political marginalisation and oppression, or because they are seen as a representative by those who share similar characteristics or backgrounds. All of these factors influence not only how the MP understands their role as a representative, but the types of representative claims they make. As such, the final section of chapter considers the institutional factors which influence the performance of identity by representatives. It examines both the idea of parliament as a political stage/space and the legislative factors such as methods of selection, role typologies and the influences of political parties which shape the way MPs construct and perform identity and identity-based representative claims. These factors will later be empirically investigated, analysing the 'real world' effects that political institutions have on the construction and performance of representative claims. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter draws together these theoretical and empirical strands to summarise the analytical framework applied to the thesis and suggests three ways in which this approach will build upon current literature on identity and representation.

## **2.2 *Presentation of the Self***

Erving Goffman's theorisation of self presentation and performance provides a new way of viewing political actors and their representative roles. Goffman uses a dramaturgical framework to argue that throughout life, people 'act' or perform in a variety of roles.<sup>2</sup> His work on the 'presentation of the self' develops the idea that social interaction is a type of theatre in which actors, supported by scripts, costumes and props, perform different roles for an audience. The audience is made up of observers who gain information about the individual from the way he/she behaves, from the things they say and from their general appearance and manner. In a similar manner to Shakespeare, Goffman sees the world as 'a stage' and individuals as players on it. Goffman focuses on the performative nature of societal roles and personal interactions that individuals experience, rather than the specific performance of identity; however identity can also be viewed as a socially constructed phenomena which can thus be 'performed' within the societal roles and interactions that Goffman discusses. Goffman's work therefore lays the groundwork for explicitly considering the performative nature of representation and the attitudes and roles of MPs in a manner that has been largely neglected from previous studies of parliamentary democracies.

### **2.2.1 Theatre and Performance**

Goffman divides his concept of theatre into three parts; front stage, back stage, and outside or off stage. This thesis focuses primarily on the performance of identity by MPs which take place on the front stage; within the context of their public roles and interaction as political representatives. Goffman describes the front stage as the place where actors use an "expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by an individual during his performance".<sup>3</sup> This 'expressive equipment' encompasses both the physical setting of the performance (props and scenery) and the personal characteristics of the performer which range from age, sex, clothing, posture and speech patterns, to mannerisms and emotions such as aggression, openness, warmth, or helplessness. These all provide information and clues to the audience about the type of person the individual is, the role they are playing, and the message they are communicating. In this way, the audience 'reads' the performer, and seeks to gather information by examining appearance, conduct and what Goffman

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<sup>2</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

<sup>3</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.19.

describes as “the expression he *gives*, and the expression he *gives off*.”<sup>4</sup> The first of these describes verbal symbols and information given by the individual, while the latter refers to “a wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way.”<sup>5</sup> Front stage performance is therefore a relationship between the performer and the audience; the performer plays a role with the help of a usually established script, props and scenery, which all suggest to the audience that he is as he presents himself, that the performance is both real and genuine. The audience, in turn, use the performance to make judgements about both the actor and the role. Goffman argues that

If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them, or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him. They can also assume from past experience that only individuals of a particular kind are likely to be found in a given social setting.<sup>6</sup>

Front stage performances therefore involve a complex web of contextual cues to the way that roles are performed by actors. The role of a political representative can be considered as a type of performance, as we will see through the discussions of representative claim-making, but very few theories of representation take into account factors such as established scripts, cultural norms, and institutional constraints which affect the ways that political representation is carried out. I argue however that all these are vital to understanding how and why representatives construct and perform representative claims on various types of political stages.

As a contrast to front stage depictions, back stage performances are those times when the actor is removed from view of the audience; when they may step out the prescribed role that they are playing and indulge in more informal and relaxed behaviour as demonstrated through dress, speech patterns and body language. Because these are carried out ‘back stage’ or away from the intended audience, they should not interfere with the impression of the character or role of the actor. The actor takes great care that

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<sup>4</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.2. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>5</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.1.

his front stage performance is consistent and convincing; Goffman suggests that a performer “foster[s] the impression that the routine they are presently performing is their only routine, or at least their most essential one... the audience, in their turn often assume that the character presented before them is all there is to the individual who acts out the projection for them.”<sup>7</sup> While this suggests a level of manipulation and control by the actor in the way they shape their performance, Goffman notes that a performer may be genuinely convinced of their own act (sincere) or they may be not taken in by it at all (cynical).<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, he argues that “sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware that this is the case.”<sup>9</sup> This may occur because the role which the actor finds themselves playing has an already-established script, costume and props; although these may not be explicitly described to the new actor. Instead Goffman suggests that individuals “will be given only a few cues, hints, and stage directions, and it will be assumed that he already has in his repertoire a large number of bits and pieces of performances that will be required in the new setting.”<sup>10</sup>

Performance is therefore a very useful lens through which to view the relationship between representation and identity, allowing us to interpret representative roles as a series of performances which are subject to a number of contextual cues and expectations. While this is a useful framework for the purposes of this research, we need to apply it carefully and be wary of its limitations. While Goffman’s front-stage/back-stage binary sets up the premise that ‘who we are’ and the way we present ourselves to others are complex constructed performances, it is also problematic for the consideration of identity performance. As will be suggested, identity may be viewed as constructed, it may be performed by individuals, but it is not so easily divided into front and back stage performances. There are often few lines to delineate which is a front-stage and a back-stage performance of identity; we may never know what is a ‘real’ or ‘truthful’ portrayal of identity (if such a thing exists). This idea will be taken up in the empirical chapters, where the change of ‘stage’ or context in which the MP discusses and makes claims about representation provides an opportunity to analyse how consistent performances of identity are; claims by an MP to represent an ethnic group,

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<sup>7</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.42.

<sup>8</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, pp.15-16.

<sup>9</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.5

<sup>10</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p.63.

for example, may be made in maiden speeches but not within an interview setting, or vice versa.

Goffman argues that roles are partly shaped by the actor, partly by the reaction or belief of the audience, and partly by the context within which the role is played. Established literature on representative claim-making explores the agency that political actors have to shape their own performances of identity, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Previous studies of political representation have not fully addressed the relevance of political contexts and audiences that also affect the way identity is performed through representative roles. Goffman has demonstrated that all these factors shape not only the way roles are performed but also the ways that they are read and understood by others. Further, if we accept Goffman's premise that the way we present ourselves to each other is a performance, then we must also consider the argument that identity (both individual and collective) can be read as a type of constructed performance. This thesis brings together these two ideas of representation as a type of performance which is affected by context and audience, and the complex, constructed, and strategic use of personal identity by political actors. The following section therefore briefly reflects on some of the debates around social construction of identity, in order to better understand the complex nature of how people identify themselves.

### **2.2.2 Identity and Performance**

At the core of the debate on identity politics is the question of whether identities are fixed or positional. Social construction of identity has popularly dominated the theory of identity, although as Gutmann points out "to say this, however, is not to say much more than that genes and physiognomies do not determine our social identities."<sup>11</sup> Social construction theory argues that identities are created because of people's environment, the people they surround themselves with, and the circumstances they find themselves in. Identities are, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues, strategic and positional, rather than essential. There is no fixed *essence* of blackness, or femininity, or sexuality that people possess - Hall argues identities are fluctuating and evolving, context-dependant and multiply constructed and fragmented across positions and discourse.<sup>12</sup> In contrast,

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<sup>11</sup> A. Gutmann (2003) *Identity and Democracy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p.120. For a comprehensive overview of key theorists and arguments concerning identity politics, see M. Bernstein (2005) "Identity Politics" *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 31, pp. 47-74.

<sup>12</sup> S. Hall (1996) "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, S. Hall and P. Du Gay (eds.), London: Sage, pp.4-5.

theories of essentialism holds that all things have certain essential characteristics; that women or blacks possess an essential quality of black-ness, or women-ness that those who identify with these groups share.<sup>13</sup> This limits the choice that individuals have to opt-in or opt-out of identification with groups, as well as creating a problematic binary of essentialism and difference. These types of categories subsequently affect the ways that certain types of identities are emphasised, constructed, assigned and performed by actors. These arguments demonstrate the influence of social context on the actor's performance, as discussed previously by Goffman. Identity performance is shaped here by either cultural norms and environments, or essential characteristics which limit the agency they have to define their own roles.

Other theorists argue that identity falls somewhere between these two poles of social construction or essentialism. Gutmann supports Hall's definition of identity as a fluid concept, in that she argues identities can change and are open to interpretation. She notes however that identity markers such as biological sex, race or sexuality "carry social expectations about how a person of the particular group is expected to think, act, and even appear"<sup>14</sup> and that as such, group identity can be very difficult for members to avoid or discard. Young also claims that identity is positional and that individuals "make their own identities, but not under conditions they choose."<sup>15</sup> This is echoed by Hopf's argument that identities are the socially constructed and relational result of three logics: of consequence, appropriateness and habit.<sup>16</sup> He uses the example of a young boy rushing out to play with his bulldozer rather than a Barbie doll, to demonstrate each of these logics. The boy's choice of a bulldozer over a doll is, Hopf argues, the result of A) a cost-benefit calculation over how much he will be teased or bullied by others, B) a normative assessment of how he should behave in front of his male peers, and C) internalised norms which result in 'natural' gendered actions – i.e. he chooses the bulldozer without thinking because he has been socialised to believe this is what boys do. The gendered identity of the child can therefore be the result of a variety of pressures and conditions, all of which are difficult to disentangle and categorise. In a

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<sup>13</sup> J. Mansbridge (1999) "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes"" *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61 (3), pp. 628-657 (637). Mansbridge calls essentialism something that "haunts every group that hopes to organize politically around a facet of identity, including descriptive characteristics such as gender and race."

<sup>14</sup> Gutmann, *Identity and Democracy*, p.9.

<sup>15</sup> I. M. Young (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.99.

<sup>16</sup> T. Hopf (2009) "Identity Relations and the Sino-Soviet Split" in *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, R. Abdelal, Y. M. Herrera, A. I. Johnston, and R. McDermott (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.281.

similar way, Judith Butler argues that gender is a performative process; not an expression of what someone inherently 'is', but rather something that is performed by undertaking "stylized repetition of acts through time."<sup>17</sup> There is no 'interior self' that exists in gender or race or sexuality; these are all constructed through performance which may be repeated by individuals continuously over time.<sup>18</sup> Here we see similarities to Goffman; Butler's work specifically links identity and performance which is carried out by actors in either a conscious or subconscious way.

Theories of identity draw on the nature of collective or group identities, as well as individual identity formation. These theories argue that identities do not just exist on their own, but are part of a wider construction of 'us' and 'them' – relational positions that are affected by context and institutions. The 'identity' of minority groups is specifically defined by their deviance from the majority norms; they are part of deeply embedded "systems of power...that cannot be understood in isolation from one another."<sup>19</sup> Hall argues that identity for minority groups is always created out of a lack or 'have-not', and from the position of the Other; group identities are therefore constructed through difference.<sup>20</sup>

Above all, and directly contrary to the form in which they are constantly invoked, identities are constructed through, not outside, difference... Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected.<sup>21</sup>

Eriksen also notes that as concepts, minority and majority "are *relative* and *relational*. A minority exists only in relation to a majority and vice versa, and their relationship is contingent on the relevant system boundaries."<sup>22</sup> These statements demonstrate the effect that power relations can have on the construction of group identities and the ways they are perceived; Hobsbawm believes "we recognize ourselves as 'us' because we are

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<sup>17</sup> J. Butler (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge, p.141. Also see V. Bell (1999) (ed.) *Performativity and Belonging*, Sage Publications: London.

<sup>18</sup> J. Butler (1997) 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' in *Writing on the Body: Female Empowerment and Feminist Theory*, K. Conboy, N. Medina and S. Stanbury (eds.) New York: Columbia University.

<sup>19</sup> L. Briskin (1990) "Identity Politics and the Hierarchy of Oppression: A Comment" *Feminist Review*, No. 35, pp. 102-108 (105).

<sup>20</sup> Also see I. M. Young (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" pp.5-6.

<sup>22</sup> T.H. Eriksen (1993) *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, London: Pluto Press, p.121.



different from ‘Them’” and argues that those engaged in identity politics have little to unite them but an “ad hoc unity” and thus attempt to engage only members within the group. In this way, “forcing people to take on one, and only one, identity divides them from each other.”<sup>23</sup>

Conversely, some theorists of identity have argued that ideas of social construction do not pay enough attention to the role of individual agency and choice in defining personal identity, even if this is constrained within certain contextual confines. Gutmann argues that “group identification is socially significant but not comprehensive of individual identity” and that group identities can be subject to interpretation by the individual.<sup>24</sup> Young agrees, arguing that subjects are also agents and that “to be an agent means that you can take the constraints and possibilities that condition your life and make something of them in your own way.”<sup>25</sup> This notion of interpreting identity gives more power to the individual actor to direct their own identity performance.

It is not that people simply choose who they are; people choose to become members of some or many of the institutions that help shape their identity (although some people become members of institutions against their will)...People can alter their attachments to these communities to change themselves.<sup>26</sup>

While individuals may not be able to completely deny group membership which consists of ascriptive qualities, the emphasis that individuals can place on certain aspects of their identities is still flexible. No one is determined by any one, singular identity; there are multiple groups that people form allegiances and attachments to, some voluntary and some ascriptively. These may experience discrimination or oppression in different ways, as well as possessing competing or opposing interests. Amartya Sen notes that there are many different identities that a person may acknowledge: biological sex, class, interests, employment or politics.

I can be, at the same time, an Asian, an Indian citizen, a Bengali with Bangladeshi ancestry, an American or British resident, an economist....when they compete for attention and priority over each other (they need not

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<sup>23</sup> E. Hobsbawm (1996) “Identity politics and the left” *new left review*, pp. 38-47.

<sup>24</sup> Gutmann, *Identity and Democracy*, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, p.101.

<sup>26</sup> J. Spinner (1994) *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity and Nationality in the Liberal State*, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, p.26.

always, since there may be no conflict between the demands of different loyalties), the person has to decide on the relative importance to attach to the respective identities.<sup>27</sup>

Sen believes that humans cannot be categorised under “some singular and overarching system of partitioning”<sup>28</sup> often assigned to them by people outside of the group. He argues that individuals have the capacity to choose which part of themselves they identify with and notes that while “classification is certainly cheap, identity is not.”<sup>29</sup> Dovi supports this theory of multiple identities, stating:

[E]ven individuals who object to their identities being defined largely in terms of their group membership or who are critical of the ways in which group membership can constrain their choices can still have a sense of sharing their fate with a historically disadvantaged group...Some individuals can belong to more than one group and therefore experience conflicting allegiances to different groups. Members can also possess conflicting views on their group's politics.<sup>30</sup>

Here, there is a sense that individuals can still be connected to the group without necessarily adopting a homogenous perspective. This allows for people to identify with multiple groups to varying degrees and demonstrates a more active, rather than passive adoption of identity. Literature on intersectionality discusses the overlap of identities such as gender and race and the potential issues that face people who connect with more than group, who has been oppressed in more than one way. Mansbridge and Tate argue that “race constructs the way Black women experience gender; gender constructs the way Black women experience race.”<sup>31</sup> Philpot and Walton further argue that “being a black woman and identifying as such is not simply adding what it means to be black to what it means to be a woman.” Instead, “black women have created an identity that is greater than the sum of its parts.”<sup>32</sup> Intersectionality of identity thus creates a new space for identities to develop, but these multiple identities may result in challenges in

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<sup>27</sup> A. Sen (2006) *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, New York: W.W Norton & Company p.19.

<sup>28</sup> Sen, *Identity and Violence*, p. xii.

<sup>29</sup> Sen, *Identity and Violence*, p.26.

<sup>30</sup> S. Dovi (2002) “Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Will Just any Woman, Black, or Latino Do?” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96 (4), pp.729–43 (736).

<sup>31</sup> J. Mansbridge and K. Tate (1992) “Race Trumps Gender: The Thomas Nomination in the Black Community” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 25 (3), pp. 488-492.

<sup>32</sup> T. S. Philpot and H. Walton, Jr. (2007) “One of Our Own: Black Female Candidates and the Voters Who Support Them” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51 (1), pp. 49–62.

shaping parliamentary roles and identity performance, as will be explored further in later empirical chapters. Representation is therefore complicated by identity on a number of levels; both for the individual representative and their personal performance of identity, and because of the homogenous identity (or lack thereof) of groups who they claim to represent.

We have seen Goffman's argument that presentation of the self is a type of performance and we have also seen that identity can be viewed as both socially constructed and performed. These theories suggest that the way that we view ourselves, the way others view us, and the way we relate to each other are more than just fixed categories and rigidly-defined roles. This lays the groundwork for considering political representation (the lens through which identity-performance is viewed here) as a process of performative action, influenced by the audience, the stage, and the expectations of the role. The following section of this chapter considers the established work on identity and representation in order to identify the limitations of conceptualisations of identity and representation and their application to real world politics.

## ***2.3 Identity and Representation: Existing Literature***

### **2.3.1 Descriptive and Symbolic Representation**

Theories of descriptive and symbolic representation tend to be discussed together, largely due to their classification by Pitkin as 'standing for' models of representation.<sup>33</sup> Descriptive representation and symbolic representation both emphasise who the representatives are, rather than what they do. The origins of the term 'descriptive representation' is attributed to Griffiths and Wollheim who argue that "I am a descriptive representative of my generation - a sample, specimen, or analogue - when I am sufficiently like my fellows for someone to be reasonably safe in drawing conclusions about the other members of my generation from what they know about me."<sup>34</sup> Descriptive representation refers to cases in which the representative shares a similar background or characteristics such as sex, ethnicity and occupation with their constituents. Here we see rigid boundaries or categories of identity; descriptive representation uses established and recognised 'collective identities' as a way of

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<sup>33</sup> Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*.

<sup>34</sup> A.P. Griffiths and R. Wollheim (1960) "How Can One Person Represent Another?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, Vol. 34, pp. 187-224 (p.188).

connecting both the representative and the represented. The assumption is that when this occurs, the representative's views are more likely to be similar or the same as the constituents, allowing representatives to better, or more accurately, speak on their behalf.

Proponents of descriptive representation largely focus on increasing the number of representatives who are traditionally marginalised in political spheres, such as women, ethnic minorities, LGBT, or those with disabilities. Anne Phillips' seminal work *The Politics of Presence*, for example, makes the case that minority groups (based on identity markers such as sex or ethnicity) should be entitled to what she terms a "politics of presence" whereby groups should be physically present in the legislative chambers to speak on their own behalf and act as their own representatives.<sup>35</sup> In doing so, Phillips establishes justifications for greater parliamentary diversity; namely justice, legitimisation and authenticity. These are familiar themes throughout the work of theorists who argue for greater representation of minority groups. They point to the importance of having 'equal' political representation and the necessity of avoiding the domination of the major racial/cultural norms in parliament. Young for example, argues that "when such institutions [as parliament] privilege some groups over others, actual democracy requires group representation for the disadvantaged."<sup>36</sup> She notes that some groups face barriers that may prevent them from easily becoming a political representative and that alienation from the political structure emphasises the need to re-conceive that structure in ways that all people, regardless of gender, race, or ability feel able to be full and active political citizens. The physical presence of previously marginalised groups in parliaments provides not only a sense of equality among citizens but also has symbolic importance for groups members "who may make their decision to participate based on the presence or absence of people who appear to be "like them" in positions of political power."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> A. Phillips (1995) *The Politics of Presence*, New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>36</sup> Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p.191.

<sup>37</sup> P. Norris and M.L Krook (2008) "One of Us: Multilevel models examining the impact of descriptive representation on civic engagement" Paper for presentation at Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, September 3rd 2008, p.3. Also see D.E. Campbell and C. Wolbrecht (2006) "See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role Models for Adolescents" *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 68, pp. 233-247; F. G. Abney, and J. D. Hutcheson, Jr. (1981) "Race, Representation, and Trust: Changes in Attitudes after the Election of a Black Mayor" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 45, pp. 91-101; C. Gay, (2002) "Spirals of Trust? The Effect of Descriptive Representation on the Relationship Between Citizens and Their Government" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46 (4), pp. 717-732.

Symbolic representation positions the representative slightly differently: as a symbol for an audience, evoking ‘emotional, affective, irrational responses’ from the constituents they represent.<sup>38</sup> In the same way, the symbol itself has meaning ‘beyond itself’; people attach assumptions and beliefs and values to it and recognise it as a symbol. In this view, considerations of symbolic representation do not rely on who the symbolic representative *is*, but how they are ‘read’ by the audience; whether the audience accepts the performance of the representative as genuine and whether they *feel* represented. Post-Pitkin, the concept of symbolic representation is understood by scholars in a number of ways: either by explicitly drawing on her work to gauge the responsiveness of the represented to the symbol of the representative,<sup>39</sup> by examining media representations of identity,<sup>40</sup> or by discussing the effect of ‘role-models’.<sup>41</sup> Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, for example, note that even if female MPs do not substantively ‘act for’ women, the presence of female representatives may result in increased feelings of connection and identification with the legislature among women.<sup>42</sup> Banducci, Donovan and Karp argue that minority political representation fosters more positive attitudes towards government and encourages political participation among minorities.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Bobo and Gilliam found that black empowerment [through seeing blacks in political office] affects political participation. Blacks in high-empowerment areas are more politically active than blacks who live in low empowerment areas because

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<sup>38</sup> Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, p.100.

<sup>39</sup> See Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*; L. Schwindt-Bayer and W. Mishler (2005) “An Integrated Model of Women's Representation” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 67 (2), pp. 407- 428; and K. Celis, S. Childs, J. Kantola & M.L. Krook (2008) “Rethinking Women’s Substantive Representation” *Representation*, Vol. 44 (2), pp. 99-110.

<sup>40</sup> See L. R. Atkeson (2003) “Not All Cues Are Created Equal: The Conditional Impact of Female Candidates on Political Engagement” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 65, pp.1040 – 1061; F.D. Gilliam (1996) “Exploring Minority Empowerment: Symbolic Politics, Governing Coalitions and Traces of Political Style in Los Angeles” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 40, pp. 56 -81; E. Evans (2011) *Gender and the Liberal Democrats: Representing Women*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>41</sup> J. L. Lawless (2004) “Politics of Presence? Congresswomen and Symbolic Representation” *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 57 (1), pp. 81-99; and C. Wolbrecht and D. E. Campbell (2007) “Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 51 (4), pp. 921-939.

<sup>42</sup> Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, “An Integrated Model of Women's Representation,” pp.413-414.

<sup>43</sup> S. Banducci, T. Donovan & J. Karp (2004) “Minority Representation, Empowerment and Participation in New Zealand and the United States” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 66 (2) pp. 534-556. Also see J. Crowley (2001) “The Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 22 (1) pp. 99-121.; J. Leighley and A. Vedlitz (1999) “Race, Ethnicity, and Political Participation: Competing Models and Contrasting Explanations” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61 (4), pp. 1092-1114; M. Fennema and J. Tillie (2001) “Civic Community, Political Participation and Political Trust of Ethnic Groups” *Connections*, Vol. 24 (1), pp.26-41; S. Verba, K.L. Scholzman, H. Brady and N.H. Nie (1993) “Race, Ethnicity and Political Resources: Participation in the United States” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 23 (4), pp. 453-497.

empowerment increases political trust and efficacy.<sup>44</sup> Identity group ‘members’ provide an ‘authentic voice’ within political institutions, they are seen to speak with insider knowledge or to provide evidence that there is diversity in decision making processes. bell hooks, for example, argues that experience is a powerful standpoint from which to construct knowledge and can lend new dimensions to representations of information.”<sup>45</sup> Having someone ‘like me’ as a representative therefore not only demonstrates that my voice is being heard and legitimised politically, it creates a perceived connection or identification between the representative and the audience. Therefore, the way identity is performed by political representatives is important beyond the visual diversity of parliament; it affects political trust, efficacy, engagement and identification with those in political power.

Literature on representation to date has tended to view the relationship between identity and representation as rather too linear. As argued above, if we apply theories of performance and interpret identity as multiply constructed, representative roles can be viewed as much more complex and dynamic, exposing a range of contradictions in theories of representation. Drawing on identity theory, we know that people do not fit rigid categories and that people have agency in the way they construct their own identities (and hence their representative roles). As Goffman shows us, this performance of identity is also constrained by contextual factors which place constraints or expectations on individual actors. This thesis, therefore, moves beyond existing theories of descriptive and symbolic representation by analysing representation as a series of performances which draw selectively on identity in different contexts.

### **2.3.2 Empirical Case Studies**

There has been some empirical work which focuses on the representation and identity, but contributions to this literature have largely focused on descriptive or symbolic representation, and, in particular, identity groups. These works, therefore, address specific aspects of identity, rather than taking a more fluid view of identities as performed and constructed. There is certainly value in these approaches, but to an

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<sup>44</sup> L. Bobo and F. D. Gilliam Jr, (1990) “Race, Sociopolitical Participation, and Black Empowerment” *The American Political Science Review*; Vol. 84 (2), pp.377-393.

<sup>45</sup> b. hooks (1991) “Essentialism and Experience” *American Literary History*, Vol. 3 (1), pp. 172-183 (pp. 181). hooks deliberately spells her pen-name with lower case letters because she believes that what is most important is the “substance of books, not who I am.”

extent, they serve to reinforce ideas which draw boundaries around identity groups: that is, groups who share certain characteristics or identity markers.

There are numerous case studies of biological sex and electoral representation for example, from Africa,<sup>46</sup> Europe,<sup>47</sup> and the United States<sup>48</sup> to name just a few. These empirical studies have informed much of the literature on *who* runs for office, *how* they were elected, *what* their experiences were and *why* gendered representation matters. Studies of race and representation were traditionally concentrated in the United States, with emphasis on racialised redistricting,<sup>49</sup> attitudes to descriptive representatives<sup>50</sup> and the substantive representation of ethnic minority groups.<sup>51</sup> These American studies largely draw on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in order to analyse the effects of race and representation; the importance of which is highlighted by the ever-more diverse nature and multiculturalism of the American population. Empirical studies on race and representation from Europe, on the other hand, have often focused on political participation and engagement of racial and ethnic minority groups, as Europe adapts to changing populations and citizenry.<sup>52</sup> In more recent years, there is

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<sup>46</sup> G. Bauer, & H. E. Britton (eds.) (2006) *Women in African parliaments*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner; J. E. Burne (2011) "Women have found respect: Gender quotas, symbolic representation, and female empowerment in Rwanda" *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 7, pp. 303–334.

<sup>47</sup> D. Dahlerup (1988) "From a small to a large minority: Women in Scandinavian politics" *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 11, pp. 275–297; Y. Galligan and S. Clavero (2008) "Prospects for women's legislative representation in postsocialist Europe: The views of female politicians" *Gender and Society*, Vol. 22, pp. 149–171; F. Mackay (2004) "Gender and Political Representation in the UK: The State of the 'Discipline'" *British Journal PIR*, Vol. 6, pp. 99–120; J. Lovenduski (1986) *Women and European Politics*, Brighton: Harvester.

<sup>48</sup> S. Carroll (1994) *Women As Candidates in American Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press; R. L. Fox and J.L. Lawless (2004) "Entering the Arena: Gender and the Decision to Run For Office" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48 (2), pp.264–280.

<sup>49</sup> K. Brace, L. Handley, R. Niemi, and H. Stanley (1995) "Minority Turnout and the Creation of Majority-Minority Districts" *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 23, pp.190–203; E. R. Gerber, R. B. Morton, and T. A. Rietz (1998) "Minority Representation in Multimember Districts" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92 (1), pp. 127–144.

<sup>50</sup> C. R. Grose, M. Mangum, and C. D. Martin (2007) "Race, Political Empowerment, and Constituency Service: Descriptive Representation and the Hiring of African-American Congressional Staff" *Polity*, Vol. 39 (4), pp. 449–478.

<sup>51</sup> R. Hero and C. Tolbert (1995) "Latinos and Substantive Representation in the U.S. House of Representatives: Direct, Indirect, or Nonexistent?" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39 (3), pp. 640–652; C. Owens, (2005) "Black Substantive Representation in State Legislatures from 1971–1994." *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 86 (4), pp. 779–791.

<sup>52</sup> L. Togeby (2008) "The Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities: Denmark as a Deviant Case" *Party Politics* Vol.14 (3) pp. 325–343; T.D. De Wit and R. Koopmans (2005) "The Integration of Ethnic Minorities into Political Culture: The Netherlands, Germany and Great Britain Compared" *Acta Politica* Vol. 40 (1), pp.50–73; J. Rath (1983) "Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the Netherlands" *International Migration Review*, Vol. 17 (3), pp. 445–469.

also an emerging field of work that looks at the intersection of identities, particularly gender and race.<sup>53</sup>

There has also been considerable attention paid to the representation of identity groups within the two case studies of this thesis, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. There is a strong body of scholars who focus on women's political representation in the UK and these draw on cross-party examples to examine the recruitment, election and role of female MPs.<sup>54</sup> More recently, the relationship between political parties, gender and representation has come to the fore, particularly with regards to the Conservative Party and female representation, especially in light of increasing claims by Conservative women to 'represent women' and comments made by Home Secretary Theresa May in which she described herself as a feminist.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, there have been fewer empirical studies of female MPs and representation in New Zealand, despite its comparably long history of female representation.<sup>56</sup> This could arguably be due to a smaller number of researchers as per the population size, but in comparison, there has been considerable scholarly work on political representation of Māori which range from an analysis of the role of the Māori MP, the Māori parliamentary seats, and the history of suffrage for

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<sup>53</sup> Mansbridge and Tate "Race Trumps Gender"; Philpot and Walton, Jr. "One of Our Own"; M. Htun (2004) "Is Gender like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups" *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 2 (3), pp.439 – 458; M. Hawkesworth, (2003) "Congressional Enactments of Race-Gender: Toward a Theory of Raced-Gendered Institutions" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97 (4), pp. 529-50.

<sup>54</sup> S. Childs and E. Evans (2012) "Out of the Hands of the Parties: Women's Legislative Recruitment at Westminster" *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 83 (4), pp.742-748.; J. Lovenduski (2012) "Feminising British Politics" *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 83 (4), pp.697-702; S. Childs (2001) "In their own words: New Labour women and the substantive representation of women" *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 3 (2) pp. 173-190.

<sup>55</sup> A. Elliott (2012) "Theresa May: A feminist in kitten heels" *Total Politics*, <http://www.totalpolitics.com/articles/290297/theresa-may-a-feminist-in-kitten-heels.shtml>, accessed 10 June 2012; G. Hinsliff (2012) "Tory feminists: the true blue sisterhood" *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/jan/08/tory-women-mps-new-feminism>, accessed 22 February 2013. Also see C. Annesley and F. Gains (2012) "David Cameron's 'Problem' with Women: Representing Women in the Coalition Government" *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 83 (4), pp.697-702; R. Campbell, S. Childs, J. Lovenduski (2006) "Women's Equality Guarantees and the Conservative Party" *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 77 (1), pp.18-27; P. Webb and S. Childs (2012) "Gender Politics and Conservatism: The View from the British Conservative Party Grassroots" *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 47 (1), pp. 21–48; S. Childs and P. Webb (2011) *Sex, Gender and the Conservative Party: From Iron Lady to Kitten Heels*, Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>56</sup> H. Catt and E. McLeay (eds.) (1993) *Women and Politics in New Zealand*, Wellington: Victoria University Press; M. Sawer and S. Grey (2005) "Australia and New Zealand" in *Sharing Power: Women, Parliament, Democracy*, Y. Galligan and M. Tremblay (eds.), England: Ashgate; J. Curtin (2008) "Women, Political Leadership, and Substantive Representation: Evidence from New Zealand" *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 61, pp.490–504.; E. McLeay (2006) "Climbing On: rules, values and women's representation in the New Zealand parliament" in *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative study*, M. Sawer, M. Tremblay, L. Trimble (eds.), Oxon: Routledge, pp.67-82.



Māori in New Zealand.<sup>57</sup> Britain has seen an emerging body of literature concerning race and representation, particularly with the rise in numbers of ‘Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) MPs in Westminster.’<sup>58</sup> Initial empirical evidence demonstrates that ‘identity’ plays a part in shaping representative roles in Britain, especially for those MPs who are a minority in Westminster.<sup>59</sup> When interviewing early BAME representatives in the UK parliament, Nixon found that MPs personal preferences about who they represented were a combination of representing minority interests and more traditional models of constituency representation. These multiple dimensions of representation were also discussed by Childs in her analysis of new Labour women MPs’ from 1997. Interview data showed that while their initial conceptions of representations focused on representing constituencies or parties, the women also believed that representation has a secondary feminised dimension. This included both creating space for a ‘feminised agenda’ and their responsibility as women MPs to put forward issues which concerned women.<sup>60</sup> This suggests that for the new Labour women MPs of 1997, descriptive representation would increase substantive representation. In a similar way, later work by Saalfeld and Bischof found that BAME MPs in the British House of Commons tended to ask more parliamentary questions about the rights of ethnic minorities in the UK and immigration issues than non-minority Members.<sup>61</sup> Both the work of Childs and Saalfeld and Bischof suggest that there

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<sup>57</sup> D. Tabacoff (1975) “The Role of the Māori MP in Contemporary New Zealand Politics” in *New Zealand Politics: A Reader*, S. Levine (ed.), Melbourne: Cheshire; E. McLeay (1980) “Political Argument about Representation – The Case of the Māori Seats” *Political Studies* Vol. 28 (1), pp.43-62; A. Fleras (1985) “From Social Control towards Political Self-Determination? Māori Seats and the Politics of Separate Māori Representation in New Zealand” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 18 (3), pp. 551-576.; W.K. Jackson and G.A Wood (1964) “The New Zealand Parliament and Māori Representation” *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 11 (43), pp.383-96.

<sup>58</sup> T. Saalfeld & K. Kyriakopoulou (2007) “Presence and Behaviour: Black and Minority Ethnic MPs in the United Kingdom – An Exploratory Study” Paper prepared for the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops at the University of Helsinki; S. Saggat and A. Geddes (2000) “Negative and positive racialisation: re-examining ethnic minority political representation in the UK” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 26 (1), pp. 25-44; I. Crewe (1983) ‘Representation and ethnic minorities in Britain’ in *Ethnic Pluralism and Public Policy*, K. Young and N. Glazer (eds.), London: Heinemann, 258-84; A. Geddes (1995) “The logic of positive action? Ethnic minority representation in Britain after the 1992 General Election” *Party Politics*, Vol. 1 (2), pp. 43-57.

<sup>59</sup> J. Nixon (1998) “The role of black and Asian MPs at Westminster” in *Race and British electoral politics*, S. Saggat (ed.), London: UCL Press; P. Norris and J. Lovenduski (1994) *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; N. Puwar (2004) *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*, Oxford: Berg.

<sup>60</sup> Childs “In their own words”.

<sup>61</sup> T. Saalfeld and D. Bischof (2013) “Minority-Ethnic MPs and the Substantive Representation of Minority Interests in the House of Commons, 2005–2011” *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 66 (2), pp. 305–328.

is value to be had in descriptive representation, both for creating space for minority interests and substantive representation of these interests.

However, as previously highlighted, descriptive representation can also draw constrictive boundaries around the role of an MP. Puwar finds, for example, that black MPs in Britain are consistently categorised and labelled by virtue of their racial identity.

Even though black MPs represent a mixed group of constituents, there is still a tendency to see them as only representing black people. Thus everything they do in the public sphere is reduced to their racial identity....<sup>62</sup>

This is potentially problematic for political representatives because their success and re-election depend on being able to represent their entire constituency, regardless of race, class, sex or political affiliation. In order to overcome potential marginalisation on the grounds of race, MPs may seek to emphasise their connection to their geographical constituency, as will be argued in Chapter 6. Consequently, scholars are now considering localness as another facet of identification or connection between the representative and the represented, highlighting the ways identity is more frequently being considered beyond traditional ascriptive characteristics. The use of 'localness' as a form of identity allows for a wider consideration of the types of identity labels used by MPs and also acknowledges the importance that political institutions place on geographical representation, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Childs and Cowley expanded the idea of descriptive representation by investigating the case for representation based on a sense of 'localness'. There has increasingly been a demand from within geographical constituencies that their representative is someone from the local area, rather than candidates imported into the locality by political parties. Cowley argues that data shows that citizens in the UK want someone to represent them who shares their beliefs (witness the strength of party identification) and is from the local area. Of the voters polled by Cowley, the mean average of people who wanted their representative to come from the same area as them was 5.7, compared with those who wanted their representative to share their gender (a mean of 0.8).<sup>63</sup> Childs and Cowley similarly found that "whether broken down by party support, age, social class

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<sup>62</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.66.

<sup>63</sup> P. Cowley (2013) "Why not ask the audience? Understanding the public's representational priorities" *British Politics*, Vol. 8 (2), pp. 138-163 (149).

or region, in every subgroup voters preferred the local candidate, even if they were of a different sex, to an outsider of the same sex.”<sup>64</sup> Despite this, there has been little consideration of localness or class as a factor in the literature on descriptive representation.<sup>65</sup> This thesis contributes directly to the growing literature on localness by empirically investigating how MPs understand and use localness and how it influences their representative roles.

Using the extensive work by authors in the field of group representation, it is possible to see where the gains have been made, but also where the literature is lacking. Firstly, many of the authors who discuss group representation come from a normative perspective: what are the conditions under which the political representation of groups is needed, and which groups ought to be represented. By virtue of paying specific attention to under-represented groups, fixed identity categories and boundaries must be drawn around representatives and while the majority of researchers in this field (particularly feminist scholars) are aware of and cautious of essentialising or applying labels to representatives, descriptive and symbolic representation – by its very nature – requires a need for the explicit discussion of ‘female’, ‘Asian’, Jewish’, or ‘young’ Members of Parliament. Considering the representation of identity as a type of performance beyond rigid identity categories provides space for considering the intersection of identities, the strategic use of identity by political actors and for various interpretations of how identity performance is understood and ‘read’ by the actors and the audience.

Secondly, requiring the possession of certain identity markers in order to represent members of that group can also mean that representation is necessarily limited; women need female MPs to represent their perspectives for example, or religious minorities need a member of their community to advocate for their needs. Groups will not necessarily share any kind of common interests or desires merely because they all

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<sup>64</sup> S. Childs and P. Cowley (2011) “The Politics of Local Presence: Is there a Case for Descriptive Representation?” *Political Studies*, Vol. 59, pp.1-19 (5). Their data was obtained by a commissioned YouGov poll which polled 2469 people, between 14 and 15 February 2008. Of these, men preferred a local woman candidate (76 per cent) to a man from outside the area (6 per cent), with 18 per cent don’t know. Women preferred a local male candidate (75 per cent) over a woman from outside the area (5 per cent), with 20 per cent don’t know.

<sup>65</sup> Childs and Cowley suggest that the argument is “as much about class as it is about localism.” (Childs and Cowley, “The Politics of Local Presence,” p.11). Also see Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*, who notes that “when it comes down to it, the real reason for my silence on class is simply that it does not lend itself to the same kind of solutions.” For a further discussion on class and representation, see Dovi, “Preferable Descriptive Representatives”.

happen to share a similar trait such as sex or race. Likewise, having a minority representative in power is no reflection of the diversity of that population in society, as has been demonstrated in the inherent complexities around identity construction and intersectionality discussed previously in this chapter. Mansbridge argues that “one representative of African American perspectives in a representative body, for example, will not usually be able to present adequately the characteristic insights of poor and well-off, female and male, urban and rural African Americans.”<sup>66</sup> Phillips herself notes that “the search for authenticity...makes it difficult for anyone to represent an experience not identical to her own and, taken to this extreme, renders dialogue virtually impossible.”<sup>67</sup> The concept of a politics of presence advocates group representation based on giving voices to oppressed groups, but this presumes a sense of shared experiences and authenticity which legitimises their political representation. Subsequently, later empirical chapters explore how MPs struggle with concepts of authenticity and descriptive representation within their lived experiences as political representatives. However, framing representation as a type of performance allows for a wider debate about the types of representative claims that can be made by political actors, as will be discussed further in the following section of this chapter.

Finally, over-emphasising the essentialist characteristics of identity groups can lead to stereotypes that affect the types of representative roles carried out by MPs. Women are seen to be able to discuss issues regarding childcare and families, regardless of whether they have children themselves; ethnic minorities are given areas of responsibility regarding asylum or ethnic affairs. The difficulty in such positions is to distinguish whether the demands to represent these areas result from essentialism per se, or from a desire for situated knowledge and experiences. For some representatives, this pigeon-holing or stereotyping of identity results in a backlash against their identity group as will be explored further in the empirical chapters. Sawyer describes the ways that the roles of female politicians can be ‘essentialised’ and stereotyped, which can subsequently result in a denial of gender as an influence on representative roles.

As representatives of women, the careers of women  
politicians were very circumscribed; gender stereotyping

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<sup>66</sup> J. Mansbridge (2000) ‘What does a representative do? Descriptive Representation in Communicative Settings of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically Denigrated Status’, in *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, W. Kymlicka and W. Norman, (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.106-107 (104).

<sup>67</sup> Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*, p.9.

of parliamentary roles meant consignment to health and welfare areas. The desire to break out of these roles and gain access to the more prestigious masculine portfolios or committee assignments led to the disavowal of gender.<sup>68</sup>

Rather than essentialised categories, an alternative way of looking at the political representation of identity is to move beyond rigid identity labels and categorisation of MPs to a consideration of multiple facets of identity that people possess and the way that these are constructed, utilised, and *performed* by political representatives. This blends Goffman's work on presenting the self with theories of socially constructed identity; political representation, like other roles, can be performed, and identity can be used in a strategic fashion by political actors. Goffman does not explicitly discuss politicians in his work on presenting the self. Nonetheless, there are obvious parallels between the type of role performance he describes and the job of a political representative which involves endless scrutiny of their public or front stage, performances. These similarities were noted by Richard Fenno in his analysis of the 'home style' performances of US Congressmen. Fenno suggests that the front stage performance of Congressmen is designed to attract political support and trust from their audience and that this is achieved through a careful and consistent presentation of the self to their constituents.

The response they [politicians] seek from others is political support. And the impressions they try to foster are those that will engender political support. House member politicians believe that a great deal of their support is won by the kind of individual self they present to others, i.e. to their constituents. More than most other people, they constantly try to manipulate it.<sup>69</sup>

Fenno argues that the aim of gaining constituents' trust is the most important part of a representative's role, as it is this sense of 'trust' which results in political support (votes). A feeling of trust in representatives is consequently gained through a 'presentation of self' via the front stage. Fenno describes three tactics used by political representatives to 'win and hold constituent trust' which are qualification, identification

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<sup>68</sup> M. Sawyer (2000) "Parliamentary Representation of Women: From Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability" *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 21 (4), pp. 361-380 (p.374).

<sup>69</sup> R. Fenno (1978) *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, p.55

and empathy.<sup>70</sup> These three qualities will be discussed in further detail during the empirical chapters of this thesis, but here let us reflect on their relationship to identity and performance. Fenno acknowledges that political representatives attempt to convince their constituents that “I am like you” or “I understand you” by emphasising commonalities between themselves and their audience; by using scripts which highlight the similarities between the actor and the audience and engender trust in the candidate.

As I have suggested, this research seeks to move beyond approaches which focus on specific identity groups, allowing space for the multiple constructions and performances of identity. It is precisely *how* identity is *used* by MPs which is of interest; this can be strategic and variable, hence the thesis avoids starting out with a focus on specific ascriptive or ‘group’ characteristics. Representatives make claims about themselves and about their abilities to represent; claims that are constructed and shaped by actors, the intended audience, the stage, and the existing scripts. In order to further explore representative claim-making as a type of identity performance, the chapter now draws on the work of Michael Saward which critically informs the central arguments of this thesis.

## **2.4 Representative Claim-Making**

Political theorist, Michael Saward, has offered alternative theory of representation: representative claim making.<sup>71</sup> Saward importantly argues that instead of focusing on who a representative is or what their role is, representation should be seen as a series of claims put forward by political actors which can be accepted or rejected by the audience who receive them. Instead of conceptualising representation as a bounded process which can be achieved through elections, it is a more performative process that allows for the construction, acceptance, or rejection of identities or representations put forward by political actors. Claim-making informs the analytical approach of this research by offering another way to think about representation and identity, one which moves beyond numbers in parliament, the problem of ‘authenticity’ or multiply constructed and intersectional identity.

Saward writes,

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<sup>70</sup> Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*, pp.56-57.

<sup>71</sup> See M. Saward (2006) “The Representative Claim” *Contemporary Political Theory*, Vol. 5, pp. 297-318; M. Saward (2009) “Authorisation and Authenticity: Representation and the Unelected” *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 17 (1), pp. 1–22; M. Saward (2010) *The Representative Claim* Oxford University Press: Oxford.

[R]epresentations (depictions, portrayals, encapsulations) of self and others in politics do not just happen. People construct them, put them forward, make claims for them — make them. More specifically, political figures (or political parties or other groups, for example) make representations of their constituencies, their countries, themselves.<sup>72</sup>

Theories of claim-making suggest that representatives can put forward aspects of their identities in different contexts in order to make claims about themselves and their ability to represent a certain constituency. These are in turn accepted, modified or rejected by an audience; as receivers of both the performance and the representative claim, the audience has the capacity to accept the image or the ‘role’ that is being offered to them or to “reinterpret the claim, to turn it back against the maker.”<sup>73</sup> Here, Saward’s work is reminiscent of Goffman’s theory of front-stage performance, but unlike Goffman whose audience is largely a passive entity, Saward gives autonomy and control to the audience who are an inherent part of the claim-making process. Due to necessary constraints, this thesis focuses on the construction and front-stage performance of political representatives rather than on the role of the audience, but this is nonetheless an important consideration when reflecting on the ways that MPs are viewed by the public, as has been demonstrated in Cowley’s recent work, and opens interesting avenues for future research.

Considering representation as a type of performance prevents it from being seen as a passive process between fixed conceptions of ‘representative’ and ‘represented’. It also avoids potentially problematic discussions around who should act as a representative for an identity group. Dovi notes that although democratic theorists have covered issues of why it is vital to have representatives from minority groups in parliaments, they frequently fail to address “the criteria that should guide democratic citizens in their choice of descriptive representatives.”<sup>74</sup> The reasons for this are twofold; firstly because theorists are reluctant to impose criteria for selecting descriptive representatives on minority group members, and secondly because ‘who’ is best placed to represent a group politically can change depending on the context. Conceiving of representation as a process of claim-making however, moves beyond rigid categorisations of defining

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<sup>72</sup> Saward, “The Representative Claim,” p.301.

<sup>73</sup> Saward, “The Representative Claim,” p.303.

<sup>74</sup> Dovi, “Preferable Descriptive Representatives,” p.729.

‘who’ a representative ought to be and focuses on ‘how’ representation can be performed.

In a similar manner to Saward, Castiglione and Warren argue that representation is more than who the represented physically is; ideas, values and judgements can also be politically represented and used to build relationships between the representative and their constituents.

[F]rom the perspective of those who are represented, what is represented are not persons as such, but some of the interests, identities, and values that persons have or hold. Representative relationships select for specific aspects of persons, by framing wants, desires, discontents, values, and judgments in ways that they become publicly visible, articulated in language and symbols, and thus politically salient.<sup>75</sup>

These ‘interests, identities and values’ are put forward by would-be representatives in order to make claims about themselves as the best people to represent a certain constituency (which may not necessarily be geographical) on the basis of shared attributes. Or, as Saward argues,

If I allege that you, a potential constituent of mine, possess key characteristic X, and if I can get you to accept this, I can then present myself as possessing capacity or attribute Y that enables me to represent you — by virtue of a certain resonance between X and Y.<sup>76</sup>

These claims are made on the basis that there are links between the representative and the represented that ‘allow’ or enable them to be the best representative for the group. It is then, as Saward argues, “a double claim: about an aptitude or capacity of a would-be representative, and also about relevant characteristics of a would-be audience (nee constituency).”<sup>77</sup> Claim making by a representative thus requires the creation of some kind of shared characteristics such as sex, location, or ethnicity with which to convince the audience that they are connected, which emphasises Fenno’s claim that politicians

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<sup>75</sup> D. Castiglione and M.E. Warren (2006) “Rethinking democratic representation: eight theoretical issues” Paper prepared for delivery to “Rethinking Democratic Representation” Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, University of British Columbia, May 2006, p.12. Also see Dryzek and Nieneyer’s discussion of discursive democracy in J. S. Dryzek and S. Nieneyer (2008) “Discursive Representation” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 102 (4), pp.481-493.

<sup>76</sup> Saward, “The Representative Claim,” p.301.

<sup>77</sup> Saward, “The Representative Claim,” p.303.



use qualification, identification and empathy in their front-stage performances of representation, in order to secure the political support of voters. Saward argues that this builds an implicit relationship between the representative and the audience; “makers of representative claims suggest to the potential audience: (1) you are/are part of this audience, (2) you should accept this view, this construction — this representation — of yourself, and (3) you should accept me as speaking and acting for you.”<sup>78</sup> Representative claim-making can thus be seen as a type of front-stage performance and an extension of the work of Goffman. In a similar manner to Fenno, Saward does define representation explicitly as a type of performance:

“[r]epresenting is performing, is action by actors, and the performance contains or adds up to a claim that someone is or can be representative... representation is not something external to its performance, but is something largely generated by the making, the performing, of claims to be representative.”<sup>79</sup>

Saward’s theory therefore is central to the analytical approach taken to this research. Representative claim making is a useful framework which foregrounds the construction of *claims to* and *understandings of* representation. However, this theory is rather detached and not grounded in the empirical realities of political representation. In addition, Saward’s notion of representative claim making does not deal with identity in any great detail, which I have argued is inherent to all forms of representation. As such, while Saward’s theory is useful, it raises a number of questions which this research seeks to address: How are representative claims articulated in reality? Do they align with descriptive characteristics or group identity? What are the roles of MPs as actors and what are the institutional constraints which then shape representative claims? This thesis therefore takes forward Saward’s ideas by investigating the way identity based representative claim-making is understood and performed by MPs in ‘lived experiences’. Considering representation as a process of performance of various claims, rather than trying to establish a fixed definition of what representation *is*, allows us to

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<sup>78</sup> Saward, “The Representative Claim,” p.303. Andrew Rehfeld also makes the case for the importance of the audience: “political representation...results from an audience’s judgement that some individual, rather than some other, stands in for a group in order to perform a certain function.” A. Rehfeld (2006) ‘Towards a general theory of political representation’, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 68, 1–21 (2).

<sup>79</sup> Saward, *The Representative Claim*, p.66.

conceive of representation as a changing dynamic whereby MPs put forward different claims, in different contexts, to different audiences.

Constituencies, whether geographical or otherwise, are never homogenous entities: they are made up of people with multiple identities; different genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religions and political beliefs. But it is the job of the MP to represent all these competing interests, as well as their political party. In addition, he or she may, by virtue of any one of a myriad of identity markers, be seen as a representative of a wider constituency based on shared group identification. This means that some MPs can be seen to be representing their geographical constituency, their political party, a racial group and a gendered group. MPs must find ways to juggle representation on numerous dimensions: in multiple contexts, for multiple audiences and with multiple objectives.<sup>80</sup> Saward believes that one way that MPs can do this is by making representative claims that are specific to an audience and create a sense of cohesion, to make potential audiences aware of a “self-conscious notion of itself as an audience as the result of claim-making.”<sup>81</sup> In this way, the identity of both representatives and audiences are ‘created’ through a process of performing and accepting or rejecting claims.

But how are these claims created by representatives and why are some more prevalent than others? Saward argues that claims cannot be created out of thin air, but they must come from ‘ready-made’ cultural understandings where the “style, timing and content of a representative claim must tap into familiar contextual frameworks.”<sup>82</sup> The claim-maker must demonstrate some reason why an audience would accept their representative claim. As we have seen, one of the ways this is established is through the performance of shared identity markers which create a bond between the representative and the represented. Public portrayal and *identification* with group markers by the political representative says to a specific audience “I am like you. I understand your needs because I have shared similar experiences.” While the audience does not necessarily recognise or relate to the projected image or claim completely, they are able nonetheless, to “decode meanings, accept them, and to recognize the legal or institutional context in which claims are advanced”, to further echo the work of

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<sup>80</sup> Collett describes the strategic use of race and ethnicity by representatives in campaigns as ‘toggling’. See C. Collett (2008) “Minority Candidates, Alternative Media and Multiethnic America: Deracialization or Toggling?” *Perspectives On Politics*, Vol. 6 (4), pp.707-728.

<sup>81</sup> Saward, “The Representative Claim,” p.303.

<sup>82</sup> Saward, “The Representative Claim,” p.303.

Goffman and Fenno.<sup>83</sup> This is not of course to assume that every representative who shares race, sex or religion with constituents wants, or is automatically guaranteed the right, to represent these groups politically; claims to represent women, for example, can come from male MPs and likewise white MPs with a large proportion of ethnic minority constituents will attempt to represent these equally in parliament. However, many representative claims are based on an assumption of shared descriptive characteristics between the representative and the represented. As has been previously argued, claims differ depending on context, audience and the intended objectives of the claim-maker. Some claims take prevalence, being made more frequently, more explicitly and with more emphasis than others. In the case of representative claims made on the basis of shared descriptive characteristics, some identity markers are emphasised over others. But how and why these claims are shaped and performed in certain ways requires going beyond the current work on representative claim-making to explicitly consider the political context within which these claims are made.

## **2.5 *Political Institutions***

So far we have considered that the way we present ourselves to others is a performance (Goffman) and that political representation is a system of performative claim-making whereby representatives utilise different aspects of their identities at different times (Saward). What also needs to be considered are the institutional factors that shape and affect identity performance and representation of MPs. As Saward has demonstrated, representative claims emerge from contextual frameworks and understandings that situate and justify the claims being made. Additionally, Goffman's work has demonstrated the importance of scenery, props, scripts and costumes to the role played by the actor. In the world of politics, these factors are centred within political institutions, norms, and cultures; the literature of political institutions delineates the 'stages' upon which identity is performed by MPs. Identities, performances and representative claims are always shaped by the context in which they are constructed and communicated. This aims to give empirical grounding to these concepts of performance and claim making, recognising that political institutions inherently mould the ways that claim-making is carried out by political representatives. As such, it brings together ideas of identity performance and the institutional factors that constrain this; an

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<sup>83</sup> Saward, "The Representative Claim," p.312.

area that has been insufficiently addressed by previous theorists of descriptive and symbolic representation.

The role of political institutions has dominated much of political science literature, most notably since March and Olsen's 1984 article on the 'new institutionalism'.<sup>84</sup> In the case of descriptive representation, institutions play a critical role in defining who candidates are and what they do once elected. They help construct, constrain and shape the performance of identity, in addition to providing norms and regulations that govern how representative claims are made.<sup>85</sup> While Saward acknowledges the role of institutions as a type of 'cultural code' which shape and impact claim-making, he argues:

I would resist confronting the 'institutional' with the 'performative'. Electoral and other institutions, of course, condition the styles of representative claims. However, those institutions are themselves 'performed' or enacted. They are pieces of crucial institutional and constitutional culture.<sup>86</sup>

Here we see the importance of space, beyond a physical stage for the enacting out of identity.<sup>87</sup> The following section therefore considers political space as a factor which influences the performance of identity by MPs.

### **2.5.1 Political Space**

Space, as Butler argues, has its own norms and cultures which affect the performance of claims. "Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal spaces and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives."<sup>88</sup> Puwar uses Butler's ideas of gender as performance to investigate the kind of gendered 'scripts' (styles, acts and performances) that are adopted by MPs in parliament; she argues that parliament, like Oxbridge and public schools, are spaces which mirror the same "architecture and theatrical style of embodiment."

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<sup>84</sup> J. G. March and J.P. Olsen (1984) "The new institutionalism: organizational factors in political life" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78 (3), pp. 734-749.

<sup>85</sup> Joni Lovenduski has argued, for example, that "institutions are gender regimes" and therefore requires a gendered analysis which takes into account the role of women and the intersectionality of identities. J. Lovenduski (2011) "Foreword" in *Gender, Politics and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*, M.L. Krook and F. Mackay (eds.), Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p.vii.

<sup>86</sup> Saward, "The Representative Claim," p.311.

<sup>87</sup> M Lloyd (1999) 'Performativity, Parody, Politics' in Bell, *Performativity and Belonging*, pp.196-197.

<sup>88</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," p.410.

If we accept that the body has a memory, for those MPs who have moved in these interconnected webs of spaces, the performative movement of their arms, legs and chests and shoulders within Parliament bears memories which take them back to the intimately familiar... thus for some MPs they are putting their theatrical performances into action amongst their peers.<sup>89</sup>

Puwar links the physical space that is Parliament, to the types of performances given by MPs. To continue the dramaturgical analogy, the space, or stage in which representatives perform affects their costumes, their scripts and the rituals and ceremonies undertaken and enacted there.<sup>90</sup> The ‘values, skills, loyalties and cognitive maps’ developed by MPs emerge out of a process of socialisation within a legislature and these shape the ways MPs construct and perform their identities.<sup>91</sup> Puwar argues that space has political power because it is ‘not a fixed entity’.

Social spaces are not blank and open for any body to occupy. There is a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time. While all can, in theory, enter, it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designated as being the ‘natural’ occupants of specific positions. Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both space and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being ‘out of place.’ Not being the somatic norm, they are space invaders.<sup>92</sup>

Puwar discusses what happens when previous ‘outsider’ groups (women, ethnic minorities etc) enter insider political spaces, such as Westminster, arguing that “being both insiders and outsiders, [these groups] occupy a tenuous location. Not being the somatic norm, they don’t have an undisputed right to occupy this space. Yet they are still insiders.”<sup>93</sup> She argues that these MPs are ‘highly visible bodies’; recognisable

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<sup>89</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.84.

<sup>90</sup> For example, Puwar argues that “The House of Commons is a place where binaries are firmly re-enacted in terms of masculine and feminine dress. In this place, men dress as men and women dress as ‘women’... The social fictions of what is considered to be the natural physicality of men and women are firmly entrenched...In these circumstances, many of the women are extremely anxious to ‘retain their femininity’. There is thus a tacit collective agreement to perform discrete genders.” P.97.

<sup>91</sup> G. Almond and S. Verba (1963) *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp.29-30.

<sup>92</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.8.

<sup>93</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.8.

because of their race or gender which mark them out as ‘Other’ – different to the majority and defined by ascriptive identity characteristics.

When a body is emptied of its gender and race, this is a mark of how its position is the privileged norm. Its power emanates from its ability to be seen as just normal, to be without corporeality. Its own gender or race remains invisible; a non-issue... [W]hiteness exists as an unmarked normative position. Similarly, the male body is invisible as a sexed entity. Its absence of gender entitles it to take up the unmarked normative locale.<sup>94</sup>

In this way, identity is classified both by what it *is* and what it is *not*. Using a focus group and in-depth interviews of women, blue-collar and ethnic minority MPs from the Belgian House of Representatives, Celis and Wauters found that these groups tended to adapt themselves to fit parliamentary norms, rather than norms and roles adapting to fit MPs with ‘new’ identities. They note the visibility of minority MPs and describe them as “colourful butterflies in a grey room.”<sup>95</sup> They stand out because of their scarcity and their ascriptive identities and are therefore under pressure not only to prove their skills, but to silence any critics who suggest they are ‘token’ appointments by their party. Celis and Wauters conclude that:

MPs with a specific identity have personal preferences to represent their particular group and are encouraged to behave as a group representative by institutions such as parties, organisations and the general public. However, since MPs estimate that this behaviour is not compatible with their career goals, that is, being a mainstream MP and securing re-election, they often hesitate and even refrain from taking up the role of group representative.<sup>96</sup>

Puwar argues that although some may assume that places and spaces are neutral, feminists have struggled to demonstrate the gendered nature of space, institutions and language which define the feminine in relation to the masculine norm.<sup>97</sup> Alcoff, for example, argues that the social location, or the identity of speakers, has “an epistemically significant impact on that speaker's claims and can serve either to

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<sup>94</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.58.

<sup>95</sup> K. Celis and B. Wauters (2010) 'Pinning the Butterfly: Women, Blue-Collar and Ethnic Minority MPs vis-à-vis Parliamentary Norms and the Parliamentary Role of the Group Representative' *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 16 (3), pp. 380 – 393 (p.386).

<sup>96</sup> Celis and Wauters, “Pinning the Butterfly,” p.391.

<sup>97</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.135.

authorize or disauthorize one's speech.”<sup>98</sup> She argues that critical theory, discourses of empowerment, psychoanalytic theory, post-structuralism, feminist and anti-colonialist theories all agree that there is no neutrality of a speaker.<sup>99</sup> Privilege confers a certain perspective or standpoint that may result in further oppression when the dominant group speaks for the minority.

[T]he practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise. And the effect of the practice of speaking for others is often, though not always, erasure and a reinscription of sexual, national, and other kinds of hierarchies.<sup>100</sup>

It is not enough merely to argue that any member of an oppressed group has the ability to communicate in a political context that was designed for, by and with those with privilege in mind. Communication is not a level playing field. As Alcoff argues, “[w]ho is speaking, who is spoken of, and who listens, is a result as well as an act, of political struggle.”<sup>101</sup> People may be excluded or hindered in political spaces by their lack of conformity to traditional styles of communication. Speech that is assertive and confident is valued more than timid or hesitant speech. Confrontational speech wins out over conciliatory attempts. The speech of white middle-class males tends to be more controlled and does not use significant gestures or expression of emotion, while women and racial minorities tend to more frequently use figurative language, wide gestures and express emotion.<sup>102</sup> Puwar argues that performative norms in Westminster are traditionally violent; it is a space where “[t]he speech, voices, styles and decorum of the bodies that utter parliamentary speech are heavily masculinised...Those who are able to humiliate their opponents through highly articulate performances which re-enact the violence and theatrical force found in the law courts are especially applauded.”<sup>103</sup> This affects not only the type of performance given by MPs but increases the sense of an environment where power belongs to the educated, the white and the male. Celis and

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<sup>98</sup> L. Alcoff, (1991) “The Problem of Speaking for Others” *Cultural Critique*, No. 20, pp. 5-32 (7).

<sup>99</sup> Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” p.12.

<sup>100</sup> Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” p.29.

<sup>101</sup> Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” p.15.

<sup>102</sup> I. M Young (1996) “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy.” in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, S. Benhabib (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.120-135.

<sup>103</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.83.

Wauters found that when interviewing working-class MPs from the Belgium parliament, working class respondents testified that “the complex and juridical jargon is a real obstacle for them. It excludes them from full and independent participation in parliamentary activities.”<sup>104</sup> To counter this, they communicated in “the language of ordinary people” to be better understood by the people they represent. This is an example of the fact that, by and large, it is the representatives who adapt themselves to act on the institutional stage, rather than the evolution of institutional norms and conventions. This will be further explored in the empirical chapters of this thesis, as context, institutions and audience all affect the ways that MPs ‘perform’ identity through representation.

In addition to these cultural norms which affect the performance of identity by MPs, there are legislative factors which also shape the way representatives understand and make representative claims such as electoral systems, methods of selection and election, and political role theory. The following section explores these in more detail, with specific reference to the two case studies of New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

### 2.5.2 Legislative Factors

A great deal has been written about political institutions in both case studies, particularly on candidate recruitment and selection processes.<sup>105</sup> A more specific body of literature has focused on the recruitment experience for women and ethnic minorities, particularly in the United Kingdom.<sup>106</sup> Although this literature is too considerable to go into detailed discussion here, it focuses both on the formal processes which individuals must undertake to be selected as a political candidate, and on the supply and demand

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<sup>104</sup> Celis and Wauters “Pinning the Butterfly” p.385.

<sup>105</sup> For a further discussion of selection processes in the UK see P. Norris (1997) *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; M. Gallagher and M. Marsh (eds.), (1988) *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*, London: Sage Publications; J. Mitchell and J. Bradbury (2004) “Political recruitment and the 2003 Scottish and Welsh elections: candidate selection, positive discrimination and party adaptation” *Representation*, Vol. 40 (4), pp. 288-301; For NZ see R. Salmond (2003) “Choosing Candidates: Labour and National in 2002” in *New Zealand Votes: The General Election of 2002*, J. Boston, S. Church, S. Levine, E. McLeay., and N. Roberts (eds.), Wellington: Victoria University Press, pp.192-206, and K. Jackson (1980) ‘Candidate Selection and the 1978 General Election’, in *New Zealand at the Polls: The General Election in 1978*, H. R. Penniman (ed.), Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Research, pp. 99-118.

<sup>106</sup> See S. Childs (2008) *Women and British Party Politics: Descriptive, Substantive and Symbolic Representation*, Oxon: Routledge (Women’s Legislative Recruitment); A. Geddes (1998) “Inequality, political opportunity and ethnic minority parliamentary candidacy” in Saggar (ed.) *Race and British electoral politics*; J. Ashe, R. Campbell, S. Childs, & E. Evans (2010). “Stand by your man’: Women’s political recruitment at the 2010 UK general election” *British Politics*, Vol. 5 (4), pp. 455-480.



barriers facing political minorities.<sup>107</sup> These factors affect not only the political stage upon which identity is performed by representatives, but also the types of performances enacted; candidates selected because of their ethnic background, for example, may feel obliged to publically represent that group politically not only for personal reasons of attachment, but as a sense of obligation to the political party who hope to attract more voters. Likewise performances of identity can be used in a strategic sense by political parties; Saggar and Geddes argue that selection processes can on the one hand, attempt to ‘de-politicise race’ by favouring ethnic candidates who “stressed their position on traditional ideological questions over their particular ethnic or racial label”, while on the other hand, “deliberately and mutually stoking up the explicitness [of identity] stakes” by running ethnic minority candidates in constituencies with large ethnic populations.<sup>108</sup> Below I reflect on the roles of three factors: electoral systems, political parties and traditional understandings of the role of an MP, all of which influence the way that representative claims and the performance of identity are understood and performed by MPs.

#### *The role of electoral systems*

Britain has traditionally used a First-Past-The-Post (FPP) electoral system to elect MPs to the House of Commons. Under this plurality system, Britain is divided into 650 electoral constituencies based on geographically defined boundaries, which each have a single MP to represent them. This form of electoral system tends to produce a two-party system and single-party governments, although this was not the case in the 2010 general election when the Conservatives entered a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. FPP traditionally creates a strong connection between the representative and their constituents, as single-member representatives are the voice of the constituency in Parliament, as well as being the person who can be approached for help, advice or criticism. In turn, the representative relies on the constituency to re-elect them and hopefully their party at each general election. The relationship then is a two-way street which, for the most part, forges bonds and connections between the representative and the represented. The exception to this could be those MPs who hold safe seats as their

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<sup>107</sup> Norris and Lovenduski, *Political Recruitment*. Norris and Lovenduski explain supply problems as those which influence the number of people willing to put themselves forward as candidates, such as lack of time, of finances, of confidence or of education. Demand factors include judgements about candidates based on how they look or speak, their qualifications, and their perceived abilities.

<sup>108</sup> Saggar and Geddes “Negative and positive racialisation,” p.39.

success is guaranteed, not because of who they are as individuals, but because of their party affiliation. They therefore have less incentive to create close relationships with their constituents, and the threat of being voted out of office holds less power. The Electoral Reform Society claims that in 2010, 382 of the 650 constituencies in Britain were safe seats, meaning that over half the representatives in the UK were elected because of party affiliation, rather than individual characteristics.<sup>109</sup>

Under a single-member system, such as First Past The Post, parties have little encouragement to select diverse candidates “[a]s the candidate only needs to win a plurality in a small geographic electorate.”<sup>110</sup> Parties need to select candidates that will appeal to the majority of voters, and as such will be unlikely to select candidates who may be seen to appeal solely to minority groups. Winning electorate seats ensures political success and the selection of candidates who will be elected by the majority is vital to this task. Stephens notes that “single-member constituency candidates often reflect the prevailing social characteristic and identity of the region and electorate – hence white males tend to dominate.”<sup>111</sup> In contrast, New Zealand’s list system under MMP potentially increases the number of minority candidates who can be elected.

MMP gives voters two votes: one for a candidate in a single-member district and one for a party. Parties are allocated seats in parliament proportional to their share of the party vote and ‘extra’ seats that are not won in electoral districts are topped-up by candidates selected from a closed party list. McLeay and Vowles (2007) note that one of the advantages to a list-based electoral system is the benefit it gives to ethnic minority groups in particular.<sup>112</sup> These benefits are twofold: firstly lists allow greater numbers of minority candidates to have the chance to be elected, and secondly once list MPs enter parliament, there are greater opportunities for them to reach out to minority groups because they do not have geographical constituencies. In the first instance, minority groups benefit from the desire of political parties to include a diverse range of people on their lists, in order to appeal to the widest possible population demographic. With a

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<sup>109</sup> The Guardian (2010) *General Election 2010: Safe and marginal seats*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/apr/07/election-safe-seats-electoral-reform>, accessed 20 February 2013.

<sup>110</sup> G. R Stephens (2008) *Electoral Reform and the Centralisation of the New Zealand National Party*, MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, accessed at <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10063/302/thesis.pdf?sequence=2>

<sup>111</sup> Stephens, *Electoral Reform and the Centralisation of the New Zealand National Party*, p.13.

<sup>112</sup> E. McLeay and J. Vowles (2007) “Redefining Constituency Representation: the Roles of New Zealand’s MPs under MMP” *Regional and Federal Studies* Vol. 17 (1) pp.71-95

large party list to fill, candidates are more likely to be selected from a wide range of groups, as having LGBT, female, disabled or ethnic minority candidates could increase their appeal among voters, who will use their party votes to ensure the candidate they want gets selected.

### *The role of political parties*

Political parties play a significant role in the representation of minority representatives; Sawyer argues that political parties are the main barrier to the political representation of women “ahead even of the electoral system or the nature of parliamentary institutions.”<sup>113</sup> This is primarily because parties are responsible for candidate selection and thus determine who they put forward as the face or image of the party. Lovenduski has argued that “[t]he crucial place for action is the political parties because they are responsible for choosing candidates. It is impossible to overstate this point. Parties select, voters elect.”<sup>114</sup> Andrew Geddes has previously claimed that in Britain, “the main parties’ parliamentary candidate selection procedures can be likened to a market where aspirants seek to sell their services to parliamentary constituencies purchasing the “best” candidate.”<sup>115</sup> For potential nominees, part of selling themselves as a package involves scrutiny of their identity and descriptive characteristics: gender, race, physical appearance, religion and sexuality. The selection process for becoming a parliamentary candidate is long and arduous, with only a select few making it into the parliamentary chamber as an MP and there are many hurdles to cross, particularly for minority candidates. They need to convince the constituency, the local party branch, and national party members that they have the qualities that will appeal to the largest percentage of voters on election day, and that the qualities which would make them a minority in Parliament will not alienate voters who are not group members.

While recent years have seen a greater example of political institutions acknowledging and attempting to respond to the need for a greater sense of authenticity and representative diversity in parliaments, there are also other agendas at play. Votes of minority groups are up for grabs and the presence of minority candidates becomes a powerful tool for parties to demonstrate connection to, and support of, these

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<sup>113</sup> See Lovenduski and Norris, *Gender and Party Politics*, cited in Sawyer, “Parliamentary Representation of Women,” p371.

<sup>114</sup> Lovenduski (2012) “Feminising British Politics” p.699.

<sup>115</sup> Geddes “Inequality, political opportunity and ethnic minority parliamentary candidacy”, p.149.

communities. While the increased presence of minorities in the New Zealand Parliament has been to the benefit of traditionally under-represented groups, it has also created an illusion of dependence on, and loyalty to political parties who nominate candidates for selection under a closed-list system. Political parties can use identity and group representation to their own benefit: by stacking the lists with diverse candidates they appeal to members of the group who believe the party is representing them; they are seen to work towards goals of a more legitimate and representative parliament; and they have representatives whose selection on the list (and therefore their election to Parliament) depends firstly on the party and secondly on their own identity characteristics. Of course, once elected the list MP has no more formal responsibility to act as a group representative than electorate MPs do; but informally, minority MPs are often well aware of the reason they have been selected as a list, rather than an electorate MP. Methods of selection therefore also shape the types of representative claims that are made by MPs.

### *The role of an MP*

Legislated mechanisms of increasing diversity such as quotas and reserved seats, for example, have considerable impact on not only who becomes a political candidate but also potentially how that individual is perceived by others and how identity is subsequently ‘performed’ by representatives. Debate about the role of the New Zealand MPs who hold one of the reserved Māori seats have focused on the difficulties with acting as a legislated ‘group representative’. These MPs have a particular responsibility not only to their constituents (who happen to be Māori) but also can be seen to represent ‘Māori’ interests as a wider group. The 1986 report by the Royal Commission into New Zealand’s electoral system noted that

If Māori are separately represented, than non-Māori must be too. And if Māori MPs are primarily responsible only to their group, then by the same token non-Māori MPs must also be primarily responsible only to their group. It is not so much the separate representation of Māori that causes problems for Māori representation, but rather the separate representation of the numerically dominant non-Māori.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> New Zealand Royal Commission on the Electoral System, (1986) *Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System: Towards a Better Democracy*, Wellington: VR Ward, Government Printer, p.90

The institutional norms and role description of an MP can therefore affect the ways in which identity is performed by representatives. The role of a Member of Parliament is not frequently discussed in academic literature on political representation despite its importance to conceptions of how MPs enact their duties in Parliament.<sup>117</sup> This thesis does not seek to analyse representative roles in the sense of what representatives do or how they behave once they enter Parliament; rather, it analyses the way in which identity is ‘performed’ on a political stage and how this affects representative claims made. However institutional frameworks, regulations and norms have a direct impact on the way that identity is performed and understood via representative roles of MPs. The evolution of electorate and list MPs has created a new dynamic in the representative-constituent relationships as list MPs move away from geographical representation to create new constituencies. In contrast, the continuing bond between constituents and representatives in Britain remains, with Cowley finding that the public place considerable importance on their MP being from the local area, who has “experienced the same things as those they will represent.”<sup>118</sup> These factors affect both the political ‘stage’ and the audience for the representative’s performance of identity.

The literature that exists on representative roles tends to categorise models of behaviour, such as Searing’s notable work on political roles at Westminster, which focuses on how MPs behave in Parliament once elected.<sup>119</sup> He draws attention to the traditional constituency-representative relationship, the ‘best known and best defined’ forms of representation.<sup>120</sup> Norton and Ward also highlight the importance of the constituency-representative relationship in Britain, arguing that “attentiveness to constituency needs can result in electoral rewards.”<sup>121</sup> They argue that British MPs “face in two directions...towards Westminster and towards the local areas that they represent.”<sup>122</sup> In fact, as we will see in the following empirical chapters, representation in Britain and indeed in New Zealand is more complex than this, requiring MPs to operate with a number of different ‘faces’ or in a number of directions, including gender, sexuality, race and class. In contrast, Crewe challenges perceptions of this ‘sacred’ connection and

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<sup>117</sup> A recent exception is M. Blogren and O. Rozenberg (eds.), *Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures*, Oxon: Routledge.

<sup>118</sup> Cowley, “Why not ask the audience?” p.22

<sup>119</sup> D. Searing (1994) *Westminster’s World: Understanding Political Roles*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 16.

<sup>120</sup> See Searing, *Westminster’s World*, Chapter 4, p.121.

<sup>121</sup> P. Norton and D. Ward (1993) *Back from Westminster: British members of Parliament and their constituents*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, p.4.

<sup>122</sup> Norton and Ward, *Back from Westminster*, p.24.

argues that although “hard-boiled politicians become almost dewy-eyed about the ‘sacred trust’ and ‘indissoluble bond’ between Members and their local constituents”, this bond is a myth.<sup>123</sup>

The representation of political parties is another important consideration. Parties still hold much of the political power and “as more and more electors become socialised into a party identification, the ability of national or constituency parties to confer the party label on a candidate or deny it to him, became increasingly important, given the electoral system.”<sup>124</sup> Norton argues that representation of party interest is essential for MPs because they “are returned for individual constituencies, but the primary determinant of their election is party.”<sup>125</sup> He argues that it is in the best interests of MPs to keep active both within their party and also within their constituency, as both the MP and the party benefit from electoral success there. Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou similarly argue that at Westminster, the pressure to “toe the party line at the expense of other representational roles” is enormous.<sup>126</sup> Candidates depend on party identity to gain support and secure re-election, and under New Zealand’s system of proportional representation, list MPs rely even more heavily on parties for a high-ranking position on the closed party lists.

The role of the MP in New Zealand prior to electoral reform was very similar to the traditional British model of representation, in that there was a strong bond between the constituency and the representative.<sup>127</sup> However, the changing nature of New Zealand’s electoral system from a First-Past-The-Post (FPP) system to Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) in 1996 meant that the role of a New Zealand MP also evolved and the system created new dimensions to parliamentary diversity.<sup>128</sup> In a case study of parliamentary role definition in New Zealand, McLeay and Vowles (2007) note that there are no prescribed job descriptions or differentiation between electorate and list

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<sup>123</sup> I. Crewe (1985) “MPs and their Constituents in Britain: How Strong Are The Links?” p.45, in V. Bogdanor (ed.) (1985) *Representatives of the People? Parliamentarians and Constituents in Western Democracies*, England: Gower Publishing Company Ltd.

<sup>124</sup> H. Berrington (1985) “MPs and their Constituents in Britain: The History of the Relationship” p. 35, in Bogdanor (ed.) *Representatives of the People?*

<sup>125</sup> P. Norton (2007) “Four Models of Political Representation: British MPs and the Use of ICT”, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 13 (3), pp. 354 – 369 (p.358).

<sup>126</sup> Saalfeld & Kyriakopoulou, *Presence and Behaviour*, p.232.

<sup>127</sup> See J. T. Anagnoson (1983) “Home Style in New Zealand” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 8 (2) pp. 157-175.

<sup>128</sup> A binding referendum was held in favour of changing the electoral system in 1993 but the first general election under MMP was not held until 1996.

MPs.<sup>129</sup> However, electorate MPs spent more time than list MPs in their community, dealing with constituents and building up relationships with local groups; usually using their weekends as well as a weekday. This time is seen by the public as the way in which an MP “earns” their salary. The role of an electorate MP is also much more clearly defined, with a fixed geographical location for MPs to represent, and Bowler and Farrell (1993) argue that list MPs can therefore ‘shirk’ constituency demands.<sup>130</sup> Some government list MPs are so highly ranked that they have a Cabinet portfolio which is an obvious focus for their political attention. These list MPs have clear duties and responsibilities to fulfil which makes role legitimisation easier to establish, but others who do not hold ministerial positions can struggle to find who they represent. One of the most common criticisms of Proportional Representational systems is that they break the bond between constituents and representatives because of the lack of geographical electorates. Some critics have even suggested that list MPs are ‘second-class’ MPs because of their lack of clear constituency.<sup>131</sup> Barker and Levine argue that in New Zealand:

Individual MPs have traditionally been seen as responsible to their electorates despite their limited freedom to act separately from their party in parliament. The introduction of list MPs, selected by and responsible to a political party and elected (indirectly) by the country as a whole, sparked a vigorous, but ultimately inconclusive, debate about what these MPs should do and to whom they were responsible.<sup>132</sup>

They further argue that despite the potential for the roles of list MPs to evolve into representation based on something other than geographical territory, by 1999 at least, this has not occurred and “[a]lthough voters appear to have wanted increased diversity among their representatives and more consultative decision making, they did not seek to

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<sup>129</sup> McLeay and Vowles, “Redefining Constituency Representation,” p.74.

<sup>130</sup> S. Bowler and D.M. Farrell (1993) ‘Legislator Shirking and Voter Monitoring: Impacts of European Parliament Electoral Systems upon Legislator-Voter Relationships’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 31 (1), pp.45-70.

<sup>131</sup> See L. Ward (1998) ‘Second-Class MPs’? New Zealand’s Adaptation to Mixed-Member Parliamentary

Representation, *Political Science*, Vol. 49 (2), pp.25–52, and T. C. Lundberg (2006) “Second-Class Representatives? Mixed-Member Proportional Representation in Britain”, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 59 (1), pp. 60–77

<sup>132</sup> F. Barker & S. Levine (1999) “The individual parliamentary member and institutional change: The changing role of the New Zealand member of parliament” *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 5 (3-4), pp. 105-130.

alter the nature of the voter-MP relationship.”<sup>133</sup> This demonstrates that despite desire for change in the electoral system and debates about the role of MPs, ultimately the representative-constituency relationship remained the default position.

List MPs in New Zealand are loosely assigned to ‘shadow’ geographical regions or electorates but this is rarely strongly enforced. McLeay and Vowles argue that list MPs will aim to both develop and legitimise their own roles and may use defined minority groups to do so. Because their geographical constituencies are so large, they hypothesize that list MPs, more than electorate MPs, will specialize in representation of descriptively defined groups. Ward similarly argues that “[p]rior to the introduction of MMP there was some expectation that list MPs, freed from constituency service responsibilities, would be able to devote a greater proportion of their time to specialisation in particular legislative policy areas and issue concerns.”<sup>134</sup> This hypothesis will be explored in further empirical chapters which explore the ways that both constituency and list MPs perform identity through their representative roles.

As I have suggested, representation always exists within a wider framework of political institutions, norms and constructs. Political rules and formal processes affect the ways that an MP can act as a representative. More theoretical approaches to representation have tended to neglect these factors, an issue which this thesis seeks to address. The above review has demonstrated some of the institutional factors which affect how an MP constructs, views, and ‘represents’ their identity in a political forum, focusing in particular on the importance of political space or stages, legislative norms and regulations and established ‘scripts’ for an MP’s role in shaping representative performance. As such, there is a clear intersection between theoretical positions on representation and claim-making and institutional frameworks which has previously been overlooked by theorists in this area.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This thesis investigates the question *how is identity performed through political representation in the United Kingdom and New Zealand?* In order to answering this question, a specific analytical framework has been developed for the thesis, which combines theories of representation, identity and performance. In doing so, the thesis develops existing work in three main ways.

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<sup>133</sup> Barker and Levine, “The individual parliamentary member and institutional change,” p.113.

<sup>134</sup> Ward, “Second-Class MPs?” p.143.



Firstly, this research aims to refine concepts of descriptive and symbolic representation by analysing representation through a lens of performance. The chapter began by outlining Goffman's notion that all social interaction can be seen as performance and how this can be applied to the study of political representation. Goffman's work on presenting the self outlines the concept of 'front-stage' performances where individuals convey impressions of themselves to an audience, impressions which are shaped by established 'scripts' which are available, contextual cues and audience expectations. Importantly for this research, drawing on theories of performance allows us to interpret political representation as a series of performative interactions between actor (in our case MPs) and intended audiences. This relationship is, therefore, a dynamic one in which political actors both have agency and are to an extent limited by contextual factors, norms and expectations placed on them as 'representatives' which I return to below.

Secondly, the thesis goes beyond the common focus on (minority) identity groups in representation studies to incorporate a more fluid view of the role of identity in shaping understandings of representation. As I have suggested, previous accounts which focus on descriptive and symbolic representation often rely on structured identity categories and boundaries which fail to take into account the complexities of identity. Having established that identity is fluid, heterogeneous and intersectional, rather than fixed or essential, it is necessary to take a much broader view of identity in relation to political representation. This allows us to more fully understand how identity might be strategically constructed or performed in certain ways in different contexts.

In order to resolve this complexity around identity and representation, the chapter then turned to Saward's more theoretical approach to representation, bringing us to the third analytical aim of the thesis: to empirically investigate Saward's theory of representative claim making. Saward argues that considering representation as a process of performance of various claims, rather than trying to establish a fixed definition of what representation *is*, allows us to conceive of representation as a changing dynamic whereby MPs put forward different claims, in different contexts, to different audiences. Saward's theory directly informs the analytical approach adopted here, foregrounding the construction of *claims to* and *understandings of* representation. However, this broad theory of representation is detached, not grounded empirically and does not deal directly

with identity (which I argue is inherent to any conception of representation). As such, this thesis expands on Saward's work to analyse how claim making plays out in reality: specifically, how claim-makers (MPs) personally understand, justify, qualify and perform representative claims based on identity, an essential part of discussions about descriptive and symbolic representation.

There are a number of reasons that these theories are applicable to an empirical study of MPs specifically, and by association, political representation in the UK and New Zealand. Both Saward and Fenno note the importance for the MP to use their public 'presentations of the self' to qualify, identify and empathise with their constituents in order to gain political support. I argue that claims based on shared identity can be used to fulfil all three of these categories. As has been argued, identity can be manipulated by political actors depending on their intended context, audience and objectives and in the same way, these 'representations of the self' undertaken by MPs are themselves conditioned by these same factors. Representatives do not have sole autonomy over the way they 'represent the self'. Saward has demonstrated that representative claims emerge from existing cultural contexts and frameworks, while Goffman has demonstrated the importance of scenery, props, scripts and costumes to the role of an actor. The making and performance of representative claims are therefore directly related to institutional contexts such as electoral systems, political parties, and political culture and space. These factors have not been sufficiently acknowledged in previous work on both descriptive and symbolic representation and theories of claim-making; the case studies in this thesis provide examples of where political norms, cultures and institutions have a sizeable impact on the way representative claims are shaped and performed by MPs. In this way, the thesis is able to provide new empirical data about the way that MPs perform identity on three separate political stages and the ways that they talk about and make representative claims based on identity, providing a new approach to considering representative claim-making.

The analytical framework in this chapter, therefore, creates space for the notion that both representation and identity are concepts which can be constructed and performed by political actors. Political representation, rather than being defined by rigid typologies or roles, can be viewed as a series of performances by representatives that are, in turn, affected by contextual factors such as institutional norms and cultures, methods of selection and election, and demands of political parties. The role of identity is central in

the way these claims are constructed and performed by representatives, in order to identify and empathise with constituents and gain political support.

These issues are then addressed empirically in the following chapters, exploring how performances of identity are understood and carried out by political representatives. What is examined within the confines of the thesis is not how authentic the MP is as a representative for an identity group, nor how successfully they are read by the audience, nor whether the data I have gathered reflects an MP's 'real' identity; instead it focuses on the claims that MPs make to represent identity groups and how the variation in audience, stage, and context affect representative claims. This expands the theoretical framework of representative claim-making by focusing on the ways that claim-making plays out in reality for MPs in the UK and New Zealand.

Considering representation as a performative process, rather than a rigid relationship between a representative and constituents, positions MPs as actors who are free to make claims about themselves and their suitability to represent which can then be accepted or rejected by an audience. Despite emerging literature on the process of claim-making, not enough has been done which allies this theory with the lived experience of Members of Parliament, particularly those from minority groups. There is a need to understand how and why MPs position themselves as group representatives; how they utilise their identity in their representative roles and the ways that this differs depending on context.



## Chapter 3

### Research Design

#### 3.1 Introduction

This thesis draws on the theoretical work of Goffman and Saward to investigate the way constructed identity is performed by MPs in the UK and New Zealand through their representative roles. In doing so, it brings together theoretical concepts of identity, performance and representation through empirical studies of political representatives. This research aims to more clearly highlight the ‘lived experience’ of MPs and the way they understand, utilise and make claims about the representation of identity.

As argued in Chapter 2, identity is an integral, yet understudied, part of political representation. Fundamentally, the way in which MPs perform identity can shape the types of representative claims they make and the ways in which they are ‘read’ by audiences. Identity performance can be used in a strategic fashion and it can be conditioned by social, cultural or institutional norms and regulations. As such, the thesis synthesises conceptual and theoretical perspectives on representative claim making while providing some empirical depth and specificity, analysing the way in which identity performance and representation intersect in particular contexts. This approach moves beyond representative typologies or categorisation of specific identity by combining Goffman’s framework of presenting the self and Saward’s theories of representative claim-making. Specifically, it provides new empirical evidence about the ways in which MPs understand the intersection of identity and representation and perform identity through their representative roles.

This chapter outlines the research design developed for the purposes of the research. In the social sciences, research design is about the organization of research. It includes the following steps: the identification of research questions generated by a clear theoretical framework, a set of expectations or, typically in quantitative analysis, hypotheses, case selection, data gathering (including sources), and methods.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the chapter firstly explains the broad approach to the project and the basis for grounding the theoretical questions in empirical research. It then turns to a discussion of the way that

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<sup>1</sup> M Maggetti, F Gilardi and C. Radaelli (2012) *Designing Research in the Social Sciences*, London: Sage.

identity and performance are operationalized within the empirical chapters of this thesis. Finally, it describes in detail the particular methodology undertaken, with particular reference to the process of data collection and analysis.

### ***3.2 Analytical framework***

Chapter 2 outlined the theoretical parameters for this study, outlining three central concepts for the thesis: identity, performance and representation. Goffman argues that all social interaction is a type of performance; that the way people present themselves to one another is a performance. Performance can be conscious and strategic or it can be the result of actors unconsciously playing prescribed roles. Performances are made up of actors, scripts, costumes, props and sceneries, all of which help shape and define the role that is played by the actor. This thesis argues that the relationship between identity and performance is inherent. Despite the common usage of fixed identity markers in theories of representation, identity is socially constructed and fluid. Identity can alter depending on context, audience or personal agenda and can subsequently be 'performed' by actors. This means that identity (the way people categorise themselves or the way they are categorised by others) can be performed and mobilised in certain ways by actors to shape social interactions, whether consciously or subconsciously. Although the term 'performance' suggests a degree of strategic manipulation, Goffman argues that this is not necessarily the case. Instead, some roles have pre-existing scripts, scenery, costumes or props which the actor must assume in order to be understood by the audience. Both the way that the actor performs identity and the way it is understood or 'read' by the audience affects the overall impression of the performance.

Identity is therefore part of every actor's performance; it can shape the things they say, the way they interact with others and the way they carry out roles: mother, employee, friend, political representative. In these terms, the performance of identity is therefore directly related to political representation. All forms of representation are a performance of some kind, an attempt to persuade an audience that X represents Y. Studies of identity and representation tend to focus on descriptive representation, having a legislature that is descriptive of the people it is meant to represent. Discussions of descriptive representation correctly identify the under-representation of many types of people from political decision making and attempt to redress or correct these inequalities. But in doing so, the language of descriptive representation naturally focuses on categorisation: defining identity, understanding who represents whom, or

what it means to have fewer women, fewer gay, fewer disabled people in legislatures. Focusing on these categories allows less space for the fluidity of identity or of performance.

Saward's work on representative claim-making attempts to overcome these problems. It suggests that representation is a succession of different claims put forward by actors (the representative, political parties, other political actors) which are fluid and able to be created, adapted and performed. Representative claim-making is one way to understand how MPs perform identity through their representative roles. As we saw in Chapter 2, representative claims based on identity can be used to qualify, identify and empathise with voters by MPs and by political parties. Parties, for instance, can use identity as a tool to 'market' MPs by stacking party lists with diverse candidates in order to appeal to the widest number of potential voters or by standing ethnic candidates in electorates with high proportions of ethnic populations. Consequently, individual actors are not the only ones with agency or power to shape performance. This demonstrates both the fluidity of identity performance and the importance of considering variations in context.

Performance is an ontology; a way of looking at reality. Understanding identity therefore, is less about what is 'real' and authentic and more about how the actor performs it at any given time to any given audience: the ways they talk about identity to an interviewer, the explicit and implicit representative claims they make based on identity, the degree to which they use identity to identify with others or qualify their representative roles. By investigating the ways in which MPs perform identity in different contexts and with different audiences, we can better understand the relationship between the two concepts of identity and political representation.

### **3.2.1 Research Question and Expectations**

My project emerged from an interest in parliamentary democracies and representation: who has a political voice, and why? There was an important focus within democratic theory on the representation of identity groups, particularly those with minority identities. But this research raised inevitable questions about who should act as political representatives for minority groups; placing homogenous identity labels on representatives in order to increase the number of women or ethnic minorities in legislatures was problematic for even those who strongly advocated for a 'politics of presence'.

The thesis began with the research question: *How is identity performed through political representation in the United Kingdom and New Zealand?* This was a broad conceptual question that needed to be grounded with empirical evidence from case studies and focused through more specific expectations. The three expectations reflect the changing nature of identity performance with regards to three points: the method of selection of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture, and the audience. Each of these factors has a significant impact on the extent that MPs perform and engage with identity and will be discussed in more detail during the following empirical chapters.

### ***Expectations***

- 1) The performance of identity varies in relation to the method of election of the MP
- 2) The performance of identity varies by parliamentary norms and culture
- 3) The performance of identity varies by audience

### ***Method of election***

In terms of research design, I use two case studies to examine the performance of identity by MPs: the United Kingdom and New Zealand. A significant difference between the two cases is that New Zealand's MMP electoral system allows for two types of MPs: those elected to a geographical electorate and those elected on the party list. MMP contributes to increasing the likelihood of MPs publically making representative claims based on minority identities, as list MPs operate outside of a geographical constituency and therefore have a greater incentive to use identity groups as potential constituencies. Further, as parties select a diverse list of candidates to broaden their appeal to voters, previously marginalised groups can be 'read' by the public (and by their parties) as surrogate or descriptive representatives for these groups. Judgements and categorisation of MPs are therefore created not only by the ways MPs publically 'perform' identity but also through assumptions made based on ascriptive characteristics and because of the 'cues' parties give the public as to how to 'read' particular MPs (by virtue of gender, sexuality, race or disability) particularly list MPs who cannot make representative claims about geographical constituencies.



In comparison, representation in the UK is based on geographically defined constituencies which are represented by single members. Election under these conditions relies on appealing to the majority of voters so minority characteristics are unlikely to be emphasised. Instead, the primary focus for representative claims is likely to be the use of ‘localness’ as a factor to qualify, identify, and empathise with constituents, as highlighted in Chapter 2. The MP who aims to be re-elected in a geographical constituency will find it more advantageous to emphasise something that all people can understand – that makes the representative an ‘us’ instead of a ‘them’. Consequently, when undertaking public performances of identity, they will be more likely to emphasise aspects of identity which appeal to a mass, rather than a specific audience. MPs in Britain are therefore less likely to make public ‘representations of the self’ based on class, race or gender than in New Zealand.

### *Parliamentary norms and culture*

Drawing on Puwar’s work on political space, I argue that political norms and culture will have an impact on the types of representative claims made by MPs. This includes the political norms and culture of the country, as well as specifically within its legislatures. For example, the 2008-2010 Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation in the UK saw the committee argue that “greater diversity in our elected representatives will be achieved only when the culture of our political parties has been changed” and recommend a change in parliamentary culture which had previously been created for and by white male bodies.<sup>2</sup> The Committee focused on supply and demand factors for the under-representation of minority groups in the UK Parliament. Supply factors that influenced the reluctance of minorities to stand as political candidates were identified as the cost of standing, social class, cultural factors, time pressures and lack of confidence, support and aspiration, as well as the confrontational style of Westminster politics. The demand barriers targeted by the Committee included issues of discrimination (both direct and indirect), and a focus on the ways that political parties enacted processes to increase parliamentary diversity.<sup>3</sup>

While these factors are certainly considerations within the NZ Parliament, New Zealand democratic culture has traditionally been more open to descriptive representation:

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<sup>2</sup> Speaker’s Conference (on Parliamentary Representation) (2010) *Final Report*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>, accessed 12 June 2012, p.44.

<sup>3</sup> Speaker’s Conference, *Final Report*, pp.46-47.

giving women the vote in 1893, having reserved parliamentary seats for the indigenous population and giving migrants the vote after one year of permanent residency. In addition, the importance of the Māori population as ‘tangata whenua’, or people of the land, as well the history of migration and diversity in New Zealand’s culture, means that it cannot avoid having to consider descriptive representation and parliamentary diversity. Consequently, this thesis suggests that it is in New Zealand where we will see more evidence of public identification with, and acknowledgement of, descriptive characteristics by MPs.

### *Audience*

The third expectation relates directly to the change in audience from public performances of identity to the more informal performances given by MPs within an interview setting. These stages will be outlined in more detail in the following section of this chapter but it is important to note that the changes in these mediums also provide a change in audience and thus affect the types of representative claims made.

Goffman and Saward have both discussed in varying degrees the importance of the audience as recipients of the performance but also as actors who have the potential to accept, reject or interpret representative claims or performance. Both web biographies and maiden speeches are targeted to large, public audiences. Web biographies are designed to present an image of the MP to a general, mass audience of potential voters and reflect not just the individuals’ identity and values, but often those of their political party. Maiden speeches are performed within institutional settings and protocols, to an audience which primarily consists of other MPs but are also transmitted to the voting public. Maiden speeches are an opportunity for MPs to publically perform aspects of their own identity upon a stage which has extremely prescribed scripts, props and roles. Finally, interviews have a single audience member which can mean that the interaction is more of a semi-private dialogue than a ritualised, public performance for MPs. This thesis therefore suggests that interviews provide a freer space for MPs to put forward representative claims based on identity; however, they are also where MPs are more likely to explicitly reject identity-based representation.

### ***Additional Research Questions***

As Chapter 2 has demonstrated, interpreting identity as social constructed means that identity can be adopted or performed in different ways depending on the intended outcome. The three empirical chapters therefore use data to explore this first in public performances of identity and then in a semi-private context. Chapter 4 asks “*how do MPs publically represent the self and how does this change by context?*” It focuses on public representations of the self as seen through MPs web biography pages and maiden speeches to firstly examine the ways that representatives publically ‘represent’ aspects of their identity; secondly, the way this shapes the types of representative claims made; and finally, the impact of institutional factors on the making of representative claims. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 expand these ideas further by using interview data with twenty nine representatives from the UK and NZ to ask “*how do MPs perceive the relationship between identity and representation?*” This section of the thesis uses interview data to go beyond normative theories and public representations of identity to an empirical analysis of MPs own experiences and understanding of how identity affects representative roles. One-on-one interviews also change the context in which MPs have to ‘perform’ their identity and can provide space for a more detailed, reflexive discussion about the way that descriptive representation in particular is played out in the parliaments of the UK and NZ. Chapter 5 therefore draws on normative theories of descriptive representation to specifically focus on the question: “*In what ways do MPs ascribe value to descriptive and symbolic representation through their performances of identity?*” while Chapter 6 reflects on the constructed and changing notion of identity and asks “*which factors constrain descriptive representation and the performance of identity?*” Here the focus is not only the ideological values that MPs place on principles of descriptive representation, but also on the ways that descriptive representation is conceived of and lived out in parliamentary representation, and the factors that shape and condition this.

Using a combination of data from interviews and from more public ‘performances of the self’ allows for a comparison between the way MPs discuss and perform identity in each context with different audiences and different objectives, as well as reflecting on how they consider the relationship between identity and political representation theoretically and through lived experiences. The thesis argues that an MP’s role as a representative relies directly on the way that identity is constructed and performed and

that understanding the ways that MPs do this and the factors which affect it, will provide a further addition to theories of representation and claim-making.

### **3.2.2 Case Selection**

Cross-national comparative studies can provide a means of investigating a variety of complex issues in some depth. This method was selected as the best way to carry out research into my research questions, because it allowed for in-depth analysis and comparison of MPs in different countries. The two countries selected for analysis within this project were the United Kingdom and New Zealand, both parliamentary democracies.

The United Kingdom (UK) was selected because it is a classic example of representative democracy under a First-Past-The-Post electoral system where MPs are elected in single-member districts. Many of the MPs hold safe seats but it has a strong tradition of constituency-representative relationships. It acts as the model for the Westminster system of government and was an easily accessible location for interviewing MPs face to face. The UK has a long and proud history of parliamentary practice and democracy, but despite this, many groups have been traditionally under-represented in its halls. Women were partially enfranchised in 1918, with full suffrage not granted until 1928. In a similar way, there were three ethnic minority MPs in Westminster between 1892 and 1929 but after that time there were none until 1987, a period of 58 years. Currently, levels of parliamentary diversity are relatively low in the UK, with only four per cent who identify as Black Asian Minority Ethnic.<sup>4</sup> In addition, as of 2013 Britain ranks 57<sup>th</sup> in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's world rankings of female representation, with only 22.5 percent of female MPs, despite having voluntary political party gender quotas.<sup>5</sup>

New Zealand was selected as a 'most-similar' case study – also using the Westminster model, it was a country that had traditionally used a First-Past-The-Post system until reform in the 1990s saw a change to a system of proportional representation under Mixed-Member-Proportional. New Zealand has a long history of engaging with descriptive representation and was the first country in the world to give women the vote

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<sup>4</sup> Operation Black Vote (2013) *MPs* <http://www.obv.org.uk/our-communities/profiles/mps>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2013) *Women in National Parliaments*, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, accessed March 2013.

in 1893. MMP saw female representation rise to a record 34 per cent in 2008 and as of 2013, New Zealand is ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in the world for female representation by the IPU.<sup>6</sup> Māori, the indigenous population of New Zealand, were also given the vote in 1893 and reserved parliamentary seats for Māori has seen guaranteed political representation based on ethnic identity. Representation of Māori is acknowledged as an important factor of New Zealand's democracy, with the Royal Commission on the Electoral System emphasising the importance of indigenous representation, as well as the need for the political presence of other under-represented groups. New Zealand therefore, has a history of engaging with concepts of descriptive representation and parliamentary diversity; something which can also be seen in its experience with electoral reform. Unlike the UK, New Zealand does not apply electoral gender quotas; however, it does have designated parliamentary seats for Māori and a list system under the MMP electoral system which allows for greater diversity in the candidates and representatives selected.

While NZ initially modelled itself on the UK, adopting a First-Past-the-Post electoral system, demands for electoral reform based on the need for a fairer and more representative system saw a change to a Mixed-Member-Proportional system for the 1996 general election. This resulted in an increase in the number of women, ethnic minorities, LGBT and disabled MPs in the House and also created a new type of representative: the list MP. Having candidates elected via a party list has meant that parties can diversify the type of candidates they stand as they aim to appeal to a wider range of voters. Party lists can also encourage voters to use votes strategically: using their candidate voter to elect the local Labour man, for example, while using their party vote for the Greens in the hopes of bringing in more women or ethnic minorities to parliament via a more diverse party list.

While the FPP system has been seen to deliver candidates and representatives who appeal to the majority, rather than the minority, there have been some moves to increase parliamentary diversity in the UK. The Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation paid attention to both the supply and demand factors that influence the political participation and representation of minority groups and some parties have legislative means in place to increase the number of women in power, such as the

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<sup>6</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2013) *Women in National Parliaments*, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, accessed March 2013.

Labour Party's all-women shortlists. But these efforts are still small in number and although, as Cowley found, the British public are aware of the need for parliamentary diversity, they place the greatest importance on having an MP who is local.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 3.1 Case Study Comparison<sup>8</sup>**

	<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>New Zealand</b>
<b>Population Size</b>	62,641,000	4,405,200
<b>Style of Government</b>	Westminster Parliamentary democracy	Westminster Parliamentary democracy
<b>Size of Parliament (at last general election)</b>	650	122
<b>Electoral System</b>	First-Past-The-Post	Mixed-Member-Proportional
<b>Constituency MPs<sup>9</sup></b>	650	70
<b>List MPs</b>	0	52
<b>Male MPs<sup>10</sup></b>	507	83
<b>Female MPs</b>	143	39
<b>Electoral Mechanisms for increasing diversity</b>	Yes, voluntary political party gender quotas.	Yes, reserved seats for Māori as indigenous population.

### **3.3 Operationalization**

In this section I explain how my key concepts are operationalized throughout the thesis. First I outline the way representative claims can be performed by MPs. Then I explain the three institutional contexts within which these claims are framed: web biographies, maiden speeches and interviews, and subsequently outline in more detail the structure of the empirical chapters of this thesis. By highlighting the differences between public, highly ritualised contexts for performances of identity and the less public, more informal interview settings, it is possible to better understand the ways that context affects identity performance and thus, the types of representative claims discussed by MPs.

<sup>7</sup> Cowley, "Why not ask the audience?"

<sup>8</sup> Data for ethnic identity gathered from the census in the UK and NZ was difficult to collate, mainly because of varying categories of identification of ethnicity and the fact that respondents could identify with several categories. At best estimate, the ethnic population of England and Wales is 9.1 million, while in NZ, the ethnic population is approximately 1.2 million. For UK data see Office for National Statistics, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/peeg/population-estimates-by-ethnic-group--experimental-current-estimates/index.html>, accessed 1 July 2012, and <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/measuring-equality/equality/ethnic-nat-identity-religion/ethnic-group/index.html>, accessed 1 July 2012. For NZ data see <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/quickstats-about-a-subject/culture-and-identity.aspx>, accessed 1 July 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Constituency and list MPs as of 2011 general election (NZ) and 2010 general election (UK)

<sup>10</sup> Male and Female MPs in parliaments as of 2013.

Recall that both identity and representation are multiply constructed and understood. By viewing identity as a form of performance, we can begin to conceive of a dynamic relationship between identity and representation, whereby representation as a concept, rather than being fixed or necessarily reliant on descriptive characteristics, can be modelled as a series of *claims to* and *understandings of* representation. To some extent, then, the way in which MPs perform identity in different contexts shapes their representative roles, whether implicitly, explicitly, consciously or subconsciously. In this model, there are three distinct (but interrelated) ways in which identity and representation can be brought into relationships and tensions with each other:

1. *Explicit representative claims*<sup>11</sup>

These are the clearest and most obvious form of representative claim, in which MPs perform their own identity in specific ways to in order to claim legitimacy to represent identity groups.

2. *Implicit representative claims*

The making of implicit representative claims is more complex: MPs may make reference to their own personal identity or backgrounds, or describe connection to various ‘identity groups’ without actually making explicit representative claims. In this way, descriptive or symbolic representation is implied by the political actor but not necessarily defined. This is a useful way for MPs to suggest linkages of qualification, empathy and identification with groups of voters without alienation the majority who do not share the same characteristics.

3. *Refuting descriptive representative roles*

MPs may also refute what they perceive to be their ‘expected’ representative role based on their descriptive characteristics. They may deny that they have any ‘obligation’ or qualification to represent a group based on shared characteristics, in an attempt not to be ‘typecast’ or to claim a more diverse and wide-ranging representative role.

Importantly, MPs may use more than one of the above devices both within or between the different media analysed in the study. While these three categories are a useful in

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<sup>11</sup> The explicit/implicit terminology was adapted from Saward’s “Key Lines of Variation of Representative Claims” in Saward “The Representative Claim”, p.308.

attempting to classify the ways that MPs are performing identity, as highlighted previously in the hypotheses, identity performance can be affected by method of selection of the MP, institutional norms and culture, and audience. By examining the way that performances of identity change by context, it is possible to assess to what extent MPs adjust the types of representative claims they make and therefore the degree to which they perform identity through representation. The actors (MPs) ‘perform’ identity on three separate stages: within their maiden speeches, within their web biographies, and within a one-on-one interview. In each of these cases the audience and the objectives of the actor change, which, following Goffman, implies that there may well be a variation in the performance of identity (and hence the claims to representation). These issues are more fully accounted for throughout the following empirical chapters.

### **3.3.1 Contexts of performance**

The thesis uses three different contexts to examine the ways that MPs perform identity through their representative roles. The three mediums – web biographies, maiden speeches and interviews – move from highly formal and ritualised settings to a more informal context, although one which is still conditioned by institutional culture. These contexts were chosen because they allow for a comparison of different but similar ‘front-stage’ arenas within which MPs may make representative claims; they are all conditioned to differing degrees by institutional rules and norms but they are all examples of representation – both in the conventional sense (within their formal roles as MPs) and the way they are representing themselves to audiences. Web biographies and maiden speeches are heavily ritualised and formal; they are governed both by political convention and tradition. These highly constrained environments were evaluated to see if identity is performed in unexpected arenas. In contrast, interviews allow MPs space to speak more freely because the audience has changed, the setting has changed and they are a more informal, less ritualised dialogue between two individuals. Childs suggests that women MPs may need what she terms a ‘safe space’ in order to discuss women’s issues and that without this reassurance, women may be reluctant to foreground them in their discussions of representation. I argue that compared with the public stages for performance, interviews create more of a ‘safe space’ in which MPs can perform



particularly minority identities.<sup>12</sup> This will be expanded in more detail in the following section of this chapter, which discusses the processes of interviewing political elites.

The layout of the empirical chapters of this thesis emphasise this move from highly formal and institutional contexts to the more personal context of an interview. Chapter 4 focuses on the public stages for identity performance: web biographies and maiden speeches. Beginning with the formal and constrained settings allows us to examine the performances of identity which emerge even within these heavily institutionalised formats, and the subsequent move to considerations of interview data in Chapters 5 and 6 compare how performances of identity are carried out on a more informal, semi-private stage.

### **Public Performances**

Within the context of this research, public ‘stages’ are those arenas from which the public can freely and easily access statements by MPs, such as political speeches, websites, television appearances and media interviews. I focus on two aspects of public performance for MPs: web biographies and maiden speeches, both of which provide an insight into how political actors shape their representational roles and how they publically ‘perform’ their identity

### ***Web Biographies***

Biographies are a chance for individuals to write their own life stories for a public audience. Web biographies likewise provide an opportunity for MPs to describe themselves to the public, within the confines of an institutional template. Biographies are either provided on the MPs personal web page or on the web page of their political party. They are designed to provide general information about the MP and their background or values and can differ in length, degree of detailed information and focus. Their intended audience is wide-ranging – anyone from the media to potential voters to researchers.

Studies of the relationship between internet technology and the role of MPs are becoming more common as representatives increasingly turn to web presence and social media to expand their profiles and open up new channels of communication with their

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<sup>12</sup> Childs “In their own words” p.178.

constituents.<sup>13</sup> There has been debate over whether the Internet increases political engagement among voters, or, as Ward and Lusoli suggest, it merely provides another forum for the “already politically active, interested and engaged.”<sup>14</sup> Jackson and Lillekar note that MPs can use Web 2.0 (blogs and social media sites) to create a space where they seem more approachable, relatable and ‘down to earth’ by sharing music, activities and some personal information with the online community, thus creating a model of representing the self which “which focuses on the MP as a human being, not as a dehumanised cog within the body politic.”<sup>15</sup>

In his 2007 study of MPs websites and their relationship to models of political representation, Norton found that most MPs in the UK used the Internet to “promote their own cause and that of their parties.”<sup>16</sup> He argues that MPs usually follow the ‘party model’ which stresses the dominance of the party and the use of the Internet primarily to reinforce party positions – as an electronic means of conveying traditional information such as party positions, speeches and constituency activity. Norton argues that in this case, “the role of citizens is essentially passive, being the recipients of material made available via the Internet. Communication is primarily, though not exclusively, mono-directional.”<sup>17</sup> However while communication via individual or party websites may be one-directional (the representative to the public), the role of citizens is not passive, because they play a part in receiving the representative claims made by MPs on these websites and subsequently responding to them. This is an explicitly visible and relatively fixed mode of identity performance with a large and potentially diverse audience. Therefore, it matters what claims are put forward by MPs as well as how they are received by the intended audience. While the ‘representations of self’ present in MPs biographies are constrained by the role of political parties, it is still possible to analyse the various ways MPs present aspects of their identities publically and which aspects are emphasised or ignored.

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<sup>13</sup> See for example, S. Ward and W. Lusoli (2005) “‘From Weird to Wired’: MPs, the Internet and Representative Politics in the UK” *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 11 (1), pp. 57–81 and N. Jackson (2003) “MPs and Web Technologies: An Untapped Opportunity” *Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 3 (2), pp. 124–37.

<sup>14</sup> Ward and Lusoli, “‘From Weird to Wired’,” p.78.

<sup>15</sup> N. Jackson and D. Lillekar (2009) “MPs and E-representation: Me, MySpace and I” *British Politics*, Vol. 4 (2), pp. 236–264 (257).

<sup>16</sup> Norton, “Four Models of Political Representation,” p.366.

<sup>17</sup> Norton, “Four Models of Political Representation,” pp.356-357.

## *Maiden Speeches*

Maiden speeches are an example of formal parliamentary procedure but, like web biographies, the degree to which these constrain or limit the performance of identity depends on the method of selection of the MP and the political norms and traditions of the country. As with web bios, the audience for maiden speeches is by and large consistent; the primary audience for maiden speeches are other MPs, with the general public as the secondary audience. Like web biographies, maiden speeches are an example of a highly formal and ritualised political context which is still conditioned by institutional culture and norms. This provides a useful context to assess whether MPs choose or are allowed space to publically perform identity by the shaping of representative claims in these forums.

New MPs in the UK follow a fairly standard, although informal, protocol for their maiden speeches. Although there is no set protocol for maiden speeches in Parliament, Richards provides a useful guideline for new MPs: 1) the speech 'should not be too long - a quarter of an hour is more than enough', 2) 'should be not over-controversial', 3) frequently will 'contain references to the Member's constituency', and 4) should not be rushed into hastily.<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting however, that when Richards revised his book in 1972, he omitted the time requirement and stated that the 'convention that a maiden speech should not be controversial has now faded'.<sup>19</sup> Informal customs during the maiden speech are to refer to the beauty of the constituency and to acknowledge one's predecessor, and these are traditionally carried out during the course of the speech. Rasmussen describes the ritual of the maiden speech as "**both** a device reinforcing the power and status of the Commons elders, by instilling a sense of anxiety and inadequacy in the new MP, **and** a tradition serving an institutional maintenance function."<sup>20</sup> The focus of the speeches is usually centred around the constituency and its needs, although occasionally some focus on issues or party positions.<sup>21</sup> In New Zealand, tradition for maiden speeches tends to allow for more overt representations of personal identity; for Horn, Leniston and Lewis, the speeches "represent a source of data offering

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<sup>18</sup> P. Richards (1964). *Honourable Members: A Study of the British Backbencher*, 2nd ed. London: Faber and Faber, in J. Rasmussen (1988) "Will I like it the first time? The maiden speech in the British House of Commons" *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 16, pp. 527-544.

<sup>19</sup> Richards in Rasmussen (1988), "Will I like it the first time?" p. 531.

<sup>20</sup> Rasmussen, "Will I like it the first time?" p.531.

<sup>21</sup> Rasmussen labels speech types as constituency oriented, issue, partisan, pontificators and anecdotal. "Will I like it the first time? pp.538-539.

information about MPs' aspirations, goals, motivations, issue concerns and philosophical orientations at the outset of their parliamentary careers."<sup>22</sup>

## **Interviews**

In contrast to web biographies and maiden speeches, interviews theoretically provide a more open space for MPs to make representative claims. I undertook semi-structured interviews with twenty nine MPs from the United Kingdom and New Zealand in order provide new empirical data about the ways MPs performed identity. The aim of these interviews was not to analyse the accuracy or authenticity of MPs representative claims, nor was it to assess when they were providing 'truthful' representations of themselves and their identities. Instead, the aim of undertaking interviews was to add a new context to the performance of identity through representation. By changing the context or stage of performance to one that was less formal, less ritualised and less public, I was able to compare and contrast the types of representative claims made or rejected by MPs across different mediums. The formal role of the MP was still the same, as all interview subjects were aware they were being asked within their capacity as MPs to discuss the relationship between identity and political representation. However the stage was different and the audience was different. By comparing performances of identity under these conditions with those undertaken in highly formal, institutional settings, it is possible to compare the effect that context (stage, audience, actors) has on the scripts presented and the performances given.

The interview questions, which are outlined in the following section, acted as probes to explore the degree to which MPs would perform identity through the making or rejection of representative claims. While observing the degree to which MPs thought reflexively about issues of identity was fascinating, it was not the primary focus of this research insofar as the emphasis was not on 'truth' of representative claims, but more on the ways that representation of identity claim-making was carried out.

This thesis uses elite interviews to explore the attitudes, perceptions and beliefs of political representatives and institutions. Although elite interviews are common among

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<sup>22</sup> P. Horn, M. Leniston and P. Lewis (1983) "The Maiden Speeches of New Zealand Women Members of Parliament" *Political Science*, Vol. 35, pp.229-266. Also see this article for a discussion of how female MPs in New Zealand understand the purpose of maiden speeches.

political researchers, there is also a lack of distinct methodology around using their use as a tool for political scientists, particularly with regard to data analysis.<sup>23</sup> Interviews provide the political scientist with data that moves beyond a quantitative analysis of what people do, or how they think, to a more individualistic narrative about how they feel, how they shape their world – the perceptions, concepts and values that they construct or utilise in life. It helps, as Richards argues, to “try to assist the political scientist in understanding the theoretical position of the interviewee; his/her perceptions, beliefs and ideologies.”<sup>24</sup> They also allow social scientists the chance to discuss detailed political and social constructs, especially those involving the beliefs of political actors.<sup>25</sup> Interviews are like a conversation, albeit one with certain structures and constraints, in that their purpose is both to gain knowledge but to also construct a dialogue which allows knowledge to be assembled and developed as the conversation continues. This allows the social science researcher the chance to gain a wider understanding of what concepts and behaviours mean to an actor and the ways in which these are utilised in everyday life. Interviews also allow the subjects to frame their own narratives, and to reflect on their sense of self.<sup>26</sup> The point of in-depth interviews then is to investigate beyond a question/answer framework to explore how and why participants construct their world, their behaviour or their attitudes. The balance of knowledge is tilted in favour of the participant; and the researcher must find a way to tap into this knowledge and draw it out.

Interviews use the individual’s stories, or their own words, to draw out understandings of group representation – a technique that is most commonly used in feminist research where Childs, Coffé, Puwar, and Rai have all focused on personal understandings of identity of female MPs through the use of interviews.<sup>27</sup> However, it is equally important

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<sup>23</sup> One of the most notable American examples being Fenno’s *Home Styles* where he follows and interviews members of the American Congress. Excellent examples of UK parliamentary interviews include Norris and Lovenduski, *Political Recruitment*; Childs, “In their own words”; and Nixon, “The role of black and Asian MPs at Westminster”.

<sup>24</sup> D. Richards (1996) “Elite Interviewing: Approaches and Pitfalls” *Politics*, Vol.16 (3) pp. 199-204.

<sup>25</sup> Beamer, “Elite Interviews and State Politics Research”.

<sup>26</sup> For discussions of ‘The Self’ through narrative, see D. Schiffrin (1996) “Narrative as Self-Portrait: Sociolinguistic Constructions of Identity” *Language in Society*, Vol. 25 (2), pp.167–203; A. P. Kerby (1991) *Narrative and the Self*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press; K. J. Gergen, and M. M. Gergen (1988) “Narrative and the Self as Relationship” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, L.Berkowitz (ed.), Vol. 21, San Diego: Academic Press, and M.R. Somers (1994) “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach.” *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23 (5), pp. 605–49.

<sup>27</sup> Childs “In their own words”; H. Coffé (2012) “Conceptions of female political representation: Perspectives of Rwandan female representatives” *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 35, pp.

to note that interviews do not necessarily provide any more ‘truthful’ representations or performances of identity than those seen in public spheres. Interviews are not strictly ‘private’ spheres and politicians must be always conscious of the way they portray themselves, especially when they are not anonymous. Individuals may manipulate language or use it in a strategic sense, as will be highlighted in the following section on elite interviewing, so a researcher should not assume that what is being told in the context of an interview is necessarily ‘true’. This thesis argues that identity is socially constructed and focuses on the ways that identity is performed at different times, with different agendas. Therefore, the differences between interviews and public ‘representations of the self’ matter because they provide different contexts within which MPs have to perform identity, as well as different audiences, and presumably with different goals and objectives.

### ***Interviewing Elites***

Elite interviewing involves studying the attitudes, values or behaviour of those who Lillekar defines as “those with close proximity to power or policymaking; the category would include all elected representatives, executive officers of organisations and senior state employees.”<sup>28</sup> Odendahl and Shaw note that:

Elites are difficult to identify and often are inaccessible, much less open to being the subjects of scrutiny. They ably protect themselves from outsiders. Barriers to reaching elites are real and include the difficulty of identifying who they are; getting past gatekeepers such as personal assistants, advisers, lawyers, and security guards; and accessing exclusive physical spaces including boardrooms, clubs, and domiciles surrounded by walls.<sup>29</sup>

Although elite interviews are common among political scientists, there is a distinct lack of methodological literature on elite interviewing. Ostrander argues that “social scientists too rarely ‘study up’”<sup>30</sup> and Smith suggests that this gap in the literature is important because “guidance based on researching ‘non-elite’ groups may be

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286–297; N. Puwar (1997) “Reflections on Interviewing Women MPs” *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 2, (1), accessed at <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/1/4.html>; and S.M. Rai (2011) “The Politics of Access: Narratives of Women MPs in the Indian Parliament” *Political Studies*, Vol. 60 (1) pp.195-212.

<sup>28</sup> D. Lilleker (2003) “Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield” *Politics*, Vol.23 (3) pp. 207–214.

<sup>29</sup> T. Odendahl & A. M. Shaw (2001) “Interviewing Elites” in *Handbook of Interview Research*, J.F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (eds.), London: Sage Publications, p.299.

<sup>30</sup> S. A. Ostrander (1993) “Surely You’re Not In This Just To Be Helpful: Access, Rapport and Interviews in Three Studies of Elites” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 22 (1) pp. 7-27.

inappropriate for researching ‘elites’.”<sup>31</sup> Other problems concerning elite interview involve gaining access, time and power dynamics.<sup>32</sup> Odendahl and Shaw argue that “[e]lites generally have more knowledge, money, and status and assume a higher position than others in the population.”<sup>33</sup> These people are usually in powerful positions, and often have little incentive to talk to researchers, which means gaining access for interviews can be problematic. Politicians in particular, are used to giving media “sound-bites” on issues and this may lead to difficulties in drawing out more subtle nuances, especially when trying to carry out an in-depth interview about something personal like identity. They are also experts in their field, which puts the interviewer at a potential disadvantage and stresses the need to be highly prepared and knowledgeable about the topic under discussion. It also demonstrates the importance of power relationships in the interviewing process; a significant concern when ‘interviewing up’. As previously discussed, elites usually hold a degree of specialised knowledge about a subject – in this case, political representation. As a researcher who seeks access to this knowledge, there is an obvious imbalance of power between the interviewer and interviewee and there has been much feminist scholarship on the relationship between gender of the interviewer and the interviewee and how power dynamics are affected by this.<sup>34</sup> Richards also notes that

The problem can arise of interviewers being too deferential in their interviews. This can work on a sliding scale – the more famous (notorious) the individual, the more deferential the interviewer can become. Also, there exists an issue of power relations: an interviewee, concerned with presenting his/her viewpoint may want to control and dominate the interview.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of interviews particularly, I was asking MPs to reflect on their own interpretation of what identity meant to them and how they understood it in relation to

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<sup>31</sup> K. Smith (2006) “Problematising power relations in ‘elite’ interviews” *Geoforum*, Vol. 37, pp. 643–653.

<sup>32</sup> For further discussion of these difficulties see: A. Gauja (2012) ‘Party Dimensions of Representation in Westminster Parliaments: Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom’ in *Parliamentary Roles in Modern Legislatures*, M. Blogren and O. Rozenberg (eds.), Oxon: Routledge, pp.121-144. Gauja argues that the response rate amongst parliamentarians to political science research is “notoriously low.” p.124.

<sup>33</sup> Odendahl & Shaw, “Interviewing Elites,” p.299.

<sup>34</sup> See Kezar, “Transformational Elite Interviews,”; S.Reinharz & S. E. Chase (2001) “Interviewing Women” in *Handbook of Interview Research*, J.F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (eds.), London: Sage Publications; A. Oakley (1981) “Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms” in *Doing feminist research*, H. Roberts (ed.), Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 30-61; and R. Edwards (1990) “Connecting method and epistemology: A white woman interviewing black women” *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.13 (5), pp. 477–490.

<sup>35</sup> Richards, “Elite Interviewing,” p.201.

their own roles, but I (as the audience) was also the recipient of the types of representative claims they made. Unlike the wider public audiences for web biographies and maiden speeches however, my role was not to accept or deny the strength of these representative claims; my goal was to observe what MPs said to me and by using general, wide-ranging questions, to observe the way that they performed identity within this process and how this differed to their previous performances of identity.

There was also a need to think about my own position as a researcher: I came to this investigation of identity labels because of the personal experiences I have had in my own life with multiple identities and the perceptions that go with those. My own interests around gender, sexuality and race could therefore prejudice the weight I gave to MPs answers on these topics. Likewise, the grounds on which I had initially selected MPs to interview were also based on identity markers that I found interesting. There was a need to balance the minority MPs with MPs who were white, middle class, male, or a combination thereof. In order for my study to be ‘representative’ of political representatives, all aspects of identity needed to be covered, not just those from marginalised or minority groups. Thinking reflexively enabled me to make adjustments to my research design when needed, to be aware of power dynamics during the interviewing process and to ponder my own role as a researcher and what I hoped to gain from the interview.<sup>36</sup>

### **3.4 Sources**

#### **3.4.1 Public Performances: Biographies and Maiden Speeches**

The focus on public representations of the self in Chapter 4 allowed me to analyse material gathered from web biographies and maiden speeches and compare data gathered from different media, with different agendas and to different audiences. It also provided access to data on representatives who were not available for interviews. For example, although I could not meet with MPs such as Diane Abbott, Harriet Harman or Chuka Umunna, I was able to analyse information about their perceptions of identity and their representative roles from quotes in the public domain. This also provided a further way of mapping how MPs construct and perform identity. Chapter 5 analyses 60

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<sup>36</sup> Also see Puwar, “Reflections on Interviewing Women MPs”.; R. Malley (2012) “Feeling at Home: Inclusion at Westminster and the Scottish Parliament” *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 83 (4), pp. 714-717; K. Borland (1991) “That’s not what I said: Interpretive conflict in oral narrative research” in *Women’s words: The feminist practice of oral history*, D. Patai & S. B. Gluck (eds.), New York: Routledge, pp. 63-75.



maiden speeches and 60 personal biographies of MPs in order to see how identity is conceived and publically employed by political representatives. The breakdown of these subjects will be further explained in the following chapter.

For this part of this study, I initially drew on the work of Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou in their investigation of presence and behaviour of black and ethnic minority MPs in Britain. They used studies of MP's webpages to search for mentions of ethnicity or advocacy of minority group issues to examine how MPs portray themselves descriptively but also how they act substantively as group representatives in the British parliament.<sup>37</sup> Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou find that when comparing web sites, behaviour in division lobbies and parliamentary questions, the behaviour of BAME MPs will vary by context. They argue that there is a need for further investigation into variations of institutional context which affect how BAME MPs behave within their parliamentary roles.<sup>38</sup> This thesis aims to continue this investigation but with a wider focus on performed identity. I therefore looked for explicit mentions of identity categorisation or claim-making, as well as implicit references to personal or group identification. Following on from Child's and Cowley's 2011 research, I also looked for mention of localness as a facet of identification, as well as anything that would reflect how MPs categorise or understand representation or their own representative roles.

### **3.4.2 Interviews**

Interviews were semi-structured, with twenty-nine MPs from the UK and New Zealand. These MPs were a range of genders, ethnicities, sexualities, ages, and were made up of both list and electorate MPs in New Zealand. Fiona Devine recommends that for qualitative analysis, "a small sample of 30-40 interviewees is the norm."<sup>39</sup> This allows for a wide sample for analysis but still remains manageable for the solo researcher. My interview sample fell slightly short of Devine's recommended number of subjects for two reasons: access and the amount of data, which will be further explained below.

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<sup>37</sup> Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou, "Presence and Behaviour: Black and Ethnic MPs in the British House of Commons" p.236.

<sup>38</sup> Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou "Presence and Behaviour: Black and Ethnic MPs in the British House of Commons" p.246.

<sup>39</sup> F. Devine (1995) "Qualitative Analysis" in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds.), London: Macmillan Press, p.142.

## *Access to MPs*

Kenneth Goldstein describes getting the interview as “more art than science” and refers to the difficulties faced by political scientists in ‘cold-calling’ political elites.<sup>40</sup> Because my thesis involved a discussion of identity with a particular interest in gender and ethnicity as variables, I began by targeting ethnic minority MPs, because numbers of ethnic minority groups in parliaments are low across both case studies. Potential interviewees in the UK were approached by email, but response to the initial email was very poor even when followed up with further emails. Due to an initial lack of response in the UK and because of the need to have variation in the data, emails were sent to a wider selection of New Zealand MPs, regardless of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. This would hopefully allow a wider response rate and provide interesting comparisons of what identity meant to both dominant and minority parliamentarians. Response rates were better, with 11 MPs agreeing to an interview. On returning to the UK, interviews were conducted with MPs at Westminster and further interviews in NZ and the UK were conducted in 2012 and early 2013. In addition to emailing MPs directly, I used a snowballing technique of asking interviewees if they could suggest anyone else I could speak too. Beamer (2002) notes that “[q]uestions like, "Who else should I talk to about this?" or "Who was the main policy expert for the opposition?" can elicit such names... Snow-ball sampling allows a researcher to garner a rich fund of information, often while conserving resources.”<sup>41</sup> I found this was not a particularly useful research strategy for MPs, as many gave vague or non-specific suggestions and it proved more effective to randomly select and cold-call potential interviewees. Although the final number of interview subjects was smaller than anticipated, Richards notes that:

Sometimes, it is simply not possible to obtain a representative sample, because certain individuals or categories of individuals (possibly those with something to lose from being interviewed), refuse a request for an interview. Where this is the case, the political scientist must acknowledge this fact.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> K. Goldstein (2002) “Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 35 (4), pp. 669-672.

<sup>41</sup> Beamer, “Elite Interviews and State Politics Research,” p.91.

<sup>42</sup> Richards, “Elite Interviewing,” p.200.

## ***Data Collection***

### ***Interview Design***

My interviews were designed to be semi-structured, meaning questions were open-ended and could be altered to fit the flow of the interview. The interview questions were purposely constructed to be straightforward and relatively generic. They were designed to act as probes to start discussions which would provide space for MPs to discuss identity or to make or reject representative claims. Discussions of identity can be difficult to draw out in a more stylised question/answer format so my questions were designed to act as starting points for role-focused discussions of the intersection of identity and representation.

**Table 3.2**      ***Sample Standard Interview Questions***

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Who do you see yourself representing in parliament and why?</i></li><li>2. <i>Do you believe political minority groups (women, ethnic minorities, LGBT etc) need members of their own group to represent them in parliament?</i></li><li>3. <i>Do you believe minority groups are currently well represented in your country's parliament?</i></li><li>4. <i>What is your opinion of quota systems to increase minority representation?</i></li></ol> |
|---|

Due to time restraints on the interviews and the scale of the research project, it was not possible to conduct unstructured interviews with MPs which would have required much longer timeframes than most MPs were prepared to provide. The benefits of semi-structured interviews are that they allow for greater discussion around areas of interest, while at the same time providing some sort of structure. Aberbach and Rockman suggest that:

Open-ended questions provide a greater opportunity for respondents to organize their answers but within their own frameworks. This increases the validity of the responses and is best for the kind of exploratory and in-depth work we were doing, but it makes coding and then analysis more difficult.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> J.D Aberach and B.A Rockman (2002) "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews" *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 35 (4) pp. 673-676.

Aberach and Rockman also add a caveat that semi-structured interviews “requires great attention from the interviewer since such an interview has a more conversational quality to it than the typical highly structured interview and questions may, therefore, be more easily broached in a manner that does not follow the exact order of the original interview instrument.”<sup>44</sup> This can lead to potential problems with consistency of data and for transcribing.

Prior to beginning my interviews, I compiled a list of key areas that I wanted to cover, which were then prioritised, as the length of responses and the length of interviews varied between respondents (See Appendix 2). This also meant that the interview remained fairly flexible, so I could develop or elaborate on any new areas of inquiry that emerged during the course of the discussion. The discussions usually covered personal identity, representation based on descriptive characteristics, and measures to increase descriptive representation, with some specific questions per case study which reflected their political environments, such as the MMP system in New Zealand. The interviews were on average 30-45 minutes long.

### *Transcribing Interviews*

Once conducted, all interviews were recorded digitally and stored safely in files to which only I had access. Recording an interview helps check for accuracy when transcribing and analysing, and as MPs are used to being recorded, there was no hesitancy on their part to grant permission for this to happen. Once they were stored securely, the process could begin of transcribing, coding and analysing the interview data. I transcribed all interviews into written text, focusing on content rather than on linguistic form. This demonstrates the focus of the thesis on exploring *content* of speech, rather than speech patterns. Kvale describes transcripts as “decontextualised conversations”<sup>45</sup> because of a lack of spatial, temporal and social dimensions which are apparent in a face-to-face interview. While this is true, my interviews all took place in similar spatial settings (offices) and within fixed social dimensions and did not involve participant observation, therefore this was not a major concern when transcribing.

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<sup>44</sup> Aberach and Rockman, “Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews,” p.674.

<sup>45</sup> S. Kvale (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, p.167.

An interview of 30 minutes took roughly two hours to transcribe and resulted in approximately 2300 - 2800 words of data. This obviously provided me with excess material for in-depth analysis and so, as Fenno suggested, I opted “to sacrifice analytical range for analytical depth.”<sup>46</sup> This did mean that I did not have a sample in the quantitative sense, but a collective that allowed for exploratory work into the way MPs perceive and map their roles and identities.

### *Coding Data*

Coding interview data is perhaps one of the most challenging parts of this type of research as it affects the way the data is analysed and the conclusions that emerge from it. Kvale argues that “the demand for a method may involve an emphasis on techniques and reliability, and a de-emphasis on knowledge and validity.”<sup>47</sup> As we have already seen, it can be difficult to quantify or to draw conclusive results and there is a potential problem with lack of verification on issues that are so deeply personal/self-constructed - discussing concepts such as identity makes it difficult to triangulate information given by the participants. But what this study does provide is an analysis beyond the theory of descriptive representation into how MPs conceptualise their roles as representatives and how identity plays an important part in the formation of that role. It is possible therefore to draw generalisations about MPs behaviour and attitudes from the data, or as Fenno argues, “[w]hen you hear the same thing repeated on more than one occasion – especially on occasions widely separated in time – you can have more confidence that it is a useable generalization.”<sup>48</sup>

Coding of the interview data was initially done manually using descriptive codes which were constructed from key thematic ideas. Markers of subjects that I was particularly interested in included any mention (or lack of) personal or group identity, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, group representation, barriers based on descriptive/ascriptive characteristics or mechanisms used to increase representation of political minority groups. Data coded under these themes was then separated into five key areas which are outlined below in Table 3.3.

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<sup>46</sup> Fenno, *Home Styles*, p.255.

<sup>47</sup> Kvale, *Interviews*, p.180.

<sup>48</sup> Fenno, *Home Styles*, p.287

**Table 3.3      Data Themes**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. MPs background (factual)</li><li>2. Personal identity (descriptive)</li><li>3. Group identification and descriptive representation</li><li>4. Intersectionality/multiple representation roles</li><li>5. Impact/role of political parties and political mechanisms</li></ol> |
|---|

Interviews were compared on a case-by-case basis and then compared across countries. In this way, it was possible to distinguish patterns and commonalities among the responses from the interview transcripts.

### **3.4.3 Ethics**

Some of the most important considerations when undertaking interviews are those concerning ethics and the issues around informed consent. According to Diener and Crandall there are four main areas in which ethical principles should be upheld, which are harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception.<sup>49</sup>

These issues can be avoided by gaining ethics approval and providing clear information to the interview participants. I obtained ethics approval for the University of Exeter prior to conducting my interviews, the certificate for which I attached to my interview request emails. When attending the interviews, I provided additional material, in the form of an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendix 3). The information sheet explains the nature of the project, goals, funding and contact information, while the consent form outlines the specific uses which may be made of the data, along with participants' rights and acts as a means of obtaining written permission for attributing information or opinions from the MPs to them by name. Interview participants all took part voluntarily and had the opportunity to refuse or withdraw at any time. For the purposes of saving time and resources, participants received copies of their recordings on CD only if they requested it, as outlined on the information sheet. Given the volume of interviews which were carried out, transcripts were not provided unless requested. Recordings and indexes were kept securely during the course of the project and the only

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<sup>49</sup> E. Diener and Crandall, R. (1978) *Ethics in Social and Behavioural Research*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

people to have access to the recordings were myself and my supervisors. At the conclusion of the project, all recordings will be electronically wiped and destroyed, unless the interviewee has requested otherwise.

When Diener and Crandall refer to ‘harm’ to participants, it refers not only to potential physical harm, but also harm that might occur through loss of confidentiality. In the case of my interviews, the subjects are not anonymous. The question of offering anonymity is complex considering the nature of the interviews which were undertaken. Because the interviews relate to the identities and identity markers of MPs and because of the nature of the job that they do, I did not propose to make my subjects anonymous unless requested. It was integral to the study to be able to identify individual MPs because the data collected is about their identity and the role they feel this plays in their work as representatives and this required not only context around the quotes but contributed to the data analysis. In addition, because some are minorities in a public office, anonymity would not guarantee that they could not be easily identified by virtue of their comments. If any MP was uncomfortable with the lack of anonymity, they could withdraw from the study at any time without question, or I was willing to send a transcript for approval if desired. In most cases, MPs were willing to speak without anonymity and without checking the transcript. Overall, there was a limited potential for causing any legal, political, economic or psychological harm in this project.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has explained and justified my research design. Drawing on the work of Goffman and Saward, this thesis uses concepts of performance and representative claim-making as frameworks for the intersection of identity and political representation. Despite scholars of descriptive and symbolic representation acknowledging the importance of identity in studies of representation, there has been little focus on the ways that identity is performed by MPs. This thesis seeks to address this by more clearly modelling the ways in which identity is mobilised and performed to make (or refute) representative claims within and across different contexts.

In addition, there is a need for a closer consideration of institutional and legislative factors which affect and condition the way that identity intersects with representative roles. In order to investigate the broad research question “*How is identity performed through political representation in the United Kingdom and New Zealand?*” a specific

methodology needed to be developed. The methodology developed here has been designed to give empirical grounding to this central research question by investigating three ‘stages’ on which MPs can perform identity: web biographies, maiden speeches and interviews (and by comparing between two parliamentary systems).

By comparing and contrasting performance of identity by MPs within these three mediums, it is possible to see the extent to which political actors make representative claims based on identity. I further suggest that the extent to which identity performance is carried out by MPs varies by method of election of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture, and the audience for the performance. The variation in performance site or stage allows space for these differences and is further elaborated in empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis. Conceiving of both representation and identity as types of performance allows for a move beyond rigid categories or typologies and provides room to consider both as constructed, fluid processes which have lasting impacts on the dynamics of political life. In this way, the thesis offers a new perspective to considerations of political representation and the complexities of both people and politics.



## Chapter 4

### Claim-making and Public Performances of Identity

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines public performances of identity and the making of representative claims by MPs. It asks: *How do MPs publically represent the self and how does this change by context?* This chapter uses data gathered from MPs maiden speeches to parliament in Britain and New Zealand as well as data from MPs online biographies to examine the ways that representatives publically ‘perform’ their identity; the types of representative claims made; and finally the impact of institutional factors on the making of representative claims.

Web biographies and maiden speeches are public, highly ritualised contexts for performances of identity. These are venues in which MPs can ‘perform’ or ‘represent’ themselves, knowing that each time they publically make a statement, they are contributing to a public bank of knowledge about who they are, what they stand for and the kind of representative claims they are making. Therefore, the way MPs refer to identity publically relates directly to their representative role: both in the way they are viewed by others as a representative but also in how they shape and articulate their own representative claims; the role of both the actor and the audience. These also intersect with institutional norms and rules that constrain and shape the ways MPs ‘represent the self’. The format of web biographies, for example, is largely dictated by party regulations as will be discussed further in this chapter. These rules differ between parties and between countries, but it is important to note that MPs do not operate within a vacuum; as has been previously emphasised, institutions play a considerable role in the way identity is politically represented.

This chapter uses the categories of explicit, implicit and refuting claim-making outlined in the previous chapter to explore performances of identity within highly rigid and confined institutional settings. In this way, the chapter draws together theories of claim-making and performance while also considering the institutional factors that affect the ways that these claims are made and portrayed. The MPs ‘perform’ identity within their maiden speeches and within their web biographies and as they do so, the audience and

the objectives of the actor change. This chapter expands on Goffman's theory which suggests that there may be variations in the performance of identity or the types of representative claims made depending on the context. By beginning the empirical analysis with heavily ritualised and formal 'stages' for performance which are governed both by political convention and tradition, it is possible to better understand the types of identity-based representative claims which are constructed and performed under these conditions.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

As previously outlined in the methods chapter, I had an interview cohort of twenty nine representatives, sixteen from New Zealand and thirteen from the British parliament. These interviews comprise the data which is used in the following two empirical chapters. However, in order to explore how Members of Parliament publically perform and make claims about identity in their web biographies and maiden speeches, I needed further subjects for analysis. In addition to the representatives who were interviewed, this chapter collected data from an additional seventeen MPs from the UK and fourteen from New Zealand, making a total 60 web biographies and 60 maiden speeches. The breakdown of total subjects by party is described in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Breakdown of MPs by Party**

	<b>New Zealand MPs</b>	<b>United Kingdom MPs</b>
New Zealand National Party	10	
New Zealand Labour Party	12	
Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand	4	
Māori Party	1	
New Zealand First	1	
ACT Party	1	
United Future	1	
Conservative Party		10
Labour Party		16
Liberal Democrats		1
Alliance Party		1
Social Democratic Labour Party		1
Plaid Cymru		1

Extra participants were selected to provide a range of people from different parties; however consideration was also given to boosting the number of women, ethnic minorities and other traditionally marginalised groups included in the sample. This had a notable effect on the number of MPs represented from within the Labour Party in the UK particularly, as they have larger numbers of MPs who fitted these criteria. Numbers of women and self-reported ethnic minority MPs are listed below in Table 4.2. It was also important to consider (in the case of New Zealand) which MPs were electorate or constituency MPs and which were list MPs as this could potentially impact on the types of representative claims made. These are demonstrated in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.2**      *Gender and Ethnic Minorities*

	<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
<i>Men</i>	18	14
<i>Women</i>	16	16
<b>Ethnic Minority Group</b>		
<i>White</i>	16	19
<i>BAEM</i>	8	11
<i>Māori</i>	6	0

**Table 4.3**      *Constituency and List MPs*

<b>Constituency MPs (UK)</b>	<b>Constituency MPs (NZ)</b>	<b>List MPs (NZ)</b>
30	13	17

The total number of biographies and maiden speeches analysed was 120.

### **4.3**    *Personal Biographies*

Personal biographies of MPs are used to provide a quick snapshot of the representative; an often generic statement about who they are and sometimes what they do, or what they believe. Web biographies are heavily influenced by institutional norms and regulations; they are governed both by political convention and tradition. They therefore provide an example of a highly constrained stage upon which identity might be performed by MPs. However representatives still have some leeway as to what information they consider important to provide to the public and what kind of representative claims they want to make through their biographies. Therefore, what is

also of interest here is not only what aspects of their identity MPs choose to publically emphasise, but also which ones are left out.

This chapter analyses the web-page biographies of MPs by looking for explicit mentions of identity categorisation or claim-making, as well as implicit references to personal or group identification. Mentions of localness were also investigated, as well as anything that would reflect how MPs categorise or understand representation or representative roles. I find that MPs are eager to emphasise their links to the constituency (localness) or the region. Factors in their upbringing can affect their representative roles and the values they bring to parliament, especially geographical/cultural factors, and these personal values affect the way they see themselves as MPs and their role as representatives. Many MPs made references to group identities or identification, through discussion of ethnicity, sexuality, or language, with discussions of class as an interesting and unexpected dimension. Linkages were made to not only descriptive group representation, but also substantive representation through demonstrations of action which supported or represented the needs of a group or community of interest.

### ***Localness***

Childs and Cowley found that there has increasingly been a demand from within geographical constituencies that their representative is someone from the local area, and this preference for a local candidate outweighs being represented by someone of the same race or gender.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, this chapter argues that localness will be the most common representative claim publically performed by MPs because it appeals to a wide audience, has a script that is easy to perform and understand, and because of traditional representative-constituency links or expectations of the role by the audience.

The biographies of MPs tended to support this hypothesis, with biographies frequently emphasising local links. In some cases this was done explicitly by referencing growing up in the constituency, for example, such as Chi Onwurah who stated that “[m]y values and beliefs were formed in Newcastle based on the people I grew up with and my own experiences.”<sup>2</sup> Others, such as Alun Michael MP for Cardiff South and Penarth used their biographies to not only demonstrate their many career achievements, but also to

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<sup>1</sup> Childs and Cowley, “The Politics of Local Presence”.

<sup>2</sup> Website of Chi Onwurah, MP (2012) <http://chionwurahmp.com/about-me/> accessed August 2012.

stress localness – in Michael’s case, born and educated in Wales with a career which situated him in the heart of Cardiff in respected positions in the community.<sup>3</sup> The attempt to link oneself to the electorate can be done through the use of emotive language of “home”. Examples of this were seen particularly in New Zealand from list MP Jacinda Arden: “[a]nd why do I want to strive for all of this on behalf of Auckland Central? That’s easy – because it’s my home;”<sup>4</sup> Sam Lotu-liga: “[m]y family and I live in Onehunga, a place we’re proud to call home”<sup>5</sup> and Jonathan Coleman “[t]he Northcote electorate is my home, and a great place to live, work and relax.”<sup>6</sup>

In a similar way, MPs talk about the ‘privilege’ of representing their local community. National Party electorate MP Jonathan Coleman uses his bio to claim that “I regard it as a real privilege to be the MP for Northcote and to represent my local community in our parliament”<sup>7</sup> and his Labour counterpart, electorate MP Su’a William Sio believes that “[i]t has been a privilege to be your MP for Māngere where I live and raise my family.”<sup>8</sup> These explicit references to ‘home’ were more common in the slightly more narrative style of biography favoured by New Zealand MPs where using emotive language such as ‘home’ is one way which MPs can make representative claims based on localness. This acknowledges a shared connection between the representative and the constituency – this is ‘our’ place and I can represent you because I come from it and I understand you. This need to be seen as a ‘legitimate’ or ‘authentic’ representative will be discussed further in Chapter 5 as a justification for descriptive representation and parliamentary diversity.

Many MPs used their personal experiences of growing up locally as a way to connect with their constituencies. The biography of New Zealand MP Megan Woods acknowledges her close ties to her constituency of Wigram and argues that because she is a local with experience in the community, she has the “knowledge and experience” to be a successful representative.

Growing up and living in the Wigram electorate  
throughout her life has ensured that Megan has the

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<sup>3</sup> Website of Alun Michael, MP (2012) <http://www.alunmichael.com/about-alun.aspx>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Website of Jacinda Arden, MP (2012) <http://jacinda.co.nz/index.php/about/>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Website of Sam Lotu-liga, MP (2012) <http://lotu-liga.com/index.php/?pages/profile.html>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Website of Jonathan Coleman, MP (2013) <http://www.jonathancoleman.co.nz/>, accessed January 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Website of Jonathan Coleman, MP (2013) <http://www.jonathancoleman.co.nz/>, accessed January 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Website of Su’a William Sio, MP (2013) <http://suawilliamsio.co.nz/about/>, accessed January 2013.

knowledge and experience to effectively represent the people of Wigram. As a former mayoral candidate, community board leader and member of Jim Anderton's electorate team for more than a decade, Megan has a good understanding of the challenges faced by those living and working in Wigram, and a strong and successful track record in advancing the interests of local people.<sup>9</sup>

Here, localness is seen as a clear advantage in representative role, as it gives the MP a sense of the needs of the electorate and experience in relating to the constituents. In this case, Woods can represent her constituents because she is from the community; localness provides a sense of legitimacy and authenticity of representation. Similarly, Welsh MP Alun Cairns uses his biography to emphasise his closeness with the electorate by linking his family to the local area. His bio states that "[h]e lives in the constituency with his wife Emma, who runs her own small business, and with their son Henri, who attends the local Welsh primary school."<sup>10</sup> Here the representative claim to localness is not just because Cairns lives in the constituency, but that he is active member of the community: his wife runs a local business and his son attends a local Welsh-speaking school, which also demonstrates connection and commitment to the wider Welsh community. In a country where for many, language is an inherent marker of nationalistic identity, Cairns' biography links himself to a 'Welsh identity'.

One of the most explicit representative claims based on localness was found in the biography of David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, who uses the slogan "From Tottenham, for Tottenham."<sup>11</sup> This connection is one that Lammy has emphasised repeatedly in the media – his claim to represent Tottenham comes not only from his electoral mandate but because of his history which is intertwined with the history of Tottenham.<sup>12</sup> Like the previous quote from Woods, Lammy's biography indicates that he is 'of' the community; he understands its needs because he is an authentic member of the community which creates a bond between the representative and the represented. Lammy's biography even links articles about "David's upbringing in Tottenham &

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<sup>9</sup> Website of Megan Woods, MP (2012) <http://www.meganwoods.org.nz/about-megan/>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Website of Alun Cairns, MP (2012) <http://www.aluncairns.co.uk/alu>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Website of David Lammy, MP (2012) [http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About\\_me](http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About_me), accessed July 2012.

<sup>12</sup> See S. Hattenstone (2011) "David Lammy: 'There is a history in Tottenham that involves deaths in police custody'" *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/aug/14/david-lammy-tottenham-mark-duggan>, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013, and D. Lammy (2012) "David Lammy: My fatherless childhood helps me to understand London's rioters" *The Telegraph*, [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/9449732/David-Lammy-My-fatherless-childhood-helps-me-to-understand-Londons-rioters.html#disqus\\_thread](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/9449732/David-Lammy-My-fatherless-childhood-helps-me-to-understand-Londons-rioters.html#disqus_thread), accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013, for example.

Peterborough” which highlights the importance of this particular representative claim to Lammy.<sup>13</sup> He repeats and reiterates his connection to the constituency by describing his substantive representation for Tottenham (“He has campaigned for the economic regeneration of Tottenham to solve the unemployment crisis that grips the area” and “He has campaigned to stop Tottenham Hotspur from moving into the Olympic Stadium.”) He also notes that the author proceeds of his book on the London Riots of 2011 are being “donated to Tottenham-based charities.”<sup>14</sup> In this way, Lammy makes one of the more explicit representative claims based on localness.

Some MPs are not local to their constituency, but use their biographies to emphasise their ties to the community they represented. Ben Bradshaw, for example, was not born or brought up near his constituency of Exeter, but his bio links him to this area through his later career. “Before entering Parliament, Ben worked as a newspaper and radio journalist, starting his career in 1984 with Exeter's local paper the Express & Echo. After a stint at a local newspaper in Norwich, Ben moved into radio journalism with a posting at BBC Radio Devon.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise Sam Lotu-liga, who was not born in New Zealand, highlights the fact that he grew up and was educated in Auckland where his constituency is located. “I was born in Apia, Samoa, and moved to New Zealand with my family when I was a child. I grew up in South Auckland and went to school at Auckland Grammar.”<sup>16</sup> Although Lotu-liga highlights his ethnic identity, he still makes a connection to being a “New Zealander”; of growing up locally. His ‘local’ identity is the primary focus of his biography and of the representative claim that he makes (I am local, this is my home) while his ethnic identity is secondary. His representative claims based on ethnicity here are implied, rather than explicit. This was common to see amongst BAME MPs, as will be seen in the following section exploring ethnicity and nationality.

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<sup>13</sup> Website of David Lammy, MP (2013) [http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About\\_me](http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About_me), accessed March 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Website of David Lammy, MP (2013) [http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About\\_me](http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About_me), accessed March 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Website of Ben Bradshaw, MP (2012) <http://www.benbradshaw.co.uk/profile.php>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Website of Sam Lotu-liga, MP (2012) <http://lotu-liga.com/index.php?/pages/profile.html>, accessed July 2012.

## ***Group Identity markers***

### *Ethnicity/Nationality*

Ethnicity was a factor of identity which was acknowledged by many of the New Zealand representatives in their web biographies. New Zealand has a long history of migration as well as being a bi-cultural state, which has shaped and moulded ideas about the 'New Zealand identity'. Because of the public awareness and recognition of multiculturalism, it is unsurprising that many MPs choose to public identify or associate themselves with ethnic and racial minority groups. In addition, the party selection of diverse list MPs means that some individuals will see their representative role, and thus, the representative claims they make, based on connection to a specific ethnic group. Examples from New Zealand include Chinese-born Jian Yang ("Jian is looking forward to representing the Chinese community in Parliament") and Korean-born Melissa Lee ("I'm honoured to represent the Korean community which is the third largest Asian population in New Zealand.")<sup>17</sup>

Some MPs highlighted the fact that they were from traditionally under-represented groups in parliament, such as Kris Faafoi, whose parents come from Tokelau ("Born and raised in New Zealand, Kris is the first Tokelauan to be elected to the House of Representatives")<sup>18</sup> and Melissa Lee ("As New Zealand's first Korean born MP, I'm very proud to be part of this National-led Government.")<sup>19</sup> In this way, these MPs emphasise the fact that there are no other MPs from that ethnic group and position themselves as potential spokespeople for the community. Dr Jian Yang, for example, notes on his biography that "As a regular commentator on international and domestic affairs for local Chinese media, Jian is well known and respected amongst the Chinese community in New Zealand."<sup>20</sup> Here Yang is not only shaping a representative claim based on identity, he is also strengthening the legitimacy of this claim by highlighting his authority and authenticity as part of the community. Similar examples are seen in the biographies of Samoan MP Sam Lotu-liga who makes reference to his Samoan chiefly title of Peseta, demonstrating his authority and connection to his Samoan roots and the

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<sup>17</sup> Website of Jian Yang, MP (2012) <http://www.jianyang.co.nz/index.php/?pages/about.html>, accessed June 2012; Website of Melissa Lee, MP (2013) <http://www.melissalee.co.nz/>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Labour Party (NZ) (2013) *Kris Faafoi* <http://www.labour.org.nz/krisfaafoi>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Website of Melissa Lee, MP (2013) <http://www.melissalee.co.nz/>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Website of Jian Yang, MP (2012) <http://www.jianyang.co.nz/index.php/?pages/about.html>, accessed June 2012.



Samoan community in New Zealand and Māori MP Rino Tirikatene (“Historically my family has given significant Parliamentary service to Māori in Te Waipounamu and Labour in the Southern Māori electorate.”)<sup>21</sup> This type of claim making emphasises authenticity and identification (I am one of you) but also legitimacy (I have the credentials to make this representative claim.)

In Britain, mention of ethnicity on web-pages is less frequent. David Lammy and Diane Abbott both discuss racial identification through contextual statements about their histories. Lammy describes how he was the “first Black Briton to study a Masters in Law at the Harvard Law School”<sup>22</sup>, while Abbott notes her achievement in being “the first black woman ever elected to the British Parliament.”<sup>23</sup> As previously seen, Lammy in particular places significance on his relationship to his electorate and this proved to be a similar pattern in other BAME MPs in Westminster. Examples can be seen in the biographies of Alok Sharma (“Alok is very much a local Reading man”<sup>24</sup>), Chi Onwurah (“I have lived in many different cities around the world, without ever for a moment forgetting where I am from: Newcastle”<sup>25</sup>) and Chuka Umunna (“Chuka Umunna was elected as Member of Parliament for Streatham in May 2010, becoming the first MP for the constituency to have grown up in the area.”<sup>26</sup>) Some related their experiences growing up as children of migrants, such as Kwasi Kwarteng, Nadhim Zahawi, and Rushanara Ali whose biography states “My story is a typical East End story. I grew up in Tower Hamlets, having moved to the UK from Bangladesh when I was seven years old. My family's migration is part of a long tradition of people who came here to build a better future for themselves and the people around them.”<sup>27</sup> These demonstrate that although individuals may be seen as ethnic MPs, they can also portray themselves as fundamentally British.

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<sup>21</sup> Website of Sam Lotu-liga, MP (2012) <http://lotu-iiga.com/index.php?/pages/profile.html>, accessed July 2012 and Labour Party (NZ) (2013) *Rino Tirikatene*, <http://www.labour.org.nz/rinotirikatene>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Website of David Lammy, MP (2012) [http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About\\_me](http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About_me), accessed July 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Green Party (NZ) (2012) *David Clendon* <http://www.greens.org.nz/people/davidclendon>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Website of Alok Sharma, MP (2012) <http://www.aloksharma.co.uk/alok> accessed August 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Website of Chi Onwurah, MP (2012) <http://chionwurahmp.com/about-me/> accessed August 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Website of Chuka Umunna, MP (2012) <http://www.chuka.org.uk/about-chuka/> accessed June 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Website of Rushanara Ali, MP (2012) <http://www.rushanaraali.org/index.php?id=25> accessed August 2012.

Only one BAME MP specifically mentioned language in his biography; Virendra Sharma who was born in India and “speaks fluent Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu.”<sup>28</sup> Yasmin Qureshi, for example, has no specific reference to her ethnicity on her biography pages. When questioned about this, Qureshi stated “I speak Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu – I speak the main languages but I don’t mention it [on my website]. To me it’s not an issue, as such and I wouldn’t want to be defined by those. If people want to define me by that then so be it.”<sup>29</sup> Qureshi instead chose to focus her biography on her career successes and achievements, without specific reference to anything about her ethnic identity. A few chose to mention their achievements as BAME representatives, such as Keith Vaz who was the “first person of Asian origin to sit in the House of Commons since 1922”<sup>30</sup> and Sadiq Khan who was the first BAME politician to be elected to the Labour Party’s Shadow Cabinet.<sup>31</sup> Overall, mentions of ethnicity were infrequent in the biographies of BAME MPs in Britain, even for those with high proportions of ethnic minority groups in their electorate. This suggests that representative claims based on ethnicity were implied, rather than explicit, something which will be explored in more detail during Chapter 5 and 6.

Nationality is also an important consideration for British MPs, and many of the Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish MPs made reference to their country of origin. But even here, representative claims based on nationality were implied through representative claims of localness. Thus, Welsh MP Jonathan Evans makes connections to his Welsh heritage through his work with Tai Cymru (the Welsh Housing Corporation) and the Welsh Sports Centre for the Disabled, and then describes his support for Welsh sports teams. “An avid sports fan, he holds season tickets for both Cardiff City and Cardiff Blues.”<sup>32</sup> Plaid Cymru member Hywel Williams states that he speaks Welsh and English, with his biography written in both languages, as is the bio for Labour MP Susan Elan Jones.<sup>33</sup> Alun Michael also mentions being a fluent Welsh speaker which uses language as an

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<sup>28</sup> Website of Virendra Sharma, MP (2012) <http://www.virendrasharma.com/biography> accessed August 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Website of Keith Vaz, MP (2012) <http://www.keithvazmp.com/biography/> accessed July 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Website of Sadiq Khan, MP (2012) <http://sadiqkhan.co.uk/index.php/about> accessed July 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Website of Jonathan Evans, MP (2012) <http://www.jonathanevans.org.uk/about-jonathan/>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Website of Hywel Williams, MP (2012) <http://www.english.hywelwilliams.plaidcymru.org/about-hywel/> accessed August 2012 and Website of Susan Elan Jones, MP (2012) <http://www.susanelanjones.co.uk/index.php?id=5>, accessed August 2012.

implicit marker of Welsh identity.<sup>34</sup> The Scottish MPs also stressed their localness and connection to Scotland but through the prism of their electorates. In the same way, in Northern Ireland Naomi Long MP for East Belfast mentions that she has “lived in East Belfast all her life”<sup>35</sup> and Margaret Ritchie states that her “love for South Down is well known.”<sup>36</sup>

It is clear that localness and being connected to the community are important traits for constituency MPs. In the UK, localness was frequently emphasised at the expense of ethnicity and nationality. In New Zealand however, there was stronger identification with ethnicity in web biographies although discussions of a ‘New Zealand identity’ were rarer.

### *Class*

Discussions of class (both implicit and explicit) were an unexpected occurrence in MPs biographies, particularly in New Zealand, despite the fact that class is an often overlooked variable of descriptive representation. Many MPs described working-class roots, using these as a way to show not only where they came from, but as a means of connecting with constituents. Discussions of working-class backgrounds allow the public to see diversity of representation and can make representatives relatable for people who may feel alienated from the political process. Discussion of class can also act as a reference point for MPs values and political ideals. In this way, Hekia Parata describes how “[m]y family grew up without owning our own house or car. When our parents’ marriage destructed we relied on, and were grateful for, the assistance of the State with housing and income, and education scholarships.”<sup>37</sup> Parata is narrating her story of a background that many New Zealanders could identify with and relate to, while also acknowledging the role of the State in providing necessary services for people in need. New Zealand list MP Louisa Wall also used a narrative device in her biography, describing her parent’s upbringing and lifestyle, “My parents...left school without formal qualifications. Education was very important and my father particularly had an aspiration for me to go to university and to have a better life than he did. When

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<sup>34</sup> Website of Alun Michael, MP (2012) <http://www.alunmichael.com/about-alun.aspx>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Website of Naomi Long, MP (2012) <http://www.naomilong.com/about-naomi>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Website of Margaret Ritchie, MP (2012) <http://www.margaretritchie.com/biography/>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Website of Hekia Parata, MP (2012) <http://www.hekiaparata.co.nz/index.php?/pages/profile.html>, accessed July 2012.

he was a child my dad lived in a hut with a dirt floor.”<sup>38</sup> Here, Wall not only stresses the importance of education to her, but also emphasises the way education can bring about change in peoples lives and circumstances. Class is not explicitly discussed here, and Wall makes no obvious representative claim based on these grounds, but the fact that she chose to emphasise this aspect of her life on her biography tells us something about the values she carries as an MP. In a similar way, New Zealand MP Kris Faafoi describes himself as “the son of a Primary School teacher and factory worker” who consequently believes that “all children should receive the opportunity to have a quality education.”<sup>39</sup>

Other examples of working class backgrounds were NZ MP David Clendon (“His story, like many other Green MPs, grew from the rootstock of working class New Zealand”<sup>40</sup>) and Welsh MP Alun Cairns (“His father was a welder in British Steel and his mother was a shop-keeper... He first became aware of politics whilst growing up in a deprived community near Swansea.”<sup>41</sup>) Other British MPs discussed growing up on council estates or attending local comprehensives, such as Helen Grant, Paul Uppal and Sadiq Khan. All of these MPs identified and portrayed themselves in a certain way; their backgrounds affect not only the way they represent themselves to constituents, but also shape the values they take with them in their representative roles. A discussion of a working-class background can also be an attempt to connect with constituents from similar backgrounds, to provide a sense of authenticity of representation as ‘one of the people’.

Conversely, many MPs adopted a different strategy in their biographies and preferred to demonstrate their qualifications for the job based on a successful career and education. This can also be used as a form of justification and qualification for their roles, particularly when discussed in tandem with minority identities such as race or class. Demonstrating higher education suggests credibility and experience for a role which has no job description, especially for MPs who already are defined by ascriptive minority characteristics and could be defensive of being thought of as ‘tokenistic’.<sup>42</sup> Examples of

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<sup>38</sup> Labour Party (NZ) (2013) *Louisa Wall* <http://www.labour.org.nz/louisawall>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Labour Party (NZ) (2013) *Kris Faafoi* <http://www.labour.org.nz/krisfaafoi>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Website of David Clendon, MP (2012) <http://www.greens.org.nz/people/davidclendon>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Website of Alun Cairns, MP (2012) <http://www.aluncairns.co.uk/alu>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Norton, “Four Models of Political Representation,” p.354. See Ward, ““Second-Class MPs?”” for a further discussion of the occupation and educational backgrounds of New Zealand MPs.

this are seen in the biographies of Lammy, who intertwines discussions of race with his educational achievements, Māori MP Hekia Parata (“being Māori and rural did not condemn you to a second rate education”)<sup>43</sup> and Bristol MP Kerry McCarthy (“One of six children, Kerry attended comprehensive school in Luton before going on to study Russian, Politics and Linguistics at Liverpool University and to take her law exams in London.”)<sup>44</sup>

### *Sexuality*

Sexuality was an identity marker that was mentioned by only a handful of MPs and there were no explicit representative claims made in biographies about representing the LGBT community. Numbers are small in both countries of MPs who are openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Few of those who have ‘come out’ publically make reference to their sexuality or their partner on their web pages in the same way that heterosexual MPs discuss their husbands or wives. The biography of Ben Bradshaw, for example, states that “Ben and his partner Neal have lived together for 12 years in Exeter and London, they celebrated their Civil Partnership in 2006.”<sup>45</sup> Likewise New Zealand MP Maryan Street openly acknowledges her partner and child, “I am gay and have a partner and one daughter.”<sup>46</sup> Margot James, a British Conservative MP who lives in a same-sex relationship, briefly mentions her partner Jay in her web biography. “When she is not working she and her partner Jay enjoy spending time with her family.” However, she has described how when she was selected as a candidate, she hoped reporters would mistake her partner's name for that of a man so her sexuality would not be an issue.<sup>47</sup>

Many of the openly gay MPs do not mention their personal lives on the web-pages, including Chris Bryant who has publically said “I don't primarily think of myself as a gay MP; I think of myself as the Labour MP for the Rhondda.”<sup>48</sup> Nick Herbet has

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<sup>43</sup> Website of Hekia Parata, MP (2012) <http://www.hekiaparata.co.nz/index.php?/pages/profile.html>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Website of Kerry McCarthy, MP (2012) <http://www.kerrymccarthymp.org/about.aspx>, accessed June 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Website of Ben Bradshaw, MP (2012) <http://www.benbradshaw.co.uk/profile.php>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Website of Maryan Street, MP (2012), <http://www.labour.org.nz/maryanstreet>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>47</sup> BBC News (2008) “Gays have a duty to vote Tory”

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7644851.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7644851.stm), accessed 19 August 2012.

<sup>48</sup> S. Moss (2010) “Chris Bryant: ‘I don't think of myself as a gay MP’” *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/mar/18/chris-bryant-gay-mp-civil-partnership>, accessed 21 July, 2012.

likewise claimed that “I certainly don't want to be labelled or stereotyped. When I was first elected I felt that I had been selected on merit, regardless of my sexuality, and that was how it should be”<sup>49</sup> but he does mention his partner Jason Eades on his webpage. Others make brief references to sexuality, such as Iain Stewart – “Iain is a patron of LGBTory, the Conservative LGBT Group”<sup>50</sup>, and Alan Duncan – “As the first ever openly gay Conservative MP...”<sup>51</sup>

Being open to the media and the public about being LGBT is becoming more common for MPs, with many feeling they do not want to hide their relationships or fear a media scandal.<sup>52</sup> However it appears that despite this, the majority do not want make representative claims about a ‘gay community’ or to publically emphasise their sexuality as an aspect of their identity, focusing their biographies instead on their work in parliament and in the constituency.

### ***Substantive Representation***

Representative claims are not just made through descriptive and symbolic representation. Representatives also use their biographies highlight their achievements and efforts to substantively ‘act for’ groups. Harriet Harman’s biography describes the many substantive actions she has undertaken for women’s rights such as campaigning for increased women’s representation in the Labour Party, setting up the first Parliamentary Labour Party Women’s Group, fighting for more Labour women MPs through ‘women-only shortlists’, campaigning for places to be reserved for women in the shadow cabinet, introducing the New Deal for Lone Parents, to help lone mothers who wanted to get off benefit into work and campaigning for longer maternity leave and higher maternity pay.<sup>53</sup> Jo Swinson also discusses her efforts to act on behalf of women, describing herself as “[A] champion of positive action rather than positive discrimination”, she chaired the Lib Dem Campaign for Gender Balance from 2006 –

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<sup>49</sup> The Lesbian and Gay Foundation (2012) “Nick Herbert MP” <http://www.lgf.org.uk/Your-rights/Your-vote-counts-/Nick-Herbert-MP/>, accessed 19 August 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Website of Iain Stewart, MP (2012) [http://www.ias4mks.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=2](http://www.ias4mks.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=2), accessed July 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Website of Alan Duncan, MP (2012) <http://www.alanduncan.org.uk/about>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Conservative MP Margot James has commented “You can't be outed if you're not trying to be undercover. I didn't want to be worried, looking over my shoulder the whole time.” Quoted in L. Hoggard (2006) “Cameron’s Girl” *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2006/jan/22/interviews.conservatives>, accessed 19 August 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Website of Harriet Harman, MP (2012), [http://www.harrietharman.org/about\\_harriet](http://www.harrietharman.org/about_harriet), accessed August 2012.

2008 and was a member of the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation.<sup>54</sup> David Lammy and Diane Abbott both discuss their substantive efforts to represent the Black community; Lammy through raising “issues of race and education into the national arena” and through “his tackling of the subject of diversity in the legal profession, where he spoke openly about the inequality still faced by black and ethnic minority British children in trying to enter the City law firms”<sup>55</sup>, and Diane Abbott through founding the “London Schools and the Black Child initiative, which aims to raise educational achievement levels amongst Black children.”<sup>56</sup>

Some MPs made representative claims about a group they did not identify with themselves. This was rare but could be observed in MP's memberships of certain All-Party groups, such as Alun Michael who chairs the All-Party Group for Somaliland,<sup>57</sup> or Keith Vaz who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Tamil Group;<sup>58</sup> or by involvement in group events such as Welsh MP Hywel Williams, whose biography describes how “Hywel has a strong interest in Kurdish affairs and the Kurdish language, and has spoken at numerous rallies and events supporting solidarity with Kurdistan.”<sup>59</sup> These claims are harder to make because they cannot be made on grounds of ‘lived experience’ or ‘authenticity’. However, substantive representation is one way that MPs can strengthen their representative claims: by ‘acting for’ otherwise voiceless groups in parliament, MPs can identify themselves with certain groups in society even if they are not members ‘of’ the group. Therefore, as Celis and Childs point out, representative claims for women can be made by men, particularly if they undertake substantive representation on behalf of women.<sup>60</sup> In this way, claims to substantively represent women take into account actors who may have traditionally sat outside a comfortable feminist interpretation of female representation (men and conservative women, for example).

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<sup>54</sup> Website of Jo Swinson, MP (2012), <http://joswinson.org.uk/en/page/jo-swinson>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Website of David Lammy, MP (2012) [http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About\\_me](http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/About_me), accessed July 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Website of Diane Abbott, MP (2012) <http://www.dianeabbott.org.uk/about.aspx>, accessed June 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Website of Alun Michael, MP (2012) <http://www.alunmichael.com/about-alun.aspx>, accessed July 2012. When interviewed, Michael explained “I am regarded as the representative of the Somalis in parliament. I have a big Somali community, I worked as a community worker in the docks, I knew the Somali community and when I came in here it was the time of the civil war in Somalia... Somaliland has been independent for 20 years and they’ve created their own government and they’ve never had any international recognition and I’ve provided a voice for that. The result of that is that I speak for that community with some authority.”

<sup>58</sup> Website of Keith Vaz, MP (2012) <http://www.keithvazmp.com/biography/> accessed July 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Website of Hywel Williams, MP (2012) <http://www.english.hywelwilliams.plaidcymru.org/about-hywel/> accessed August 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Celis and Childs “The Substantive Representation of Women: What to Do with Conservative Claims?”

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Any public performance of identity allows MPs to put forward information about themselves to the public. Personal biographies offer MPs a (limited) means of describing themselves and in doing so, making implicit and explicit representative claims. Although biographies are usually formatted along the lines of a party-approved template, they provide an interesting example of what personal information or representations of identity that MPs put in or leave out.

In the case of MPs from the United Kingdom, localness was heavily emphasised. The aim of these biographies was for the MPs to seem A) connected to the constituency and B) competent for the job. Thus, elements of identity that were repeatedly discussed were history of connection with the constituency, involvement in the local community, and education and qualifications. Localness remained the most common representative claim made by British MPs, with aspects of identity such as ethnicity, class or nationality implied but rarely made explicitly. The biographies of New Zealand MPs saw more engagement with a variety of group identification - ethnicity and class being strong variables. However, localness and connection to constituencies was also common among NZ MPs suggesting that goals of re-election remain firmly in the minds of constituency representatives. Very few MPs specifically mentioned representation of a group as a primary aim at the risk of alienating other voters. Given the theory that list MPs have greater freedom to represent group needs, particularly through their own membership in an identity group, it would have been expected that more would make reference to their groups of interest in their biographies. This suggests that MPs, even those elected via a list system, are reluctant to explicitly position themselves as group representatives, as will be explored further in Chapter 6.

### ***4.3 Maiden Speeches***

MPs maiden speeches are their first public address to parliament, a way to introduce themselves to their colleagues and to the public, or a 'rite of passage'. They provide an additional tool to analyse public performances of identity and claim-making by MPs. As with web bios, the audience for maiden speeches is by and large consistent; the primary audience for maiden speeches are other MPs, with the general public as the secondary audience. Maiden speeches are an example of a highly formal and ritualised political context which is still conditioned by institutional culture and norms. There are inherent



differences between maiden speeches in UK and in NZ. The narrative format for maiden speeches in the UK is formal and focused on the history and economy of the constituency. In contrast, maiden speeches in New Zealand have more informal norms; MPs use their maiden speeches to discuss not only their constituency, but their own personal journey to parliament. This allows potential space for MPs to engage with representative claim-making for minority groups to a much greater level, highlighting the importance of context for performance. The subsequent analysis of maiden speeches is therefore divided between the UK speeches and the NZ speeches, with a final comparison and contrast of the two cases.

### ***Maiden Speeches in the United Kingdom***

As previously outlined, maiden speeches in the United Kingdom usually follow a traditional template. These institutional norms can provide little space for MPs to incorporate aspects of their own identity throughout these speeches. Parliamentary culture can be seen in this case as a strong driver of the types of representative claims that are made by MPs during their speeches, with localness and ties to the constituency being the most prominent. Any further mention of personal identity is at the individual MPs discretion and most commonly demonstrated through linking identity to the constituency or its population. The audience for maiden speeches is two-fold: fellow MPs and the public. While maiden speeches are recorded in Hansard and therefore publically accessible, the maiden speeches are primarily a means of introducing new MPs to their colleagues. The primary audience and the receiver of any type of representative claim made therefore are not only the public or constituency, but also fellow MPs.

Tradition dictates that maiden speeches in the UK are constituency focused, and this was evident in all the examples analysed. While all subjects discussed local features or beauty of their constituency in a general sense, some MPs sought to directly tie themselves to the place they represented through explicit representative claims. Jo Swinson, for example said “It is a great privilege for me to represent East Dunbartonshire, where I was raised and where I have lived for most of my life”<sup>61</sup> and

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<sup>61</sup> Jo Swinson Maiden Speech (2005) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo050526/debtext/50526-19.htm>, accessed August 2012.

Chi Onwurah noted “I felt a huge sense of privilege growing up in Newcastle.”<sup>62</sup> Similar instances of localness were echoed in the maiden speeches of Chuka Umunna who stated “I am the first Member for Streatham who was born and bred in the constituency and it is such a privilege to represent them”<sup>63</sup> and Sadiq Khan, “I am Tooting, boy and man. I was born in the constituency and I have lived there all my life. I married a Tooting girl, Saadiya, and we are bringing up two beautiful daughters there.”<sup>64</sup> All these examples demonstrate an attempt by MPs to strengthen their representative claim by virtue of being from the area, being ‘local’. Welsh MP Alun Michael used examples of his work in the community to strengthen his claim to represent his constituency and described himself as “someone who in recent years has been a properly accountable local representative”, signifying a connection between accountability and being locally.<sup>65</sup> Other MPs used inclusive language such as “we in Wales”, “we in Northern Ireland” and “for us in Tottenham” in order to reiterate the bond between constituencies and representative.<sup>66</sup>

While mentions of localness were common in the maiden speeches of UK MPs, there were times when other forms of identification were mentioned. These were usually linked in some way to representation of a geographical constituency like in the maiden speech of Chuka Umunna who claimed that “with my own mixed English, Irish and Nigerian heritage, I am in many ways typical of the constituency, which is a very multicultural area. More than 35 per cent of the population is, like me, from an ethnic minority.”<sup>67</sup> Within the speeches of the UK MPs, ethnicity and racial identification were infrequently mentioned but could be seen in the speeches of some of the BAME MPs

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<sup>62</sup> Chi Onwurah Maiden Speech (2010) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100608/debtext/100608-0018.htm>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Chuka Umunna Maiden Speech (2010) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100602/debtext/100602-0015.htm>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Sadiq Khan Maiden Speech (2005) *Sadiq Khan MP* <http://www.sadiqkhan.co.uk/index.php/speeches-a-media/1257- maiden-speech>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Alun Michael Maiden Speech (1987) *They Work For You*, <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debate/?id=1987-07-02a.708.4>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Evans Maiden Speech (1992) *They Work For You*, <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=1992-05-12a.500.4&s=speaker%3A22650#g575.0>, accessed August 2012; Margaret Ritchie <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100608/debtext/100608-0016.htm#10060863000112>; David Lammy Maiden Speech (2000) *Personal Website*, <http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/da/13153>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Chuka Umunna Maiden Speech (2010) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100602/debtext/100602-0015.htm>, accessed August 2012.

where there was an explicit stress on ethnicity. Rushanara Ali mentioned that she was “proud to be one of the first three Muslim women MPs ever to be elected to this Parliament, and the first person of British-Bengali heritage to be elected to this House”<sup>68</sup> while Viendra Sharma described being a “Member of this House who was born in India and who represents a constituency with large numbers of constituents either of Indian birth or descent.”<sup>69</sup> Other BAME MPs, including Priti Patel and Alok Sharma also made reference to their ethnicity and how it has shaped their political values – Patel commented, for example, that her “deep and personal interest in what I call the economics of enterprise and small business” came from her parents experience of migration to Britain and their ownership of a newsagents.<sup>70</sup> Here, Patel uses ethnicity as a form of implicit claim-making, it is part of her greater focus on representing enterprise and business. In contrast, David Lammy used explicit discussions of his racial identity to strengthen his representative claim to speak for his constituency of Tottenham.

I have the great privilege of representing one of the most multi-cultural constituencies in this House. I am not just a black politician for black people - I am a politician for all people. Multi ethnic means just that - all ethnic groups, black and white. When I see any section of my community missing life-chances and opportunities, I will strive to support them and I will speak out for them. All of Tottenham's communities deserves no less from me and would expect no less from me.<sup>71</sup>

Here Lammy directly references his ethnicity but uses it in multiple ways. On the one hand, he references his ethnicity in a way that white MPs rarely do, which draws attention to the fact that he is a black MP who represents the black community (I am not *just* a black politician for black people). On the other hand, Lammy is careful to make clear that he represents all communities *within his geographical constituency*,

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<sup>68</sup>Rushanara Ali Maiden Speech (1997) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100608/debtext/100608-0012.htm>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Viendra Sharma Maiden Speech (1997) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm071008/debtext/71008-0017.htm>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Priti Patel Maiden Speech (2010) *Hansard* <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100727/debtext/100727-0002.htm#10072741001047>, accessed August 2012

<sup>71</sup> David Lammy Maiden Speech (2000) *Personal Website*, <http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/da/13153>, accessed August 2012.

emphasising the need for wider representative claims which do not isolate the majority of his intended audience.

As was seen in MPs biographies, localness became intertwined with nationality for some MPs. Plaid Cymru MP Hywel Williams connects language both as a form of Welsh identity and as a way of highlighting his links to his predominantly Welsh-speaking constituency, while Susan Elan Jones noted that “I rejoice that I can swear my oath as a Member of Parliament in Welsh.”<sup>72</sup> The dangers however of making these type of potentially limited representative claims based on a minority nationality are that MPs want to be seen as able to operate as a ‘mainstream’ MP, not categorised as a minority within parliament. Perhaps realising the potential problems with this, MP Jonathan Evans used his maiden speech to be very clear to his fellow colleagues how he identified himself. “I am a Welshman who has lived and worked in Wales all my life. I represent a Welsh constituency, but I am here as a Member of the United Kingdom Parliament.”<sup>73</sup> Although Evans acknowledges his Welsh heritage and constituency and uses his localness as a means of identifying with his constituents, he also claims membership as a ‘mainstream’ politician, a theme that was common in more personal representations of identity in the following chapters.

Other markers of personal identification seen in UK maiden speeches were age and gender, although both were rare among the subjects. David Lammy and Jo Swinson, both young when they entered the House, made reference to their age in their speeches.<sup>74</sup> Lammy noted that “[a]s a young representative I am very aware of the lack of interest my friends and contemporaries have towards the workings of parliament” while Jo Swinson, emphasised the importance of diversity in ages of representatives.

I am delighted that among the new faces in the House there are several young MPs. It is a strength that the elected Members span a spectrum of 55 years in age. A

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<sup>72</sup> Hywel Williams Maiden Speech (2001) *Hansard*, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo010702/debtext/10702-24.htm#10702-24\\_spnew1](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo010702/debtext/10702-24.htm#10702-24_spnew1), accessed August 2012 and Susan Elan Jones Maiden Speech (2010) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100609/debtext/100609-0011.htm>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Evans Maiden Speech (1992) *They Work For You*, <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=1992-05-12a.500.4&s=speaker%3A22650#g575.0>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>74</sup> Lammy was only 27 when he entered Parliament in 2000 and Swinson was 25 when she entered in 2005.

more representative House can help to make politics more relevant to the electorate that we serve.<sup>75</sup>

Representations of gender were rarely mentioned by MPs in the United Kingdom, but Gisela Stuart was one of the few to do so, arguing that her constituency had a “long and, indeed, proud tradition of being represented by women” and that her own entry into politics had been driven by an awareness of the problems facing pensioners, and more specifically, older women. Along with making a representative claim about her constituency, Stuart also made claims to represent both women and pensioners so that they would not “be caught in a perpetual cycle of low wages during their working life and poverty in old age.”<sup>76</sup>

MPs in the United Kingdom use their maiden speeches to consolidate their electoral mandate and emphasise ties with their electorate. The importance of geographical constituencies can be clearly seen in the speeches, as representatives adhere to prescribed customs and traditions of acknowledging their predecessors and their electorate. There is little space for MPs to define their own identity or to make representative claims about descriptive representation. Conversely the format for maiden speeches in New Zealand allows for greater freedom of representatives to publically discuss their identity and their representative role.

### ***Maiden Speeches in New Zealand***

Unlike their British counterparts, the maiden speeches of New Zealand MPs allowed them to discuss more of their personal journey to enter parliament. Speeches are used to tell the story of a representative: who they are and how they came to be involved in politics. While, like Britain, reference is made to constituencies, these are not generally the predominant focus of the speeches, regardless of whether a representative was elected via the list or in an electorate. Instead, MPs generally discuss their individual heritage and identity, and how these link to the values they bring to the House and to their representative roles. New Zealand MPs also use maiden speeches as a forum to outline how they see their representative roles and reiterate their connection to, and affiliation with, their political parties. Their maiden speeches provide a tool for

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<sup>75</sup> Jo Swinson Maiden Speech (2005) *Hansard*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo050526/debtext/50526-19.htm>, accessed August 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Gisela Stuart Maiden Speech (1997) *They Work For You* <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debate/?id=1997-05-15a.205.0>, accessed March 2013.

deconstructing the ways that political representatives view themselves, their representative role and the ways that their identity intersects with this. The maiden speeches of New Zealand MPs becomes much more of a narrative, an autobiographical story framed by identity that has shaped and moulded the representative.

A simple example of this is Brendan Burns, who describes his migrant background and family identity: “Like some other new members, mine is a migrant’s story... We were almost wholly bog Irish by extraction, Catholic and working class.”<sup>77</sup> Similarly, other MPs use their childhoods as starting points for explaining who they are as adults, and, as seen in both Burn’s account above and in MPs web biographies, class is one facet of this. Sam Lotu-liga narrates the story of his upbringing, relating his own experiences of coming from a working class background and belonging to an ethnic minority group.

My personal story is born of the fabric of the community I represent. Born in Samoa, I migrated to New Zealand when I was a child and I lived in Māngere with my family. We lived in a three-bedroom home with a double garage, where our custom to care for our extended family sometimes meant that we had up to 16 people living in our home at any one time...My parents suffered and endured a great deal just so that we children could live better lives.<sup>78</sup>

Lotu-liga uses an autobiographical tone in his speech to recount his childhood; drawing on personal experiences to explain his journey and to connect with others who have shared experiences. Rajen Prasad adopted a similar approach, as he recalled his arrival in New Zealand from Fiji:

I remember my arrival in New Zealand on 21 April 1964. The TEAL Electra flight took 300 minutes from Nadi in Fiji. It landed at Whenuapai airport in Hobsonville, west Auckland. On the walk from the aircraft to the air force hangar, which doubled in those days as the international terminal, the cold of that early autumn morning had frozen the toes of this Pacific Indian. I just wanted to go back home. My grandparents, however, before me, had taken a much more hazardous journey from Uttar Pradesh

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<sup>77</sup> Brendan Burns Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/4/1/7/49HansD\\_20081211\\_00000835-Maiden-Statements.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/4/1/7/49HansD_20081211_00000835-Maiden-Statements.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Sam Lotu-liga Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/8/e/49HansD\\_20081209\\_00000291-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/8/e/49HansD_20081209_00000291-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed July 2012.

in India, to Fiji, as indentured labourers under colonial rule.<sup>79</sup>

Prasad here not only narrates his experiences as arriving as a migrant in New Zealand, he also lays out some of his family history and explains his own identity as a Fijian-Indian. Setting up this narrative not only allows Prasad to tell his own story of how he came to be a migrant and a Member of Parliament, it also allows him to connect with other immigrants who can recognise or identify with his description. It sets the scene for the construction of his representative role and the establishment of his representative claim concerning group representation and specifically the Indian community.

In the same way, many MPs used descriptions of their identity to make representative claims - acknowledging membership, identification or recognition with an identity group. When Carmel Sepuloni stated “[i]t is indeed an honour for me to be here at this historic event, for today we, the Tongan people, are finally part of this New Zealand Parliament, and today everybody knows that we are now included”, she acknowledged herself as a Tongan woman and that her participation as a Member of Parliament is related to this.<sup>80</sup> Ethnicity played a significant part in many of the maiden speeches, with Kris Faafoi acknowledging that he was the “first Tokelauan MP to serve in this House of Representatives” and Melissa Lee acting as “the first MP of Korean descent in New Zealand but also as the first woman of Korean descent to become an MP outside of Korea.”<sup>81</sup> Her National Party colleague Anne Tolley also made explicit reference to gender: “I have always been proud to be a woman, and I am more so to be a woman MP”, arguing that “women are well represented in numbers, right across the political spectrum, and from widely differing communities.”<sup>82</sup>

Many of the MPs in New Zealand acknowledged the intersectionality of multiple identities and representative claims. Louisa Wall noted that she was “I am the 261st

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<sup>79</sup> Rajen Prasad Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/4/1/7/49HansD\\_20081211\\_00000835-Maiden-Statements.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/4/1/7/49HansD_20081211_00000835-Maiden-Statements.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Carmel Sepuloni Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/8/0/2/49HansS\\_20081217\\_00001152-Sepuloni-Carmel-Maiden-Statements.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/8/0/2/49HansS_20081217_00001152-Sepuloni-Carmel-Maiden-Statements.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Kris Faafoi Maiden Speech (2010) *Hansard* [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/5/1/6/49HansD\\_20101214\\_00001150-Maiden-Statements.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/5/1/6/49HansD_20101214_00001150-Maiden-Statements.htm), accessed March 2013 and Melissa Lee Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard* [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/8/e/49HansD\\_20081209\\_00000291-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/8/e/49HansD_20081209_00000291-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Anne Tolley Maiden Speech (2000) *Scoop Independent News* <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0002/S00173.htm>, accessed March 2013.

person to join the Labour team of MPs in the history of the New Zealand Parliament, and I am the 96th woman, the 86th Māori, and the 6th takatāpui to enter this House”<sup>83</sup> and Green Party list MP Jan Logie was noted for proclaiming “I stand here today as a lefty, feminist, lesbian who sometimes despairs about what we’re doing to each other and our planet.”<sup>84</sup> These representations of identity were often accompanied by and linked to a greater sense of identification and one which was not commonly seen in Britain: the idea of a national identity. One of the most frequently occurring themes among all representations of identity made by MPs was that of a ‘New Zealand identity’. This could be seen in those MPs who had migrant backgrounds or those who had lived in New Zealand for many generations. Korean-born Melissa Lee told the House that:

I may not have been born here, I may not even have been brought up here, but I made a commitment to become a New Zealander and I am a proud carrier of a New Zealand passport. This is a privilege, and I am proud to call myself a Kiwi. But not all New Zealanders would accept that I am a Kiwi; because of my skin colour, I will forever be a foreigner. This must change.<sup>85</sup>

In a similar way, Chinese-born Jian Yang stated “Mr Speaker, we are Kiwis, although made in China” and Raymond Huo argued that “this is not just your home; this is not just my home: this is our home—our Aotearoa!” These MPs used ideas of nationality to signify that they were ‘real’ New Zealanders, whose claims to represent ethnic communities (all as list MPs) were not lessened by perceptions of being token minorities. This emphasis on national identity was more prevalent in New Zealand than claims about being ‘local’ to the constituency.<sup>86</sup> Although most MPs made brief reference to their electorates, there was noticeably less evidence of localness being

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<sup>83</sup> Louisa Wall Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard* [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/0/2/f/48HansD\\_20080304\\_00001025-Maiden-Statement.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/0/2/f/48HansD_20080304_00001025-Maiden-Statement.htm) . accessed July 2012. ‘Takatāpui’ is the Māori word for ‘partner of the same-sex’.

<sup>84</sup> Jan Logie Maiden Speech (2012) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/3/2/7/50HansD\\_20120215\\_00000012-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/3/2/7/50HansD_20120215_00000012-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed July 2012. Also see Gay Express (2012) “*Lefty, feminist lesbian*” *Logie’s first address to Parliament*, <http://www.gayexpress.co.nz/2012/02/lefty-feminist-lesbian-logies-first-address-to-parliament/> and The Daily Kos (2012) *Jan Logie: We could use someone like her*, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/02/17/1065751/-Jan-Logie-We-could-use-someone-like-her>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>85</sup> Melissa Lee Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard* [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/8/e/49HansD\\_20081209\\_00000291-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/8/e/49HansD_20081209_00000291-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>86</sup> This could also be because New Zealanders generally are very spatially mobile, so may be less likely to be born in the electorate.



made as the most prominent explicit representative claim. Some MPs echoed the rhetoric of British MPs, such as National Party MP Jonathan Coleman who noted that “[m]y own personal family history is deeply entwined with that of the Northcote electorate... I believe it to be a rare occurrence for a Member to represent an urban seat where his forebears lived for so long, and I am privileged.”<sup>87</sup> Coleman, as with other white, middle-class men, may use localness as his primary representative claim because he has little other identity markers to draw on. On the whole however, the speeches of New Zealand MPs saw considerably more emphasis on personal narrative, as tradition would dictate, but also more representative claims based on group identification than in Britain.

Some of this could potentially be explained through the role of list MPs as outlined in previous chapters. However, the difference between list and electorate MPs was not often clearly apparent from the maiden speeches. Although some made direct reference to their status as a list MP, such as Maryan Street (“I enter this Parliament as a list MP. I am proud and honoured to do so”),<sup>88</sup> most MPs did not explicitly discuss their role as a list MP. The most explicit mention of list-based representation was from Dunedin MP Michael Woodhouse, who said “I believe it is incumbent on all list members to be as active in representing a constituency as electorate MPs are, be that geographical, cultural, gender-based, or some other form of representation.”<sup>89</sup> This claim was taken up by the majority of list MPs, with several putting forward explicit claims to represent various identity groups. Dr Jian Yang noted that “[a]s a Chinese immigrant, I will act as a bridge between the Chinese community and our mainstream society. I will also endeavour to contribute to the strengthening of New Zealand’s relations with China.”<sup>90</sup> Green Party list MP Kevin Hague mentions several groups he feels he represents in what he calls a ‘politics of aspiration’, including interest groups as well as identity groups: cyclists, those who support the Green movement, the LGBT community, those

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<sup>87</sup> Jonathan Coleman Maiden Speech (2005) *Personal Website* <http://www.jonathancoleman.co.nz/index.php?/archives/6-Maiden-Speech-to-Parliament.html>, accessed July 2012.

<sup>88</sup> Maryan Street Maiden Speech (2005) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/5/2/f/48HansD\\_20051116\\_00000775-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/5/2/f/48HansD_20051116_00000775-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>89</sup> Michael Woodhouse Maiden Speech (2008) *Personal Website* <http://michaelwoodhouse.co.nz/index.php?/archives/1-Maiden-Speech-to-the-House.html>, accessed March 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Jian Yang Maiden Speech (2012) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/a/4/50HansD\\_20120216\\_00000016-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/a/4/50HansD_20120216_00000016-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed July 2012.

who work in public health and those New Zealanders who “hope for a better future for our kids and for our planet.”<sup>91</sup> Although this list is considerable and vast and the expectations of these groups are diverse, Hague notes that “I do not experience these expectations as a crushing or repressive weight, but, rather, as a surging wave that lifts me up and sustains me.”<sup>92</sup>

What was noticeable among the list MPs and discussions of group representation was a reoccurring mention of political parties and an attempt to link the party to identity groups. This could be seen in the speech of Labour MP Carmel Sepuloni, who is of Tongan and Samoan descent: “The Labour Party is notable for its support in recognising the place of Pasifika peoples in New Zealand and in honouring the ties our country has in the Pacific. I hope to support and nurture initiatives in these areas during my time in Parliament.”<sup>93</sup> It was also apparent in the speech of Jian Yang who linked the values of the Chinese community with those of the National Party.

[T]he values held by me and many Chinese New Zealanders are parallel to those of the National Party and other New Zealanders. These include equal citizenship and equal opportunity, individual freedom and choice, personal responsibility, and reward for achievement...With the National Party, I look forward to a brighter future.<sup>94</sup>

Here the two MPs from different ethnic minority groups and from different parties are attempting to demonstrate a bond between their communities of interest and their political parties. Both claim a sense of legitimacy of representation by linking their ethnicity, their party and their representative roles – they are *of* the community and they understand its needs and values which are in turn met by the political party. Their political roles are influenced and affected by their ethnicity and their political parties, and their position as list MPs allows for greater freedom to expand or move their

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<sup>91</sup> Kevin Hague Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/c/c/7/49HansS\\_20081211\\_00000906-Hague-Kevin-Maiden-Statements.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/c/c/7/49HansS_20081211_00000906-Hague-Kevin-Maiden-Statements.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Kevin Hague Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/c/c/7/49HansS\\_20081211\\_00000906-Hague-Kevin-Maiden-Statements.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/c/c/7/49HansS_20081211_00000906-Hague-Kevin-Maiden-Statements.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Carmel Sepuloni Maiden Speech (2008) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/c/c/2/49HansS\\_20081217\\_00001152-Sepuloni-Carmel-Maiden-Statements.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/Speeches/c/c/2/49HansS_20081217_00001152-Sepuloni-Carmel-Maiden-Statements.htm), accessed July 2012.

<sup>94</sup> Jian Yang Maiden Speech (2012) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/a/4/50HansD\\_20120216\\_00000016-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/a/a/4/50HansD_20120216_00000016-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed July 2012.

representative role away from traditional models of geographically-based representation.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Maiden speeches are a chance for new MPs to introduce themselves to their colleagues, to make connections to their party and their constituency but they are also another public forum in which MPs can perform their identity and make public representative claims. These types of claims noticeably differed between the speeches of MPs in the UK and those in NZ, part of which is due to the traditional format of speeches in both countries. Unlike MPs in Britain, the New Zealand representatives are less hampered by traditional protocol for maiden speeches, which allows them greater opportunities to ‘represent the self’ in a more informal tone.

Maiden speeches in the United Kingdom were situated in a wider parliamentary debate and traditionally focused on the constituency – its features, beauty, local people or areas of concern. Any other aspects of identity were secondary to this, or managed to be linked in some way to the constituency. Of the thirty maiden speeches analysed in the UK, all thirty made their constituency the focus of their maiden speech. In contrast, while nine of the ten constituency MPs in New Zealand discussed their geographical constituency explicitly, these were not the primary focus of their speeches. While theory has shown that political parties dominate Westminster systems, direct reference to parties was not common in the UK maiden speeches – largely because it seemed that notions of party were inherently tied up with discussing the constituency. References were made to the fact that one party traditionally held a seat, or that the previous MP in the electorate had been from an opposing party, but there was little discussion of party policy or values outside the context of the relevant political debate within which the speech was situated. In contrast, list MPs in New Zealand such as Carmel Sepuloni, Jian Yang and Melissa Lee all emphasised the role their party had played in connecting to their ethnic groups (Pacific Islanders, Chinese and Korean, respectively) and all fifteen list MPs explicitly mentioned their party’s history or its values.

New Zealand maiden speeches provided a much greater chance for MPs to publically represent the self, or to ‘strive for authenticity’ as list MP Shane Jones described it in

his maiden speech.<sup>95</sup> While mentions of descriptive representation was more frequent among MPs (both explicit and implied), there were also consistent references to ideas of a ‘New Zealand identity’. It was a common rhetorical device used by both list and electorate MPs and urged citizens (and fellow MPs) to acknowledge and respect difference but ultimately to consider themselves united New Zealand citizens. This was not evidence of explicit claim-making on the part of the constituency MPs but list MPs who lack a geographical electorate might well draw on notions of a national identity as part of their representative role. Like claims of localness moreover, claims of national unity are relatively easy for MPs to make publically; they require nothing other than sharing citizenship and can overcome divisions of party or geography. However, while these are aspects of shared identity that are performed publically, the next two chapters will explore whether these are claims that are also ‘performed’ in less public forums.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the question “*how do MPs publically represent the self and how does this change by context?*” In doing so, it focuses on MPs performance of identity within ritualised, formal and public arenas. Maiden speeches and web biographies allow MPs the chance to craft an image of themselves for the public through the performance of representative claims. They do this in the hopes of identifying and emphasising with voters and qualifying themselves as a suitable representative by the types of representative claims they put forward. Studying these public ‘performances’ by MPs allows for an exploration of what types of representative claims are being made and the nature of the way they are publically framed. Why are some claims given more weight than others? Are there commonalities among the types of explicit and implicit claims performed by MPs? Which aspects of identity are seen to be appealing to a public audience and are there any similarities between countries?

This chapter suggests that one way that representative claims are put forward by MPs is by demonstrating shared identity markers with the audience such as geographical location, gender, race or class. Because, as Saward argues, claims need to be specific and targeted to an audience, not all aspects of identity can or will be emphasised by MPs. Instead, I suggest that identity-based claims are the result of a process of actors putting forward explicit and implicit claims to representation based on identity or

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<sup>95</sup> Shane Jones maiden speech (2005) *Hansard*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/3/9/7/48HansD\\_20051115\\_00000644-Address-in-Reply.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/3/9/7/48HansD_20051115_00000644-Address-in-Reply.htm), accessed March 2013.

conversely, refuting identity-based representative claims. These categories can be used by MPs concurrently or individually. Additionally, identity performance can be affected by method of selection of the MP, institutional norms and culture, and audience as we have seen throughout this chapter. This chapter subsequently argues that while localness is an explicit representative claim commonly made by MPs within public forums, identity markers such as gender and race (which have traditionally been the focus for studies of descriptive representation) are actually largely used to make implicit representative claims. Public refutation of representative claims was non-existent among the sample; suggesting that MPs are reluctant to publically deny membership or identification with any potential group of voters.

Localness was an explicit representative claim frequently performed by MPs across both case studies. Connection to the constituency, involvement in the community and a sense of authenticity in being ‘of’ the people they were claiming to represent were all common themes throughout the biographies and maiden speeches, particularly from the UK MPs. All thirty maiden speeches analysed from the United Kingdom used their electorate as the primary focus of the speech. Representations of identity among UK MPs were implied through discussions of ethnicity, nationality and class although most of these were directly tied back to the constituency, and thus, their political party. Emphasis on localness in the UK is unsurprising, given the strong tradition of constituency-representative relationships, the strength of political parties who dictate much of the public performances of identity by MPs are scripted, and the desire to appeal to a community based not on minority identity, but a larger, more encompassing geographical constituency.

MPs in New Zealand also focused on localness, particularly among the electorate MPs. Ninety per cent of electorate MPs, for example, made direct reference to their constituency in their maiden speeches. In contrast, the speeches of the list MPs provided more scope for representative claims based on descriptive representation and it was apparent that many drew on their own identities to reach out to communities, from ethnic groups to cyclists. However, very few MPs in either country made explicit representative claims based specifically on representation of a single group at the risk of alienating other voters from voting for them or their party. In addition, list MPs in New Zealand consistently used their speeches to highlight their parties in a much more explicit way than was seen in the UK. While theory has shown that political parties

dominate Westminster systems, direct reference to parties was not common in the UK maiden speeches; discussions of ‘the party’ were inherently tied up with discussing the constituency and there was little discussion of party policy or values outside the context of the political debate within which the speech was situated. In New Zealand, discussions of party were common in maiden speeches, particularly through linking its values or history to the role representatives hoped to carry out: the rhetoric of equality and justice from centre-left parties for example, and that of individual merit and achievement from those on the right.

When comparing biographies and maiden speeches in both countries it is apparent that there were some similarities and some differences. While localness was an explicit representative claim made by MPs, identity markers such as gender and race (which have traditionally been the focus for studies of descriptive representation) are actually more commonly used to make implicit representative claims. These aspects of identity are more subtly highlighted publically by MPs and minority MPs largely attempt to minimise their visibility or difference, rather than emphasise it, particularly in the United Kingdom. While the traditional narrative style of the maiden speeches in New Zealand allows MPs greater freedom to publically construct and perform their identity, this is a rare opportunity as it is one of the few occasions in parliament where MPs can speak without the constraints of party positioning or monitoring from the party whips. The role of the list MP allows for the most space to publically represent identity through explicit representative claim-making because these MPs are often chosen and elected for those identity characteristics and they lack a geographical constituency that is solely theirs to represent. But for the most part, identification with minority groups can be alienating to the wider audience and can lead to MPs being labelled by virtue of their identity (“the black MP”; “the gay MP”). MPs do utilise identification with minority identities but this tends to be done in an implied or strategic manner such as when it can be linked back to claims of representing the constituency.

Although mentions of localness was high and identification as minority representatives was low among the public ‘representations of the self’ made by MPs, this thesis is also concerned with how these representations are made in other forums to other audiences, and whether the same types of representative claims are made in a one-on-one setting. The following two empirical chapters now turn to data gathered from twenty nine interviews with MPs in the United Kingdom and New Zealand to explore further how

they construct, perform and understand identity and representation in a more informal setting.





## Chapter 5

### Descriptive and Symbolic Representation in Interviews

#### 5.1 Introduction

The following two empirical chapters move from public representations of identity to explore the ways in which MPs perform identity within an interview setting. They seek to better understand *how MPs perceive the relationship between identity and representation?* Using interview data with twenty nine MPs from New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the chapters draw a more detailed picture of the ways that identity and representation are linked through performance and claim-making. Interviews change the context in which MPs have to ‘perform’ their identity; by changing the context and the audience from public representations of identity to a more informal, one-on-one setting, it is possible to map whether MPs do in fact discuss the same aspects of identity that shaped their public representative claims or whether they emphasise or reject different identity markers within this new performance space. Interviews provide an opportunity to observe how the change in audience and stage affects the script or performance of identity by actors. In comparing the less formal interview setting with the highly formal and ritualised public stages of the previous chapter, we can map whether the three expectations outlined in Chapter 3 are demonstrated here: that performance of the MP varies by method of election of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture, and audience.

This chapter focuses on the relationship between claim-making and descriptive and symbolic representation. It asks “*In what ways do MPs ascribe value to descriptive and symbolic representation through their performances of identity?*” It begins by asking who the interview subjects themselves think they represent in parliament to see how these statements reflect on the public discourses of identity presented in the previous chapter. Comparing performances on identity in differing contexts and with different audiences and objectives provides a fuller picture of the ways that MPs construct and perform identity and allows for a comparative analysis of representative claim-making through the use of in-depth interview data. It also provides an opportunity to assess the degree to which MPs make explicit and implicit representative claims within discussions of descriptive and symbolic representation. The chapter then draws on interview data to discuss what I have termed the ‘authenticity of representation’ and it

demonstrates how the search for authenticity, or the performance of authenticity, has become an important part of the desire for a representative legislature. This desire operates at two levels, numerical and cultural authenticity. Numerical authenticity is the demand for descriptive representation based on minority groups being physically present in parliaments. This not only is a visible sign that all groups in society are equal politically, it also serves to promote engagement with the political process, particularly for minority groups, who can see that there is “someone like me” in parliament. Secondly, there is a demand for cultural authenticity which moves beyond visible representations of identity groups to a recognition of similarities with the representative based on shared backgrounds, cultures, values or upbringing. This allows representatives to speak, represent or perform as an ‘authentic’ member of the group because of shared lived experiences or values. Performance of explicit identity based claims in an interview setting is a further example of the way MPs use identity as a basis to qualify, empathise and identify with constituents. This chapter argues that descriptive and symbolic representation are performed in complex ways by MPs; these forms of representation are ascribed value by MPs, as can be seen in the search for ‘authenticity’ of representation, however representative claims made do not necessarily reflect this ideological position.

## ***5.2 Who Do You Represent?***

This chapter draws on interview data with twenty nine MPs, sixteen from New Zealand and thirteen from the United Kingdom. At the beginning of the interview, subjects were asked who they felt they represented in parliament. Like the public representations of identity demonstrated in the previous chapter, the results differed substantially with answers that ranged from their constituency, their party or particular groups in society.

***Table 5.1: Who MPs feel they represent in Parliament<sup>1</sup>***

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Race/Ethnic Groups</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Sexual Identity</i>	<i>Other</i>
18	7	3	5	2	2	7

<sup>1</sup> Most MPs gave multiple answers so total number of answers will not equal 29. Figures are rough indicators only.

Answers given by MPs reflected the diverse ways that representatives interpret their roles and who they speak for in parliament. All British MPs answered that they represented their constituency, which highlights the traditional importance of electoral representation in the UK and echoes the public representations of identity seen in Chapter 5. For the thirteen interview subjects who held constituency seats, their constituents were the first and most significant relationship listed in the interview. The notable exception to this was Welsh MP Alun Cairns who argued that he represented “my country, my constituency and my party and that’s the order in which you decide issues.... if you don’t have a country then you won’t have a constituency.”<sup>2</sup> Despite this view, there was only one other British MP who made specific reference to representing a country, signalling that other representatives did not place the same level of importance on this kind of representation. Being seen as a representative of the constituency (and the subsequent party identification that comes with it) was seen as more important than being seen as an English MP or a Scottish MP. Although Jonathan Evans is the MP for Cardiff North, he drew a distinction between representing the ‘Welshness’ of his constituency and representing the electorate as an entity separate from national identity.

I represent my electors of Cardiff North. I don’t regard myself as representing the Welsh element of my voters. I don’t regard myself, even though I’m a man, representing the male voters. If I was a woman, similarly, even though I think there are some colleagues who view their role as promoting and actively taking up the cause of women, and there *are* issues that relate to women that I think need to be outlined, I don’t think I would ever regard myself as representing any specific gender. Rather, I would regard myself as representing my constituents.<sup>3</sup>

Although in both his maiden speech and his biography, Evans notes aspects of Welsh identification (“[My constituency] has the largest proportion of the land-mass of Wales and so I suppose that I may say that I speak for more of Wales than anyone else in the Chamber”) he links these directly back to his constituency representation.<sup>4</sup> Consequently his initial performance of identity in an interview setting appears consistent with his public statements.

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<sup>2</sup> Extracted from an interview with Alun Cairns, MP, UK (September 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jonathan Evans, MP, UK (September 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Website of Jonathan Evans, MP (2012) <http://www.jonathanevans.org.uk/about-jonathan/>, accessed August 2012.

Only two British MPs initially listed communities of interest who they also felt an obligation to represent: Jo Swinson felt that she represented young people and women, while David Lammy felt he represented ethnic minority groups. Both these MPs used their own identity markers (age, gender, race) as factors that influenced who they made representative claims on behalf of and performed this aspect of identity both in their maiden speeches and in interviews. This kind of identification was rare among the answers given by the British MPs however, as most focused solely on their relationship with their constituents. Despite the strength of political parties in Britain, only two MPs (Swinson and Qureshi) specifically mentioned their party as a factor in whom they represented in parliament.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, all MPs interviewed in the UK mentioned representing their constituency, with the majority classifying this as the most important representative responsibility. Yasmin Qureshi was one of the few MPs who discussed the values of her party as the initial force that shaped her role as a representative, which was then in turn followed by the needs of her constituents.

I don't see myself here to represent women, to represent Asian or Blacks or any particular vested group – or any group for that matter. I am here to represent what I call...when I say the Labour Party I mean the general philosophy behind the Labour movement, the socialist movement, the trade union movement – that's my ideology, where I'm coming from. For me that's the most important thing, and from there it's what my constituents want.<sup>6</sup>

Qureshi acknowledged that as a female BAME MP there were demands for her to act as a symbolic representative for women or for BAME communities but she explicitly rejects these forms of identification and labelling. Her quote frames party representation, or the representation of political values, as the central focus of her representative claims. This is a similar performance of identity as in her web biography, where Qureshi makes no explicit reference to her identity as a young Muslim female and focuses instead on her career achievements and qualifications, and in her maiden speech where she makes no reference to identity and instead focuses on her constituency. Qureshi was elected under an all women shortlist, which may have influenced her decision to largely omit gender representation from her performances of identity. The difficulties with audience bias and perception of shortlists and quotas will

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<sup>5</sup> For discussions of MPs roles and the relationship to parties, see Gauja, "Party Dimensions of Representation in Westminster Parliaments".

<sup>6</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. The quote from Qureshi, as with Evans previously, demonstrates a relative level of autonomy for the British representative to interpret their representative role, although both are consistent with the traditional constituency-party allegiances. The strength of political parties and the objective of MPs to be re-elected means there is little incentive to act as a spokesperson for communities of interest, particularly if they cannot be mobilised as a voting bloc. Traditional concepts of representative roles in Britain also serve to reinforce the importance of representing a geographical territory, rather than representing an identity group.

In contrast, the diversity of answers given by the New Zealand MPs was almost directly related to their status as either a list MP or an electorate MP which highlights the importance of methods of selection for performances of identity, even in an interview context. Consequently, the ways that New Zealand MPs view or perform the dual roles of a list MP and an electorate MP need to be examined in more depth. In interviews with New Zealand Members of Parliament, electorate MP Sam Lotu-liga described the differences he sees in the two parliamentary roles and their respective mandates to represent.

I've never been a list MP and I hope I'll never be a list MP... [A] lot of the list MPs who compete hold themselves out to be the electorate MP which I object to cos you earn the right to be the MP and that bond between being the elected representative and the people that you serve is because of an election, and you've earned that right to be their MP.<sup>7</sup>

Lotu-liga used the term “earn the right” to act as an electorate MP, a right that is gained by fighting and winning a constituency seat. A ‘bond’ is created between the representative and the represented, through winning the votes of a territorial constituency. It is also apparent that for Lotu-liga, to be an electorate MP is more ‘legitimate’ than being a list MP because of that bond and subsequent mandate to represent. While his quote below acknowledges that all MPs deserve respect and a ‘voice in parliament’, it also draws on the idea of a list MP as being a ‘second-class’ MP.

There are different types of list MP, those who deal with or represent certain ethnic groups in parliament and then

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<sup>7</sup> Extracted from an interview with Sam Lotu-liga, MP, New Zealand (February 2011)

you have other list MPs who represent a set of values like the Greens. And then there are others who I don't know what their constituencies are. Look, everyone's a member of parliament: I just think some are elected members of parliament and some aren't... in my view, there's definitely a difference between a list MP, whatever garden variety that happens to be, and an electorate MP.<sup>8</sup>

There is a clear distinction here between the ways that Lotu-liga understands the two representative roles. The electorate MP is seen to have a clear mandate to act as a representative for his/her constituency, while the list MP is seen as representing either an identity group or a set of values and principles. They are seen as less legitimate because they were not elected, despite their role as an MP and dismissed as of lesser importance ("whatever garden variety that happens to be"). This signifies a perceived hierarchy of representative roles, with the list role and its associated group representation seen as less important or legitimate as electorate MPs. Territorial constituencies have greater validity than non-territorial interests because representative roles are clearly linked with being elected by, and having a mandate to represent, constituents in a geographically defined area.

When interviewed, list MPs who were from minority groups were quick to acknowledge connections between their role as a list MP and group representation, although none mentioned any kind of role hierarchy in relation to list or electorate roles. New Zealand list MP Carmel Sepuloni, who is of Pacific Island heritage, discussed the ways that her representative role had changed as she moved from a list MP to a candidate for an electoral seat. Her previous priorities had been centred around notions of group representation; in this case, the Pacific Island community.

If you're an electorate MP, your responsibilities are much more confined to a geographical area than if you are a list MP. Before I was the candidate for Waitakere, a big focus on what I was doing was based around the Pacific community, not based in one particular electorate. It was supporting my other Labour colleagues in building relationships with their local Pacific community and it was also my portfolio areas. Now that I'm running for Waitakere, it's much more focused on this particular geographical space.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Extracted from an interview with Sam Lotu-liga, MP, New Zealand (February 2011)

<sup>9</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

Her responsibilities were to help build relationships between MPs who were not Pacific and the Pacific community and act as a bridge between these groups; her identity as a group member allows access for others to connect with the community she represents. However once she became a candidate for an electoral seat, her activities were much more focused on this geographical area and the needs of all the constituents in it, regardless of ethnicity. In that sense, she became more than ‘a Pacific MP’.

In contrast, Dr Jian Yang, a Chinese migrant to New Zealand, saw his role as a list MP and a representative of the Chinese community as one that was vital to his selection as a candidate and to his representative role in the New Zealand parliament.

The party specifically wanted someone from the Chinese community who can represent, who can be accepted and who has a good reputation or influence in the Chinese community to advance the National Party interests. My role in the party is also trying to represent the party within the Chinese community, that’s my role. That’s why I’m a list MP; I’m not in a particular electorate. For that reason I mainly focus on the Chinese electorate, that’s my contribution to the party, the government and to the country.<sup>10</sup>

The quote from Dr Yang demonstrates that for some MPs, acting as a group representative is not only a conscious choice, it is the primary way they construct their representative roles. In this case, there are only two Chinese MPs in the New Zealand Parliament which makes Yang a visible minority. He accepts that he was selected on the basis of his identity because his political party wanted to ‘advance their interests’ with the ethnic group and sees his own role as being a bridge between these two groups; the Chinese community is his electorate, and he has the freedom to represent them because of his role as a list MP. Ethnic groups can therefore become an expanded constituency for representatives in New Zealand in a much clearer way than in Britain because they are not necessarily bounded by geographical constituencies.

All the electorate MPs in New Zealand described their constituents as groups that they represented in parliament, with most also acknowledging representation of political parties as another important factor in their roles. As has been previously discussed, lack of a geographical constituency potentially gives list MPs the chance to expand their representative roles to represent communities of interest or it results in a demonstration

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<sup>10</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jian Yang, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

of strong party loyalty and the adoption of a more partisan representational role. Despite, as we have seen, the perceived ‘legitimacy’ of geographical electorates, only one NZ list MP made reference to representing “people living in my home electorate”<sup>11</sup>.

List MPs interviewed did confirm that they identified with a large group of interests and represented those accordingly, including working class communities and marginalised people; community sector interests; people from their portfolio areas; LGBT communities; ethnic minority groups; and young people. Although representatives of electorates seemed to support the role of list-elected members as a partisan representative - for example, Megan Woods’ argument that “no one gets into parliament on their own, they’re there representing a party and representing a geographic community”<sup>12</sup> – in interviews, representatives elected via a list system did not mention their political parties as their primary focus for representation, although about half did mention parties as one of the groups they represented in parliament. Some list MPs were reluctant to commit to defining fixed representative groups at all. New Zealand MP Hekia Parata stated “I think that the notion that there’s kind of a fixed definition of who one is representing is misleading. I think that it’s a reasonably fluid dynamic.”<sup>13</sup> This concept of fluidity of representation reflects again on the notion of claim-making and is one that will be returned to in these empirical chapters.

### ***5.3 Different Contexts, Different Performances?***

Chapter 4 has previously demonstrated some of the ways in which representatives perform or make public representative claims based on identity. In this, we saw that localness was the focus of explicit identity-based representative claims, highlighted through connections to the constituency, involvement with the community and direct reference to constituencies in biographies and maiden speeches. In the United Kingdom, references to other identity group markers, such as gender, race or sexuality, were more implicit and usually tied in some way to discussions of the constituency and by implication, to political parties. List MPs in New Zealand consistently used their speeches to highlight their parties in a much more explicit way than was seen in the UK and while they tended to publically identify more strongly with identity groups and the role of group representative, very few MPs in either country specifically mentioned representation of a single group as an explicit representative claim at the risk of

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<sup>11</sup> Extracted from an interview with Catherine Delahunty, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Extracted from an interview with Megan Woods, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Extracted from an interview with Hekia Parata, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).



alienating other voters from voting for them or their party. Public representations and performances of identity tended to be centred on a discourse of localness and constituency, while identity markers such as gender, race or class were discussed in a more implicit way. Claims of localness draw on traditional constituency-representative bonds and provide an easy to 'read' narrative with wide appeal for a cross-range of voters. Representations of groups tended to be more commonly discussed by New Zealand list MPs, suggesting that lack of defined territorial constituencies allowed these MPs to expand their representative roles in favour of identity groups.

Interview data provided MPs with a more personal context within which to discuss their identities and the way they related these to representation. By changing not only the context of the performances of identity, but also the audience, it is possible to observe whether the types of representative claims made by MPs also changes. At first glance, the representations of identity seemed very similar in both the public and the personal contexts. Localness was still the most commonly featured identification among constituency representatives in both countries; all MPs in the UK explicitly mentioned representing their geographical constituencies, as did ninety per cent of the New Zealand electorate MPs. However, localness was rarely mentioned by list MPs in the interview context, with only one mentioning representing people living in their 'home electorate'. Instead, list MPs drew on the representation of identity groups as a form of new constituency, beyond geographical boundaries. Of all the MPs, list MPs were the most common group who discussed group representation and put forward a wide range of groups that they identified themselves with and consequently felt an obligation to represent. Among the UK MPs mention of group representation was rare, but unlike public representations of minority group identification where MPs often highlighted their identity markers through a discussion of their constituency, the two MPs who explicitly discussed representing groups within the interview drew on their own *personal* identities as a reason for acting as a group representative (Lammy and BAME communities and Swinson with young people/women).

The interview data revealed little direct reference to representation of political parties among MPs in the UK which was consistent with evidence from maiden speeches and biographies. Party association and values were implied, rather than explicitly stated by MPs. In contrast, as in the maiden speeches and biographies, MPs in New Zealand mentioned representing their political parties more frequently although these were not

framed as their only representative claims. However, unlike their public performances of identity where mention of “New Zealand” was frequent, there was no mention of representing nationality in New Zealand and only two of the British MPs (both from Wales) mentioned representing their countries. This silence around representation of nationality rejects the idea of a ‘national interest’ as discussed by Burke.<sup>14</sup> Burke believed that what mattered in representation were not individual constituency interests, but the interests of the whole country. Thus, as Judge argues “[t]he role of representatives collectively is to identify the national interest.”<sup>15</sup> However, in the case of these MPs, there seemed to be little attempt to discuss a ‘national interest’, with discourse almost exclusively centred around constituencies. In a similar way, there was also a silence around the representation of class, despite the fact that it was used as an identifier in biographies and speeches. The gay and lesbian communities were mentioned twice by list MPs as potential groups to represent in parliaments and this corresponds with the infrequent discussions of personal sexuality within the public settings.

When we compare the representations of identity made by MPs during public performances and those made during an interview setting, we can see that representation of constituencies and a ‘local identity’ is the most common theme to emerge. At this initial stage of the interview, MPs largely remained consistent to their public performances of group identification: constituency MPs emphasised links to their geographical territories, while list MPs identified the identity groups they felt connected to (usually by virtue of their own identity) and thus more explicitly positioned themselves in the role of group representative. List MPs were seen by constituency MPs to have less of a mandate to represent because they lacked a geographical community to represent and therefore need to ‘create’ a constituency for themselves, and representing identity groups is a means of doing this. However, those constituency MPs who could be identified as parliamentary minorities by virtue of ascriptive characteristics such as gender or race, often recognised that they were seen as *symbolically* representing a group despite their own representative claims. The next section of this chapter subsequently turns to an examination of descriptive and symbolic representation through the lens of authenticity. It uses interview data to explore the value that

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<sup>14</sup> D. Judge (1998) *Representation: Theory and Practice in Britain*, London: Routledge, p.98.

<sup>15</sup> Judge, *Representation*, p.51.

representatives place on the political representation of minority groups and the way that identity is used to create ‘representative’ parliaments.

#### **5.4 ‘Authenticity’ of Representation**

Chapter 2 has previously demonstrated that while identity can be seen as fluid, socially constructed and positional, it is also constrained and affected by culture, norms, institutions and systems of power. Identity is intersectional and multi-faceted and defining representation through the lens of group identification can be problematic and endanger essentialist discourse. However, individual subjects have agency over the creation and performance of identity and recent theories of representative claim-making have allowed ideas about descriptive and symbolic representation to be incorporated into conceiving of representation as a type of ‘performance’ where identity is used in different contexts, to different audience, with different agendas.

This section of the chapter draws on the language of ‘authenticity’ to examine the value that MPs place upon descriptive and symbolic representation. Authenticity, like identity, has been viewed as a socially constructed process, or as Peterson argues, “authenticity is a claim that is made by or for someone, thing, or performance and either accepted or rejected by relevant others.”<sup>16</sup> Peterson draws on Goffman’s notion of ‘representation of the self’ as a means for individuals (and other actors) to create, manage and manipulate the audience’s notion of authenticity, which requires consistent messages and performances by the actor. He cites empirical examples of when ascribed group membership and essentialist discourse was used to portray and judge ‘authenticity’ in music, food and art.<sup>17</sup> Using data gathered from in-depth interviews which discuss how MPs perceive descriptive and symbolic representation and how they relate this to their own roles as representatives, allows us to see another way that identity and identification with group representation is performed by political representatives. The chapter uses two frames of reference, numerical and cultural authenticity, to assess the value that MPs themselves ascribe to descriptive and symbolic representation and how

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<sup>16</sup> R.A. Peterson (2005) “In Search of Authenticity” *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 42 (5), pp.1083-1098 (1086).

<sup>17</sup> R. A. Peterson (1997) *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; K. J. Fox (1987) “Real punks and pretenders: the social organization of a counterculture” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 16, pp. 344–70; S. Lu and G.A. Fine (1995) “The presentation of ethnic authenticity: Chinese food as a social accomplishment” *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 36, pp. 535–53; E. L. Wade (1985) “The ethnic art market in the American Southwest, 1880–1980” in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, G.E. Stocking, (ed.), Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 167–91.

they position themselves as acting as a group representative. The language of ‘authenticity’ emerges out of the work of Phillips and Young, but also directly from the words of the MPs themselves.<sup>18</sup>

#### 5.4.1 Authenticity and Representation

Literature on descriptive representation has highlighted the need for visible representations of diversity in legislatures. Theorists of group representation argue that the political presence of minority groups who are traditionally under-represented in parliaments is necessary to encourage political participation and engagement among group, so that representatives can act as ‘role models’ and that the under-representation of these groups in legislatures causes a democratic deficit.<sup>19</sup> The most visually apparent reason for promoting diversity in parliaments is to provide a physical representation or a ‘mirror’ of the populace as a whole, or what I have termed *numerical authenticity*. In this case, representation is based on ascriptive characteristics of group identity such as gender, race or age. The physical presence of minority MPs provides visual evidence that parliaments are for all people, not just the privileged. Rhetoric about numerical authenticity is common not just in academic theory, but also in public debates about representation. Parliamentary debates in the UK around the Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation in 2010 saw Dame Anne Begg, for example, note that if parliament was not representative, it would affect its legitimacy.<sup>20</sup> Some MPs, like Iain Stewart, the former chairman of the Conservative Party’s LGBT group, publically emphasised the linkages between symbolic representation and numerical authenticity.

One of the most powerful things that we can be is role models. That applies to people who are of a visible minority and those who represent diverse backgrounds, be they professionals, carers or people from modest council house backgrounds. People who might be inspired to go into politics need to be able to see that there are people

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<sup>18</sup> See Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*, and Young, “Polity and Group Difference”.

<sup>19</sup> Phillips, *The Politics of Presence*; Wolbrecht and Campbell, “Leading by Example”; M.M Yoon and S. Bunwaree (2006) “Women’s Legislative Representation in Mauritius: ‘A Grave Democratic Deficit’” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 24 (2), pp.229-247; G. Abels (1998) *Engendering the representational democratic deficit in the European Union*, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin.

<sup>20</sup> A. Begg (2012) *House of Commons Hansard: Debate on Parliamentary Representation, 12 January 2012*, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column\\_403](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column_403), accessed July 2012.

like them in Parliament. That is one of the most powerful ways of getting more people involved in politics.<sup>21</sup>

The language of 'role models' draws on theories of symbolic representation; minority representatives serve as symbolic 'role models' for groups that may feel marginalised and excluded from privileged political space. Or, as Lynne Featherstone, the Minister for Equalities publically argued, "[w]hen a person sees that someone who looks like them can do it, that changes the world."<sup>22</sup> This kind of hyperbole inevitably creates a sense of pressure for representatives who are visible minorities, assigning them a label based on ascriptive identity and can also be rejected by MPs, as seen in the comments of Labour MP Chris Bryant ("I hope to God nobody will ever think of me as a role model in relation to anything whatsoever at any time") and Conservative member Adam Afriyie ("categorising people into clear groups can often be more divisive than allowing things to evolve to begin to reflect a nation over time.")<sup>23</sup>

Interview data gathered for this thesis demonstrated that even out of a public context, MPs from both countries acknowledged the importance of a visually representative parliament for helping people connect and identify with parliament. British MP Yasmin Qureshi used the language of justice to argue that visual representations of diversity were needed in parliaments.

Visually it looks nice...there is something about it. It's that concept that justice not only must be done but it must be seen to be done and I think that's where a visible representation of women and ethnic minorities on the green benches or red benches will perhaps engineer a confidence in people and it will look as if Parliament is much more representative.<sup>24</sup>

She put forward a normative position that parliaments *ought* to reflect diversity because failure to do so is unjust, and secondly, acknowledged that there are demands for this to

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<sup>21</sup> I. Stewart (2012) *House of Commons Hansard: Debate on Parliamentary Representation, 12 January 2012*, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column\\_403](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column_403), accessed July 2012.

<sup>22</sup> L. Featherstone (2012) *House of Commons Hansard: Debate on Parliamentary Representation, 12 January 2012*, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column\\_403](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column_403), accessed July 2012.

<sup>23</sup> C. Bryant (2012) *House of Commons Hansard: Debate on Parliamentary Representation, 12 January 2012*, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column\\_403](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column_403), accessed July 2012 and A. Afriyie (2012) *House of Commons Hansard: Debate on Parliamentary Representation, 12 January 2012*, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column\\_403](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column_403), accessed July 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

be physically demonstrated in order to make parliaments look more diverse and to increase public confidence in their political institutions. In a similar way, NZ MP Jacinda Arden echoed the need for a visually representative parliament.

I will always defend that we make sure that parliament looks like NZ, I guess that's my way of interpreting it because I think it's really important that people see within their parliament people they can identify with, people who they feel represent them. Now whether that be by gender, by age, by ethnicity, I think people will determine themselves, but as long as they feel like their parliament looks like NZ and represents them, that's what I think is the important test.<sup>25</sup>

Arden argued that parliaments should be a reflection of society, not just for abstract issues of justice, but to provide a tangible sense that legislatures were representative assemblies that 'looked like' the country they represented. For both these MPs, having a parliament that visibly reflects the identities of the people it aims to represent is important because it allows the population to see someone who is like them, which promotes confidence in and engagement with the political system. In Britain and New Zealand, both with relatively diverse populations, a parliament that reflects the variation in society has symbolic importance - demonstrating that everyone has the ability and the right to be a part of the political system, as well as increasing political engagement of minority groups by demonstrating a commitment to their representation.<sup>26</sup>

But as highlighted in previous chapters, the normative reasons for having a visually diverse parliament are not just because it 'looks' like society. The arguments for descriptive representation run deeper than this, arguing that group identification is not just based on having someone who *looks* like you in parliament, but also someone who *thinks* like you. Descriptive and symbolic representation therefore are also based on the premise that people who share identity or identification with a group, will have similarities in behaviour, life experience and culture that results in the creation of a bond between representatives and minority groups, or what I have called *cultural authenticity*. Shared experiences, upbringings or values create a closer bond between the representative and the represented because there is fundamental understanding of the

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<sup>25</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jacinda Arden, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>26</sup> For a further discussion of minority representation and engagement, see Bobo and Gilliam, "Race, Sociopolitical Participation, and Black Empowerment"; Banducci, Donovan & Karp, "Minority Representation, Empowerment and Participation"; and N. Terkildsen (1993) "When White Voters Evaluate Black Candidates: The Processing Implications of Candidate Skin Color, Prejudice, and Self-Monitoring," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37 (4), pp. 1032-1053.

experiences of the group and the construction of knowledge about issues that arise from this, as hooks et al. argue, as well as a sense of legitimacy to speak on their behalf. There is an importance therefore of having someone who has lived experience speaking on behalf of others with those same experiences.<sup>27</sup>

One of most consistent justifications for diversity of representation in interviews (among MPs from both countries) was the idea that individuals from minority groups shared experiences, upbringings or values with their constituents they were representing, which gave them an authenticity when speaking on behalf of the group. For example, Carmel Sepuloni, a Labour MP from New Zealand argued that:

They [political minority groups] need to feel that they're connected to the people that are in parliament, and the best way for that to happen is to have similar backgrounds, similar upbringings if you like, similar life experiences, similar cultural values so that helps in terms of engagement.<sup>28</sup>

Sepuloni demonstrated two points: firstly, the link between engagement and identification - as discussed previously, minority groups are more likely to feel connected to the political process if they see someone like them in parliament; and secondly, it is the shared sense of experiences, values and backgrounds with the representative that creates that connection. For Sepuloni, both numerical and cultural authenticity affect representation of minority groups, in that people must both be able to see that parliament looks like them but also feel a connection to the representatives based on an acknowledgement of shared backgrounds or values. British MP Paul Maynard echoes this sentiment as he stated, "I want the general public to see in their MPs people who they feel are just like them. That, to me, is the most crucial thing of all."<sup>29</sup>

As previously mentioned, the language of authenticity emerges not just in theoretical literature but also through the words of the MPs themselves. New Zealand National Party representative Hekia Parata argued that "I think that it is important that institutions reflect the authenticity of the communities from which they grow and from

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<sup>27</sup> See hooks, "Essentialism and Experience"; Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others"; Puwar, *Space Invaders*.

<sup>28</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>29</sup> P. Maynard (2012) *House of Commons Hansard: Debate on Parliamentary Representation, 12 January 2012*, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column\\_403](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column_403), accessed July 2012.

which they take resource and information and knowledge”<sup>30</sup> while her Labour opponent Maryan Street noted that when Labour had issues that affected Pacific people, “we will always give our speaking slots to our Pacifica MPs. They have a right to speak on those things before I do because they speak from a point of authenticity that I don’t have and they represent their communities in a way that I can’t do.”<sup>31</sup> Both women draw on the language of authenticity to describe the ways that representation should be carried out, as does Green MP Kevin Hague who argued that political minority groups need members of their own group to represent them in parliament because “it’s something to do with authenticity of representation.”<sup>32</sup> MPs used the term ‘authenticity’ as way of explaining the need, or the desire, for political representation which reflects the lived experiences of minority groups. This sense of shared backgrounds, values or perspectives allow some representatives to more accurately represent the views of the communities that they come from and gives them a more ‘legitimate’ role as a spokesperson for the needs of the group.

Here we see direct linkage to normative theories of descriptive representation. Street reflects that she does not have the same legitimacy to speak on Pacific issues as do MPs from within those communities. She uses the term “right to speak” which reflects back to Alcoff’s work on speaking for others and her theory that no speech is neutral, that the social location of the speaker (their identity) affects how they speak and how the discourse is constructed. Cultural authenticity also draws on bell hook’s argument that there are different ways of knowing; that the social position of the speaker not only situates them within a system of privilege but that knowledge can be constructed in different ways, giving support to the politics of presence argument. One female MP argued “I am of the view that different cultures, and men and women bring different perspectives, different ways of thinking.”<sup>33</sup> This is another advantage to diversity in parliaments; it produces a range of perspectives and differentiated knowledge that affect the political system. Conversely, a lack of diversity could stifle the representation of these lived experiences.

I think the problem is if all the MPs are of a particular grouping, or a majority, because you don’t get as many varied voices and while I can represent men, I don’t know

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<sup>30</sup> Extracted from an interview with Hekia Parata, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Extracted from an interview with Maryan Street, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Extracted from an interview with Kevin Hague, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Extracted from an interview with Hekia Parata, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).



what it's like to be a man, I do not have that lived experience.<sup>34</sup>

Here, Jo Swinson is discussing Phillips 'politics of presence' argument. She explores demands for descriptive representation from a wider parliamentary perspective: if all MPs are the same, parliaments do not reflect variation in voices; groups are not physically present to speak for themselves. She also focuses on her individual representational role and notes that because she is not a man, she cannot have the same lived experiences that a man does. There is an importance of belonging, in order to provide a sense of cultural authenticity.

MPs ascribed positive values to descriptive representation through identification with a minority group. Many mentioned the need to be 'of' the group in order to represent it – both for symbolic reasons and to create a sense of authenticity and legitimacy. New Zealand MP Jan Logie acts as her party's spokesperson on Pacific issues, despite not being of Pacific background. However, she believed that "it would be so much greater and better for them [Pacific people] if it was somebody who they knew had lived the life; who would just get it without having to check that they got it or explain it."<sup>35</sup> The idea that a Pacific representative would understand (or be more likely to understand) the needs of the Pacific community better than someone who was not of the group once again reinforces the demand for cultural authenticity in representatives, but it also suggests essentialist discourse in arguing that there is something inherently 'Pacific' to represent. Other MPs avoided this trap by specifically linking the notion of situated knowledge and group representation. Yasmin Qureshi, for example, argued that people contacted her as a female, Asian MP because:

I have an understanding of some of the issues... others see that as an advantage in terms of helping their particular causes. When they contact me they think they're more likely to get a positive response from me as someone who's going to show interest as opposed to someone that doesn't understand or hasn't experienced these things.<sup>36</sup>

Here, Qureshi acknowledges that even though she does not make explicit representative claims based on ethnicity or gender or religion, she is still recognised as a symbolic representative for people who share these traits. In a similar way, her Labour colleague

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<sup>34</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jo Swinson, MP, UK (November 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jan Logie, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

David Lammy argues that his racial identity informs the constituents who look to him as a representative.

There aren't many black men in parliament... and for that reason, I have a wider constituency, many of whom look to me because they think I will be sympathetic to the issues that they are raising and it's sometimes quite hard because I can't take up all of these issues.<sup>37</sup>

Here, Lammy makes two major points concerning minority representation. He discusses the black community as a “wider constituency” and he draws distinctions between what “they” (implying a cohesive black community) think Lammy can do as a representative for them, and what he can physically do in his role as a representative. ‘They’ are an external force, and they look to him as their representative, although there is little to suggest here whether this is a conscious choice that Lammy has made himself.

The concept of representation of a group may be seen at odds with the traditional notion of territorial-based representation, which assumes a representative with an elected mandate from a geographically defined constituency. However, electorates may form that move beyond the boundaries of geographical constituency to ones that are based on identity markers, such as race or gender. There are several reasons why this may occur. These may include demands based on the assimilation of a group into a nation, as a form of reparation from harm done to groups, their presence as a community of interest or as a means to increase the likelihood of getting a minority representative.<sup>38</sup> As Mansbridge outlines, group members may seek out a culturally authentic representative; someone who shares their background, culture or language, to better understand their needs.<sup>39</sup> Communication is an important factor in why group members may seek out ‘someone like them’ as a representative. New Zealand MP Sam Lotu-liga acknowledged that language played an important role in his relationship with his Samoan constituents.

I get Samoan people come in because they can speak Samoan to me and feel comfortable. I understand that, and I understand people have certain comfort levels around people of their own grouping or ethnicity or whatever it is that makes them comfortable and that's fine.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Extracted from an interview with David Lammy, MP, UK (May 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Taken from Rehfeld, *The Concept of Constituency*, pp.46-52, in his list of rights-based and consequentialist justifications for the formation of electoral constituencies.

<sup>39</sup> See Mansbridge, “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women?”

<sup>40</sup> Extracted from an interview with Sam Lotu-liga, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

The use of the phrase ‘certain comfort levels’, acknowledges one of the practical ways in which having a minority MP can affect representation. Lotu-liga argues that people feel more comfortable around members from their own group, implying that for ethnic minority groups at least, there are benefits to having a member of your own group representing you in parliament. Lotu-liga has an advantage as a Pacific MP as 19 per cent of his electorate of Maungakiekie are Pacific people, the fifth largest in the country.<sup>41</sup> Language barriers are one way that minority groups can feel excluded from the political process, and being able to communicate with an MP gives a sense of connection between people who may not be bound by geographical constituencies. This demonstrates the ways in which constituencies can form that are not based on location, but on a sense of kinship and recognition.

Geographical constituencies can also play a part in the shaping of identity labels and performance. In a bid to appeal to the widest number of voters, parties can run minority candidates in constituencies with geographically concentrated groupings. This is most common in the case of ethnic or racial groups who are more likely to be geographically clustered together, whether deliberately or through a process of informal ‘ghettoization’. This has follow-on effects for representatives as Bird notes.

Female candidates neither enjoy the benefits nor suffer the disadvantages of spatial concentration. In some constituencies, an ethnic minority candidate will seem the natural choice to represent the interests of the people; rarely will parties see women in the same way. Conversely, if elected, an ethnic minority representative may find it difficult to establish his or her credibility within the party as anything other than the ethnic spokesperson. While women may still be seen as defenders of women’s interests, they are not limited to this role.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, ethnic minority representatives may find themselves both hampered and aided in their performances of identity by the spatial concentration of ethnic groups.

In his interview, Ben Bradshaw made specific reference to constituencies with large populations of ethnic minorities and the prevalence of minority MPs representing them.

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<sup>41</sup> New Zealand Parliament (2012) *Maungakiekie Electorate Profile*, [http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/Electorates/EPData/1/9/e/DBHOH\\_Lib\\_EP\\_Maungakiekie\\_Data\\_4-Maungakiekie-People.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/Electorates/EPData/1/9/e/DBHOH_Lib_EP_Maungakiekie_Data_4-Maungakiekie-People.htm), accessed 10 March 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Bird, “The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities” p.20.

I think there are certain constituencies in the country that if they don't have majority ethnic minority populations, they certainly have sizeable minority ones and where it not only makes perfect sense, it also makes it much more likely that ethnic minority candidates get selected. I thought it was great actually that we did have David Lammy and Diane Abbott being able to speak out with their experience on the riots in a way that showed they understood the communities that they represented.<sup>43</sup>

This statement directly links MPs location, shared backgrounds and experiences, and representation. Bradshaw argues that because they come from the communities which experienced wide-scale damage in the 2011 English riots, David Lammy and Diane Abbott are better placed to understand and comment on why they occurred. It is inferred here, although not stated explicitly, that part of this shared background is also to do with a shared ethnicity, linking both Lammy and Abbott who are BAME MPs, and the racially diverse communities that were affected by the riots. There is an acknowledgement by Bradshaw that Lammy and Abbott have experiences and understanding of the communities that he does not have, hence the reference to “their” experience and that “they” understood. There is legitimacy and credibility to what both of these MPs say on the issue of the riots which may not come from someone outside the community who does not possess that sense of shared identity.

As we have previously seen, Lammy does acknowledge his role as a symbolic representative for the black community in Britain, both in his interview and in his public performances of identity, but his explicit representative claims appeared to be focused on his constituency as a wider audience, like all constituency MPs.

I acknowledge [that] as an ethnic minority MP, I have a particular role in relation to the black community, in this particular sense, but also to black, Asian, minority, ethnic people in a wider sense, and take those responsibilities seriously, but I think most people would say even if they were white and working class in my constituency, that I would represent their interests as well.<sup>44</sup>

Lammy acknowledges his role as a representative for many ethnic minority groups, including the black community of which he is seen as a visible member. This is a result not only of the lack of minority Members of Parliament in the United Kingdom, but is also indicative of the way that minority MPs assume a symbolic importance in

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<sup>43</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Extracted from an interview with David Lammy, MP, UK (May 2011).

parliament. Minority MPs are symbolically significant and have representational power for all ethnic minorities, even if they are not physical representatives of the group. Here, Lammy is accepting his responsibility as a representative of ethnic minority groups, but he also takes care not to alienate himself from his geographical constituency. While Tottenham has a sizeable ethnic population (44.9 percent recorded at the 2001 census), the majority of its constituents are not ethnic minorities.<sup>45</sup> The debates around Lammy and the race-based contest for the seat of Tottenham will be highlighted in the following section, which explores the concept of matching ethnic candidates with constituencies which have large ethnic populations in an attempt to tap into a sense authenticity.

#### **5.4.2 Identity-Based Constituencies**

Debates around descriptive representation and ethnic-based constituencies tend to be predominantly centered in studies from the United States.<sup>46</sup> These focus on issues of ethnic candidacy, voter mobilisation and political participation of minority groups in constituencies where they are represented by ‘one of their own’. In other words, do constituencies with large proportions of identity groups tend to elect a representative who shares the same identity markers? When the constituencies in Britain and New Zealand with high proportions of ethnic minority groups are investigated, it is clear that numerical superiority by no means guarantees a minority representative. In the UK, 25 parliamentary constituencies have more than 40 per cent of their voting population from ethnic minorities, with the top five constituencies having more than 60 per cent ethnic populations at the 2001 census. Of these five constituencies, two of which were altered as a result of the boundary change prior to the 2010 election<sup>47</sup>, only one has a MP from an ethnic minority background, Shabana Mahmood who is British born but of Pakistani heritage. She was one of the first Muslim female MPs in the British parliament, representing Birmingham Ladywood. Of the four other electorates in 2013, Harrow East

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<sup>45</sup> M. Anwar (2010) “Ethnic Minority Vote Stronger Than Ever But Massively Undervalued By Main Parties” *University of Warwick*  
[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/ethnic\\_minority\\_vote/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/ethnic_minority_vote/), accessed 17 June 2012.

<sup>46</sup> For discussion of ethnic minorities voting behaviour and selection of minority candidates, see: M. A. Barreto (2007) “Si Se Peude! Latino Candidates and the Mobilization of Latino Voters” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 101 (3), pp.425-440; C. Gay (2001) “The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95 (3) pp. 589-602; J.D. Griffin and M. Keane (2006) “Descriptive Representation and the Composition of African American Turnout” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50 (4) pp. 998-1012; R. Preuhs (2006) “The Conditional Effects of Minority Descriptive Representation: Black Legislators and Policy Influence in the American States.” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 68 (3) pp. 585-599.

<sup>47</sup> Birmingham Sparkbrook and Small Heath became part of Birmingham Hall Green seat and most of Brent South became part of Brent Central for the 2010 elections.

is represented by a white Conservative male; Birmingham Sparkbrook and Small Heath, now part of Birmingham Hall Green, is represented by a white male from the Labour Party; Brent South, now part of the seat of Brent Central is represented by a female white Liberal Democrat; and West Ham is represented by a white Labour woman.

In some cases, the representatives defeated ethnic minority candidates such as in the Birmingham Hall Green election in 2010, where Roger Godsiff defeated runner-up Salma Yaqoob from the Respect party. While concerns that the proportion of ethnic minorities in the UK population does not reflect the total number of ethnic minority origin MPs are justified, this demonstrates that large proportions of ethnic minority groups will not necessarily ensure a representative from an ethnic minority background.

*Table 5.2: Top 5 Ethnic Majority Constituencies in the UK (2001)*<sup>48</sup>

Constituency	Ethnic minority % in the 2001 census	Ethnic Minority Representative 2010
Harrow East	66.3	No.
Birmingham Ladywood	64.9	Yes
Birmingham Sparkbrook and Small Heath	64.8	No
Brent South	64.6	No
West Ham	60.2	No

In New Zealand, the Māori seats provide a means for legislated representation for the indigenous population. Aside from the Māori electorates which are all represented by Māori MPs, the five most ethnically diverse consistencies have large proportions of Pacific Island and Asian constituents, although unlike Britain, only one has a majority population. As of 2013, two seats with significant Pacific populations have ethnic minority MPs both from the Labour Party, while the other is a Labour safe seat and has been held by the former Party leader since 1999.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, neither of the seats with large Asian populations currently have an Asian MP. Botany was held by a Chinese MP

<sup>48</sup> Anwar "Ethnic Minority Vote Stronger Than Ever.

<sup>49</sup> Former Labour Party leader Phil Goff has held the seat of Mt Roskill since 1999.

from the National Party, Pansy Wong, until 2011 when she resigned after misusing her parliamentary travel allowance. The National Party then ran a young man of Māori descent, Jami-Lee Ross, who was elected in a by-election in 2011 with 54.66 per cent of the vote, proving that for Botany constituents, party loyalty mattered more than ethnicity.

**Table 5.3: Top 5 Pacific and Asian Electorates in New Zealand<sup>50</sup>**

<b>Name of Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Name of electorate</b>	<b>% in electorate</b>	<b>Ethnic Minority Candidate</b>
Pacific	Māngere	58.8	Yes
Pacific	Manukau East	44.2	No
Asian	Mt Roskill	40.3	No
Pacific	Manurewa	31.9	Yes
Asian	Botany	33.5	Yes

While both the Chinese MPs in the House were elected via the list system, the Pacific community had better ethnic representation in electorates, with ethnic minority candidates in four of the five constituencies with high Pacifica populations.<sup>51</sup> Justification for this practice is not necessarily framed in terms of vote winning – MP Brendan Burns argued:

If I were a Pacifica MP and I knew that a large part of my work that I wanted to do, not exclusively, but a large part of that was to serve Pacifica peoples and make sure their aspirations and hopes and dreams are fed into the political machine, then I guess I would want to be elected in a strong Pacifica presence and that tends to be how it manifests itself.<sup>52</sup>

Burns is speaking as part of the majority; he is a white, male, middle-aged MP and therefore his perspective provides an interesting addition to the views of the representatives from minority groups. He assumes that Pacifica MPs will want to represent Pacifica issues and stand in seats with large Pacifica population,

<sup>50</sup> Data gathered from New Zealand Parliament (2012) *Electorate Profiles*, <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/Electorates/> accessed 12 May 2012.

<sup>51</sup> These MPs are Sam Lotu-liga in Maungakiekie, Louisa Wall in Manurewa, Sua William Sio in Māngere and Kris Faafoi in Mana.

<sup>52</sup> Extracted from an interview with Brendan Burns, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

demonstrating that representatives from minority groups are labelled as group representatives in a way that the majority are not. Burns linked ethnic based constituencies with the desire of ethnic representatives to operate as a group representative, albeit “not exclusively”. It supposes a link between *being* of the group and *acting* for it, or the connection between descriptive and substantive representation, and the autonomy of the representative to choose to stand in constituencies with large ethnic populations. Despite the desire of parties to select an “authentic” ethnic candidate to run in these areas however, there is no guarantee of a link between descriptive and substantive representation. Furthermore, ethnic candidates are often chosen because they are seen as symbolic ‘models’ for the community in terms of achievement and success, and there is no guarantee that they will identify or be identified as part of a community who suffers from oppression or marginalisation. Bird discussed the danger of this type of candidate selection:

The message communicated by such visible minority candidacies is that immigrants and minorities are acceptable, so long as they are fully integrated, productive, highly educated, economically independent, culturally and religiously non-threatening, and contributors to rather than dependent upon the host society. This is an appealing message to the ethnic majority, but it is one that does not fit most visible minorities in the country, and that fails to address the underlying causes of their political and social marginalization.<sup>53</sup>

BAME candidates standing for safe seats may also experience prejudice as visible minorities. Le Lohe suggests that prejudice will have a greater impact on election results when “the electorate is overwhelmingly white, but where there is a significant non-white electorate the impact of prejudice is greatly reduced.”<sup>54</sup> The 2000 by-election in Tottenham provides an example of when representation of ethnicity and localness intersect in a safe seat. The Labour-held seat was left vacant in 2000 after the death of its MP, Bernie Grant, who had held the seat for thirteen years. Grant was one of the four black Labour MPs who historically entered the British Parliament in the 1980s and Tottenham was a diverse and multi-ethnic constituency. The strongest candidates for the Tottenham seat were Grant’s wife Sharon, who was white, and David Lammy, who was

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<sup>53</sup>Bird, “Comparing the Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities,” p.30.

<sup>54</sup> M. Le Lohe (1995) “Ethnic minority participation and representation in the British electoral system” in *Race and British electoral politics*, S. Sagar (ed.), London: UCL Press, pp. 76-77.



young, black, and highly educated. Debates raged about which candidate could better represent the people of Tottenham; a white woman who had strong links to Grant and his networks of contacts in the constituency or a black, Harvard-educated man. One black community worker argued in favour of Sharon Grant, stating, "[w]e've argued the need for black representation but many of the arguments being put forward in favour of Lammy are tokenistic. We're more worried about the quality of representation than the colour of it. Lammy's a nice bloke but he's as different to me as any white, middle class candidate."<sup>55</sup> In contrast, writer and activist Darcus Howe writing in the *New Statesman* argued in favour of Lammy, drawing on the importance of having black representation. "I live in a black community not unlike Tottenham. Although there is no black MP locally, there exists serious support for the Labour Party, particularly because it defends black representation. It gives black people an assurance that their own will be speaking for them."<sup>56</sup> Other local constituents argued "I don't know anything about his wife but if she's white then she doesn't know what it's like being black in London."<sup>57</sup> Here, claims of racial identification trump claims of localness. Despite the fact that Sharon Grant had been married to the former black MP and that she had plenty of experience with local communities and networks, Lammy was preferable as a representative because he was black and therefore could understand the experiences, values and oppression of being black in Tottenham. Lammy won the by-election and has continued to hold the seat in subsequent elections.

### 5.4.3 Justice and Symbolic Representation

Issues of justice in representation draw on the work of Young and Phillips who argue that there is symbolic power in having political minorities in parliament because it recognises them as fully participatory members of the political community and increases political engagement and participation of members of the group. The identity of minority groups can be defined by their Otherness, their exclusion from the majority. Representation based on cultural authenticity was therefore seen by some interview subjects as an important means to overcome structural oppression. Demands for descriptive representation seek to overcome the privileging of parliament as a majority institution by representing minority voices, or as Fiona Mactaggart argued before

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<sup>55</sup> G. Younge (2000) "Politics, race and the fight to inherit" *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2000/may/25/uk.labour>, accessed 21 June, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> D. Howe (2000) "My £10 bet that Bernie Grant's white wife would lose" *The New Statesman*, <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/137799>, accessed 21 June 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Younge, "Politics, race and the fight to inherit".

parliament, “[th]is issue is not just about representation but about power.”<sup>58</sup> Descriptive and symbolic representation give a voice to groups who may have been excluded from parliament in a variety of ways and who see no one who looks ‘like them’ in the legislative chamber. New Zealand MP Jan Logie drew on the language of power and marginalisation to argue that descriptive representation has symbolic power.

The strength of having one of your own represent you is more powerful without question, particularly for marginalised groups because part of the process of being marginalised is that you’re kept out of power and to have your own voice is a sign of change in itself.<sup>59</sup>

The importance of having “one of your own” as a representative is not only the act of representing but has symbolic importance, demonstrating positive change and empowerment of previously marginalised groups. Data collected from the MPs also referenced ideas of cultural authenticity, in that MPs from minority groups would be better placed to understand discrimination and oppression than those who had no ‘lived experience’. Yasmin Qureshi argued:

If you’re a woman you’re more likely to understand certain issues than if you’re a man. And if you’re a member of a minority community you’re more likely to understand issues regarding discrimination because you’ve probably felt it firsthand – you’ll have a better understanding of it.<sup>60</sup>

Here, the key words are “felt it firsthand” – the MP is able to draw on his or her own experiences to understand and communicate the needs of the community they represent in a way that someone outside of the community may not be able to do. While it cannot be said categorically that every member of a minority group has experienced oppression or injustice directly as a result of their membership in the group, it seems feasible to believe that they would have a better understanding of how that oppression may occur, because of their own experiences and the experiences of those around them. People naturally concern themselves with issues that affect them – therefore women are more likely to understand issues around pay parity if they have been denied the opportunities for financial advancement given to their male colleagues for the same job, or ethnic

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<sup>58</sup> F. Mactaggart (2012) *House of Commons Hansard: Debate on Parliamentary Representation*, 12 January 2012, [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column\\_403](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0003.htm#column_403), accessed July 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jan Logie, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>60</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

minorities may better understand issues of racism if they or their families have been subjected to judgements because of the colour of their skin. While empathy and understanding about these issues from all representatives is vital, it is unsurprising that representation on issues by someone who has ‘lived experience’ is sought after. Kevin Hague thus argued “I know issues facing gay men in immeasurably more detail and flavour than someone who is not a gay man.”<sup>61</sup> Here, Hague feels better placed to represent the issues that affect gay men because of his situated knowledge and experiences, demonstrating the connection and responsibility many minority MPs feel to their identity group.

However, as Maryan Street acknowledged, sometimes even being ‘of’ a community does not help to clarify whether you represent a group accurately, or if indeed, they feel represented. “I’m not sure if [lesbians] do feel I represent them... sometimes it’s hard to know if I’m representing interest groups adequately and whether I would do it any differently if I were not of them.”<sup>62</sup> This is an important consideration and links back to Saward’s concept of representation as a process of accepting and rejecting claims; representation is not just something passively accepted by the represented, it is a relationship whereby minority groups may choose to recognise the claims of an MP as their group representative, or they can reject those claims. Street subsequently argues that for her, the issue of identification concerned accountability, rather than representation. Because she was a lesbian and openly identified as such, she felt “responsible as a lesbian” to represent issues that affected the lesbian community, who in turn “know they can come to any of us [lesbian representatives] and they can expect us to represent them.”<sup>63</sup> This again links the idea of authenticity and representation – it is assumed that the lesbian community will seek to be represented on issues that concern them by someone who is also a lesbian, and that they can also *expect* that this representation will take place because of shared group identity. There is then a relationship between the representative and the represented that is linked by a sense of cultural authenticity and of symbolism - Street is recognised as a symbolic representative for the lesbian community in New Zealand by virtue of her own identity and her shared experiences as a member of the community. This further demonstrates the importance of the audience in shaping representation; the way they perceive and

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<sup>61</sup> Extracted from an interview with Kevin Hague, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>62</sup> Extracted from an interview with Maryan Street, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Extracted from an interview with Maryan Street, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

‘read’ the performance of the MP affects the types of performances of identity and representative claim making that the MP continues to undertake.

Other MPs argue that while lived experiences are important, it is ownership of identity through active engagement with communities which is vital. Or, as New Zealand MP Megan Woods argues, “It’s not enough to just be a woman, or just be a Chinese person or a Pacifica person; it’s about being connected, to have grass roots engagement, to actually be able to speak with some kind of knowledge about what it is that the wider group is feeling.”<sup>64</sup> The reference to situated knowledge again links back to the importance of cultural authenticity, but here knowledge is directly linked to substantive representation. It is not enough to ‘be’, you have to ‘do’. Identity markers such as gender or ethnicity are the first step (descriptive representation) but action to and for the group (substantive representation) is also necessary to be a group representative because they add weight to representative claims. For Woods and for Sepuloni (see below) an MP can only be ‘authentic’ if they act on behalf of a group, and Sepuloni’s quote in particular, emphasises the role that the audience plays in receiving and accepting or rejecting representative claims.

If you’re engaged with that community and they know that, then they’ll feel that you are representing them and advocating on their behalf. If you’re there at things, if you’re listening, if you’re putting things out and letting them know that you have spoken about Pacific people or you’ve alerted others to Pacific issues, if you’ve tried to get media traction around particular Pacific issues, then that matters to our Pacific community.<sup>65</sup>

Self-definition as a group representative is not enough in this case - there must be substance, rather than just description. Sepuloni discussed communication and dialogue with the community, as well as the need to raise awareness of issues that concern the group and demonstrating a connection with the represented. While MPs did not stress shared identity markers as essential to the making of explicit representative claims or for carrying out substantive representation, both minority MPs and ‘mainstream’ MPs argued that there was an importance in being a member of the group.

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<sup>64</sup> Extracted from an interview with Megan Woods, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>65</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated some of the ways that MPs perform identity within an interview setting; moving away from the public ‘performances of identity’ of the previous chapter to a one-on-one interview setting allows for a comparison of the ways that MPs construct and perform their identities through their representative role. In public performances of identity in the UK, we saw that localness was commonly used as the basis for explicit representative claims while references to representation of other identity groups were more implicit. In New Zealand, public performances of identity were affected considerably by the method of selection of the MP (list/electorate) and the associated political norms that accompany these. For example, list MPs in New Zealand consistently used their speeches to highlight their parties in a much more explicit way than was seen in the UK and very few MPs in either country publically mentioned representation of a single group as an explicit representative claim at the risk of alienating other voters from voting for them or their party.

Within this chapter, we can see many similarities: the performance of identity is still affected by method of selection and parliamentary norms and culture. Electorate MPs in NZ prioritised constituency representation while list MPs in New Zealand were more likely to associate themselves with some form of group representation. This was the result of two factors; firstly, the lack of geographical constituency for list MPs meant that they sought the representation of identity groups as a form of new constituency. Secondly, as previous chapters have highlighted, New Zealand’s history of engagement with descriptive representation and electoral reform has meant that the explicit linkage of identity with representative performances and claim-making is not unusual and therefore does not counter institutional norms, as in the case of the United Kingdom.

Interview data showed that there was awareness among MPs that ascriptive minority identification meant that they could be perceived as a symbolic representative for marginalised groups who shared those identity markers even if they do not make representative claims themselves. This reiterates Goffman and Saward’s emphasis on the way the performance is ‘read’ or understood by the audience. Some MPs (Qureshi and Evans) struggled to maintain autonomy over their representative roles and refuted representative claims based on aspects of their identity, while others (Lammy and Swinson) accepted that representing identity groups, albeit after the representation of constituents, was an inevitable part of their role as an MP. The use of ‘localness’ as a

basis for making explicit representative claims which has been evident in both the public performances of identity and within the interviews, demonstrates the importance that constituency representation has for representatives. Despite the importance that literature gives to the relationship between political parties and representation, there was little mention of this from the narratives of the British MPs. Party representation was emphasised by half the representatives from New Zealand, both from list and electorate MPs.

The chapter then turned to consider the ways that MPs think about the representation of identity, and asks “*In what ways do MPs ascribe value to descriptive and symbolic representation through their performances of identity?*” Here, the role of the differing individual audience/interviewer is more easily visible. On a more informal, less ritualised stage, the actors (MPs) deviated more frequently from institutional norms and traditions and discussed the representation of identity in a more explicit manner. MPs scripts about descriptive and symbolic representation followed two separate but intertwining threads: authenticity and symbolism, and echoed much of the normative theoretical literature on descriptive and symbolic representation highlighted in Chapter 2. The common ‘script’ for MPs was that parliaments must demonstrate to minority groups that politics is not just the domain of the elite, that there are people ‘like them’ to represent them and that their experiences and needs are valued as much as those of the majority. Therefore, parliamentary diversity was important because it was a visible symbol of equality and justice. Furthermore, there was a need for authenticity of representation because MPs who had shared group membership, similar backgrounds, or the same cultural experiences as a minority group were better positioned to operate as a group representative. It was assumed that these shared characteristics will enable representatives to speak with greater legitimacy on behalf of the group, because they understand the needs of the community better than someone who is not a member would do and that they would act as symbols or role models for other members of the group. This rhetoric suggests that identity performance therefore plays an important role within representation: emphasising shared identity markers allows representatives to qualify their roles and identify and empathise with constituents. Identity performance through representation also allows MPs to be ‘read’ by an audience: their party, other MPs, the media, or voters.

At face value, MPs seem to assign value to descriptive and symbolic representation and yet their previous public performances have demonstrated that many do not fully adopt or perform the role of a group representative. Some of the difficulties with understanding 'authenticity' of representation are that it is challenging to define criteria and consequently, it is difficult to 'read' who an authentic representative is. The claims that MPs make concerning representation of identity groups are affected by the performance they give, the reaction of the audience, the political norms and culture that they are a part of, and the institutional rules and regulations that dominate the political system. The next chapter goes on to explore these factors which constrain the performance of identity in more detail, and reflects further on the ways that MPs perform identity within their representative roles.





## Chapter 6

### The Constraints on MPs' Performance of Identity

#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 has demonstrated some of the ways that MPs perform identity and claim-making within an interview setting, focusing on the ways they ascribe value to descriptive and symbolic representation. This chapter also focuses on the way MPs perceive the relationship between identity and representation and uses further interview data to ask the question “*which factors constrain descriptive representation and the performance of identity?*” While the previous chapter has highlighted the ways that MPs ascribe value to descriptive and symbolic representation and used representative claims based on identity to justify and qualify their own representative roles, this chapter focuses on why performances of identity might conversely demonstrate a reaction to descriptive and symbolic representation. The ‘authenticity paradox’ reveals that despite acknowledging a need for the political representation of women, ethnic minorities and other under-represented groups, most MPs did not want to make explicit representative claims based on these facets of identity. They feared being labelled or ‘typecast’ as a tokenistic minority MP and assigned low status to the role of the group representative.<sup>1</sup> The chapter examines the complexities of identity performance and the way representative claims are made and rejected by MPs.

The chapter then turns to considering the impact of political ‘space’ on the way identity is constructed and performed. As I have argued, political institutions play an important part in developing the relationship between identity and representation. Political parties, methods of selection and the rituals of parliamentary life can all act as factors which shape or constrain the portrayals of identity by representatives. The chapter first explores MPs feelings about candidate selection and quota systems as potential support for, or barriers to, descriptive representation, and then turns to considering the impact of parliament as a ‘stage’ upon which identities of representatives are performed and shaped. It follows Ray’s supposition that “institutions are not neutral spaces in which contestations over collectivity are played out, but exert a constitutive impact upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Celis and Wauters” ‘Pinning the Butterfly’ p.390.

identities produced.”<sup>2</sup> In this way, the chapter draws on both internal and external factors which affect the way that identity and representation are performed by political representatives.

## **6.2 Representation Beyond Labels**

Chapter 2 has demonstrated the ways that identity can be socially constructed in a myriad of ways: through environment, company or culture to name a few. Group identity moreover can be viewed as part of a wider construction of ‘Othering’ or relational positions that are affected by context and institutions, and the subsequent identity labels which accompany this division of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are not easy to remove. Gutmann argues that identity markers such as gender or race carry expectations about behaviour, attitudes and character and Puwar notes that the visibility of bodies makes minority representatives instantly defined by ascriptive characteristics.<sup>3</sup> The desire for ‘authentic’ political representation described in the previous chapter means that MPs may be encouraged to play a more active role in group representation by virtue of their identity. Performance of group identification can originate from the individual MP, other political actors or the audience; consequently group representation is a process which involves recognition and negotiation of identity from both the representative and the represented.

As we have seen in Chapter 5, MPs are aware of the need for group representation and parliamentary diversity; they ascribe value to having a legislature that looks like the public it is supposed to represent. This operated on two levels: a demand for numerical authenticity (visual similarities) and cultural authenticity (shared backgrounds, values and experiences). Although the rhetoric employed by MPs when discussing descriptive and symbolic representation echoed much of the normative literature on group representation, the interviews revealed that MPs – particularly those from parliamentary minority groups – found the concept of acting as a group representative more challenging. In an echo of Celis and Wauters findings from the Belgian Parliament, this data demonstrates that MPs in the UK and NZ also did not want to be seen as ‘just’ a group representative.<sup>4</sup> Despite supporting authentic representation for women, ethnic

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<sup>2</sup> K. Ray (2003) “Constituting ‘Asian women’: Political representation, identity politics and local discourses of participation”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 26 (5), pp. 854-878.

<sup>3</sup> Gutmann, *Identity and Democracy*, and Puwar, *Space Invaders*.

<sup>4</sup> Celis and Wauters” ‘Pinning the Butterfly’

minorities and other under-represented groups, MPs pushed to be seen as more than a token identity label.

### **6.2.1 “I’m other things as well”**

The ‘authenticity’ typology developed in the previous chapter was the result of both the theoretical literature on group representation and MPs themselves describing the need for representatives who looked like and understood diverse groups in society. MPs talked about the need for role models, justice, overcoming oppression and discrimination, and different perspectives involved in decision-making processes. Descriptive and symbolic representation are therefore understood through the lens of identity labels: be it gender, ethnicity, religion, age or sexuality. New Zealand MP Maryan Street described the power of these identity labels and the effect they have on representative roles.

Some people are known for certain things...so people attach certain values to them and sometimes communities of interest to those individual MPs and sometimes it can be very difficult for an MP to be more than that, to be more than associated with those issues.<sup>5</sup>

Her phrase “to be more than that” echoes the representative’s self-perceptions of identity and the way they have to juggle identity labels with their roles as representatives of all their constituents. There is a common thread among representatives of being more than a label, more than just a gendered, ethnic or religious minority, which supports Celis and Wauters’ findings that MPs walk a line between “balancing between being that colourful butterfly, but making sure not to be pinned down as one.”<sup>6</sup> They support authenticity of representation but resist being an ‘authentic’ group representative. While MPs were on the whole, encouraging and open to the idea of increasing diversity in parliaments and recognised the need for a range of voices in legislatures, there was a reluctance to be pigeonholed or labeled on the basis of their group identity and a disavowal that these identity markers were the reason they were selected by the party or by the constituents.

Minority representatives in particular struggle to balance the demands to represent diversity while maintaining that identity does not affect their role as MPs. There is a conflict between these two issues; the interview subjects all asserted the need for a fuller

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<sup>5</sup> Extracted from an interview with Maryan Street, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Celis and Wauters, “Pinning the Butterfly,” p.391.

sense of representation, rather than a concept strictly based on identity. No one, despite race, gender, age or other identity marker, wanted to state that they only represented an identity-based group or that they *could not* represent a minority group even if they were not ‘of’ the group. For example, Jo Swinson argued “[c]ertainly I think I can represent men, or people from a BEM background or people who are gay or bi or transgender even though I’m straight, a woman and white”<sup>7</sup> and Brendon Burns noted “I don’t think people should be there to simply represent the interests of a particular subset of our population.”<sup>8</sup> This created a discord between the rhetoric promoting and encouraging diversity in parliaments, and the need for numerical and cultural authenticity; and a denial of the fact that these facets of identity can affect the ways that representational roles are carried out. In the same interview, subjects would support demands for parliamentary diversity because of issues of justice, legitimacy, or the need for cultural authenticity while refusing to be seen as a ‘token’ female, Asian, or Muslim representative.

Literature on identity has argued that it is a socially constructed process affected by many factors and for MPs the complexity of their own personal identification is mixed with perceptions and representations of identity made by political parties, by voters and by the media. Performances of identity are therefore influenced by the way that they are perceived and ‘read’ by others. Interview data revealed that MPs struggled to maintain their own definitions of how they were seen as representatives; with many denying that their ‘group identity’ was their defining characteristic as an MP. Maryan Street argued “[p]eople know that I’m gay but they know that I talk about more than gay issues”;<sup>9</sup> Sam Lotu-liga stated “[e]thnicity is only part of who you are as an MP”;<sup>10</sup> and Carmel Sepuloni insisted that “I may be a Pacific MP but I’m other things as well.”<sup>11</sup> These MPs attempt to define their own representative roles; they acknowledge their ‘unique’ qualities as representatives but see them as only part of their larger responsibilities as politicians. They do not focus only on issues of sexuality or ethnicity. In a similar way, Ben Bradshaw argued that “[c]ertainly my sexual orientation has helped me form my politics; it has never been my motivation behind me going into politics. I am much more

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<sup>7</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jo Swinson, MP, UK (November 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Extracted from an interview with Brendon Burns, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Extracted from an interview with Maryan Street, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Extracted from an interview with Sam Lotu-liga, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

interested in other areas of policies.”<sup>12</sup> While Bradshaw acknowledges the role that his sexuality has played in shaping his identity, he wants to demonstrate that his knowledge and his role as an MP moves beyond issues of sexuality or the LGBT community.

MPs can struggle with maintaining autonomy over their performances of identity. In a similar way to his Pacific counterparts Lotu-liga and Sepuloni, New Zealand MP Kris Faafoi tried to brush off the label of ‘ethnic MP’, argued that “I don’t necessarily want to be tagged with any perception of just being a Pacific MP.”<sup>13</sup> Dr Jian Yang publically described himself in his maiden speech as “a bridge between the Chinese community and [our] mainstream society” but in his interview he mentioned that he should go ‘beyond’ representing the Chinese community because as a list MP “I’m not only representing one community, I am representing the whole country.”<sup>14</sup> In a similar way, Carmel Sepuloni stated “we [Pacific Island MPs] need to demonstrate that we are quite capable of representing other groups as well as our own.”<sup>15</sup> Maintaining autonomy over their own performances of identity can be problematic for MPs however; in previous media interviews, Conservative MP Margot James has described the way she views identity labels with regards to her own same-sex relationship.

I truly don't see myself as a gay this or lesbian that; I think it's all very limiting. But that's not to say that I don't respect people whose instincts and being and choice are very strictly for one gender or the other. I just hate the sort of feeling that if you're not in the straight, accepted-norm box, then you must be gay. I don't think that's true and it leads to a sense of pressure that a lot of people, who other people think are gay, don't necessarily feel comfortable with.<sup>16</sup>

However, despite ‘performing’ her identity in this way, media references to James still portray her as a ‘gay MP’ (particularly when referencing LGBT issues) and there is little apparent attempt to try to frame her sexual identity beyond this label.<sup>17</sup> Yasmin Qureshi

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<sup>12</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Extracted from an interview with Kris Faafoi, MP, NZ (February 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jian Yang, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Hoggard, “Cameron’s Girl”.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: A. Faiola (2012) “Britain’s Conservatives push for same-sex marriage” *The Boston Globe*, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/world/2012/03/31/britain-conservatives-push-for-same-sex-marriage/CywN88sXjHaun2tWxzAizL/story.html>, accessed 10 June 2012; BBC (2012) “Catholic cardinal criticises gay marriages plan” *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17249099>, accessed 10 June 2012; Pink News (2010) “Margot James becomes the second out lesbian in parliament” <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2010/05/07/margot-james-becomes-the-second-out-lesbian-in-parliament/>, accessed 10 June 2012.

also argued that she had autonomy in how she defined her own identity. “For me it’s not a question of definition, I don’t define myself as an Asian, Muslim, Pakistani origin, woman. I define myself very much as a Labour MP representing the constituency of Bolton South East – that for me is my starting premise.”<sup>18</sup> Qureshi’s performances of identity have been relatively consistent; her maiden speech and biography make no attempt to draw attention to her ethnicity, gender or religion, or make claims about group representation. However, she also previously highlighted the need for representatives who had ‘first-hand’ knowledge about discrimination or oppression, and because of that, recognised that she may be seen by some as a symbolic representative for those with a similar faith, ethnic background or gender. There is a disparity for her between recognising that identity is important to representation and representative roles, whilst advocating to not be recognised as an identity label. While it may be important that ‘someone’ symbolises diversity and increased perspectives in parliaments, she does not want to define *herself* in that role, although she may fit the criteria.

Conversely, Pacific MP Carmel Sepuloni argued that her identity could potentially bar her from being seen as an ‘authentic’ group representative. “I guess in terms of being a young Pacific half-caste woman who can’t speak either of her Pacific languages, who’s also a solo mother who doesn’t come from a family of high status, I don’t exactly fit that box of traditional leadership in the Pacific, so it does have its challenges sometimes.”<sup>19</sup> Sepuloni faced potential barriers to acting as a group representative for the Pacific community, because her personal identity did not match the requirements desirable in a Pacific representative. This demonstrates the complexity of authenticity and identity: simply identifying as a group member does not automatically mean the community will support the claim to act as a group representative. Representative claim-making, as well as performances of identity are then shaped not only by the MP but by external forces and these can be harder to overcome or discard.

The relationship between an MP and these external identity labels and responsibilities requires negotiation and acceptance on both parts. It requires both an acknowledgement and projection of identity from the representative and recognition and acceptance from the represented that the representative speaks on their behalf. Identity can be developed and shaped by the individual representative but representatives are also part of a more

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<sup>18</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

complex, wider construction of group identity. They may have some control over who they represent, but demands to act as a group spokesperson, or indeed the perception that they *are* a representative of a group because of shared characteristics, also exist outside the individual. New Zealand MP Maryan Street noted that:

The way the media frame things, the vocabulary around communities of interest or identity politics can very powerfully alter people's perceptions about someone. "Oh she's the Asian one"... She might be Asian but she's a lot of other things. She is a woman, she might be a mother, she might have a long career in business or the community and voluntary sector... people latch onto the label they find easiest to remember.<sup>20</sup>

As was demonstrated by the earlier example of Margot James, the media operates as another external force which assigns identity markers to representatives. These labels have values attached to them which can affect perceptions and judgements of the individual and there is weight and significance to "which label they find easiest to remember." In the example above, ethnicity is the significant identity marker, rather than gender, age, occupation or fact she is a parent. This not only demonstrates the impact of ascriptive identities, it assigns certain values and perceptions to the representative that can be hard to overcome or disassociate from. Although ascriptive identities present an easy way for the media to label representatives, it is not clear why some of these are privileged over others, such as ethnicity over gender; although it is likely it is due to being "a minority within a minority". There are less Asian MPs than there are female MPs, for example, which makes an Asian female MP more visible as a minority and more susceptible to being labelled by external forces.

Sometimes the media uses MPs own public performances of identity to shape the way they 'label' politicians. Green MP Jan Logie discussed her performance of identity in her maiden speech and acknowledged that this could have lasting implications on the way she was viewed by the public 'audience'.

It's been interesting because in my maiden speech I talked about being a lefty feminist lesbian and people came up to me afterwards and said "that was really brave" and I thought "was that brave??" ... I've had someone giving me advice, an older politician, saying you should be really careful about what issues you take on, not to get pigeonholed... I don't feel too concerned about it. I just

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<sup>20</sup> Extracted from an interview with Maryan Street, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

want to do the work and I know that the media processes  
and if they chose to label me, they will.<sup>21</sup>

Puwar has argued that the media shapes the role of black MPs in Britain by focusing on their blackness as a form of speciality: “[B]lack MPs have to be especially careful what they say on race issues because they know the media are just waiting and watching them for any kind of controversial statement or behaviour.”<sup>22</sup> This was seen in 2012 when UK Labour MP Diane Abbott was involved in a ‘racist’ Twitter debate and Māori MP Hone Harawira was accused of using a racial slur to refer to fellow politicians.<sup>23</sup>

### **6.3 Making and Rejecting Representative Claims**

Former BAME MP Paul Boateng once described his position of acting as a ‘mainstream’ MP while attempting to stay aware of minority issues and interests as ‘Janus-like’.<sup>24</sup> The reference to the Roman god with two faces who must look forward and look back simultaneously, demonstrates the difficulties MPs face when attempting to marry their roles as MPs and demands for descriptive representation. There is a struggle between believing in the concept of diversity in parliaments and a genuine desire to reflect the makeup of society in legislatures, while at the same time denying that race, gender, or sexuality has any impact on the representative role. This requires first admitting representation is not a level playing field and that there is a need for diversity in legislatures, as has been previously discussed. Representatives then must find a way to marry their own identity with these demands for diversity and to avoid being seen as a token MP. Puwar quotes a BAME MP from the UK describing the difficulties faced in this dual notion of representation.

It is important to make clear that you are a British MP, because you know, people try to turn you into all sorts of things...they turn you into a community leader. [You have to struggle] to establish that you’re a properly elected MP. Even though they know, they try to make out that you’re a black leader... I make it quite clear that I am a Member of Parliament and I am a British Member of Parliament.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jan Logie, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.67.

<sup>23</sup> BBC (2012) “MP Diane Abbott ‘sorry’ over Twitter race comments” *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-16423278>, accessed 20 March 2013; D. Levy and K. Chapman (2012) “Harawira’s N-bomb directed at National MPs” *Stuff.co.nz*, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/7623209/Harawiras-N-bomb-directed-at-National-MPs>, accessed 20 March 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Nixon, “The role of black and Asian MPs at Westminster,” p.226.

<sup>25</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.65.



Sometimes a representative's role as spokesperson for a minority group was driven more by the demands of the group themselves than it was by the MP. This is particularly evident for those with ascriptive characteristics because they are visibly marked out in parliament as a minority group. Sam Lotu-liga stated that "Pacific people see me as their voice in parliament, that's the way it is, whether I like that or not, that's the way they feel. And there's nothing wrong with feeling that way."<sup>26</sup> In contrast, others fought back against this type of identity-labelling and explicitly rejected representative claims. Māori MP Hekia Parata argued that despite perceptions of her representative role, she is clear in her own mind about who she does not speak for.

[I do not feel responsible] in the sense that I see myself representing or speaking for all Māori or speaking for all women... I understand that I'm perceived that way and that people will assume that particular appellations that I have – I'm a mother, I've been a business women, I've been a public servant – that therefore it is inevitable that whatever I say or do will be received through that lens whether I mean it to be that way or not. I actually wasn't elected by all women or all Māori or all mothers, so no, I don't see myself speaking on their behalf.<sup>27</sup>

Parata defines her own role as not "speaking on behalf" of women or Māori or mothers. Like Yasmin Qureshi previously, she is acknowledging the perceptions of who she represents, while at the same time, rejecting them. Yet in previous public performances of identity, Parata has emphasised her links to both her gendered and ethnic self and even discussed the way that culture and identity "are the collective and personal lenses through which we see and interpret the world."<sup>28</sup> She publically acknowledges and makes representative claims through demonstrations of shared ethnicity but in this context, Parata is reluctant to be labelled as a group representative.

David Lammy emphasised the difference between recognising the role he played as a political representative for ethnic communities, and the notion of representation based solely on variables such as race or ethnicity.

I think that that, in the end, represents a crass representational politics, I use the word crass very carefully, but that does not feel appropriate for the 21st century. It was appropriate perhaps in the 20th century but

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<sup>26</sup> Extracted from an interview with Sam Lotu-liga, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Extracted from an interview with Hekia Parata, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Website of Hekia Parata, MP (2012) <http://www.hekiaparata.co.nz/index.php?/pages/profile.html>, accessed July 2012.

it is not appropriate in this century and is not really particular to our democracy. What I mean by that is I represent all of my constituents, whatever background, as best I can. I recognise the special components of my own ethnicity and I do take my representation in relation to diversity and racial diversity very seriously and I speak out nationally on diverse issues and I have over the last 10 years. But I think it would be wrong if you're suggesting that there should be black MPs to represent black people or Asian MPs to represent Asian people - the reason that that just doesn't feel right in the 21st century in this country, is that people have multiple identities.<sup>29</sup>

Lammy's statement suggests that representation based on descriptive characteristics is limited and dated, demonstrating a narrative of progress in the way representation is conceptualised and echoing the theoretical move from identity-based group representation to wider notions of representative claim-making. He stresses again the importance of representing his entire constituency, who will be largely responsible for his re-election or loss of seat, while at the same time briefly acknowledging his own ethnicity and diversity issues. However, there is little active attempt here to portray himself as a minority representative or discussion of why he believes representational politics has moved beyond descriptive representation. There is also a disconnect between the way he conceptualises descriptive representation as "black MPs to represent black people or Asian MPs to represent Asian people" and more normative theories which move beyond a need for mirror representation to issues of justice and legitimacy. His discussion of 'multiple identities' reflects a need to discard simplistic identity labels in favour of a wider conception of how identity and representation intersect, as has been discussed throughout this thesis. Lammy clearly acknowledges here that he has a role as a representative for BAME communities but he also positions himself as more than a group representative.

When asked if he acted as a representative for the LGBT community, Ben Bradshaw answered:

There have always been moves and there has been an appetite for that, but I think one of the very wise and sensible decisions that I took very early on after I had been elected was that I wasn't going to allow myself to be pigeon holed in any way or allow myself to become known as the gay MP or the MP who campaigned on

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<sup>29</sup> Extracted from an interview with David Lammy, MP, UK (May 2011).

LGBT issues, not least because I didn't think this was a very sensible way of achieving change, but that would have meant I wasn't doing my job properly for the rest of my constituents.<sup>30</sup>

Bradshaw gives a sense that for him, fulfilling a representational role as an LGBT spokesman would be non-productive. He argues that he did not think being seen as the “gay MP” would be “a very sensible way of achieving change”, inferring that change comes not from LGBT MPs, but from outside the group. While Bradshaw does not conceal his sexuality, he believes his responsibility is not to act as a vocal spokesperson on LGBT issues but to act as a positive role model for the LGBT community and for his constituents.

I also believe and believed the single most effective thing that someone like I could do for LGBT equality was to simply do a good job and be a good role model and not to be a flag waving, standard bearing, LGBT activist.<sup>31</sup>

Instead of emphasizing difference, Bradshaw normalises his role as a representative. His perception of what it means to be a good role-model for ‘the community’ (both LGBT and otherwise) is not to draw attention to himself as a minority, but to demonstrate that he is simply an MP who works for his geographical constituency. Bradshaw is also in a relatively privileged position in that he can ‘opt out’ of identifying with the LGBT community if he chooses. He has no visible identity markers that single him out as a member of a group, such as ethnicity, gender or disabilities. This gives him greater autonomy over the role his identity plays in his job as a Member of Parliament. It also emphasises the difference between visible identity markers and identity that can be internalised such as religion, sexuality or class and the freedom to choose to opt in or opt out of group membership. Here, because Bradshaw does not self-identify as a “gay MP”, he has relatively freedom to avoid this label by abstaining on commenting on gay issues or being involved in the gay community. He has control over the way his image or his identity is presented to the public in a way that a black or Asian MP does not have.

Carmel Sepuloni noted that “[a]t the end of the day, all MPs have to be able to have a relationship with our Pacific community and have to be able to represent them in parliament. It can't be just up to the 6 of us in here to do that because that's not

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<sup>30</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

enough.”<sup>32</sup> This is a risk for minority MPs and constituents alike: that having certain MPs who either physically or politically represent minority issues will result in a lack of attention from other political representatives. Sepuloni is concerned that Pacific people will only be represented by the six Pacific MPs in parliament, rather than by the wider political party they supported or even by their constituency MP. Although Pacific MPs may have shared cultures, languages or backgrounds with their constituents, and reflect the diversity of society in parliament, this is not enough. Sepuloni sees a need for *all* MPs to represent the issues of the minority group. Young (1989) believes that this is unlikely, as the privileged are not usually inclined to protect oppressed groups “partly because their social position prevents them from understanding those interests and partly because to some degree their privilege depends on the continued oppression of others”.<sup>33</sup>

The failure of MPs who are not ‘of’ the group to speak on behalf of minority interests may also be because they themselves are conscious of a perceived lack of authenticity. Thus Megan Woods reflected on her position about advocating for gay rights in New Zealand by stating that she believed decisions (or representation) concerning the community needed to come from within.

I’m really connected to our Rainbow Sector but as a straight Member of Parliament, I don’t think it is for me to take up the crusade to take civil unions into gay marriage because that’s a decision that the community needs to make about whether they’re willing to accept the backlash that will occur because of that.<sup>34</sup>

Here, Woods first demonstrated her relationship to the LGBT community (“I’m really connected”); self-identifies (as a straight Member of Parliament); defines the issue (the crusade to take civil unions into gay marriage) and then separated herself from “the community” and its decision-making process. This both gives autonomy to the group while at the same time distances an MP from the issues concerning the minority. In contrast, Bradshaw challenged Young’s position that the privileged will not speak for the less privileged by arguing that in Britain it was heterosexual MPs who had made a considerable difference to the fight for LGBT rights.

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<sup>32</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Young, “Polity and Group Difference,” p.262.

<sup>34</sup> Extracted from an interview with Megan Woods, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

If you look back to all the reforms Labour government implemented on all the LGBT human rights, they were all spearheaded by heterosexual married MP's with children which made them far more effective.<sup>35</sup>

This was not just case as regards to sexuality but ethnicity as well. British MP Yasmin Qureshi also supported the idea that representatives from outside the group could be better at advocating for their needs than representatives who were seen as group members.

I'd say quite a lot of non-ethnic minority MPs have been stronger on ethnic issues and discrimination than others have been – more openly vociferous about it than the people you think will speak. A lot of them have been quite silent on the issues. That's why I don't think you need an Asian MP to represent Asian interests, Muslim for Muslim issues. A lot of male and white and middle class MPs can be just as good, and in fact quite a lot better.<sup>36</sup>

Bradshaw's statement that representation of LGBT issues by heterosexual MPs was "far more effective" gives a new perspective to the theories of descriptive representation. If white, middle-class, heterosexual, male MPs can adequately and even successfully advocate for minority issues, then the theory of descriptive representation faces a challenge. It is also suggested here that in this case of advocating for LGBT reforms, support from heterosexual MPs was seen as MORE legitimate and beneficial than the voice of an LGBT Member of Parliament would have been. This refutes the theory of Phillips and Mansbridge who argue that it is the voices of minority group themselves that are needed to speak on issues that affect them. It also reinforces the minority/majority power dynamic, as the voices of the minority are put aside in favour of legitimisation from the majority. As Alcoff noted, there is power in the social location of the speaker and issues which can be seen as agenda-pushing when supported by members of the group, can be legitimised and affirmed when proposed by members of the majority group. While advocacy from members outside the group can have positive benefits and all MPs should take up issues of social justice and equality; this can also subvert the principles behind demands for descriptive representation. Cultural authenticity is not required here to speak on the behalf of a group, and there is no advantage of shared, lived experience.

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<sup>35</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

### 6.3.2 Issues of identity construction

This thesis has previously shown why descriptive representation is seen as important for democracies, both by theorists and by representatives themselves. Minority interests need to be represented politically and legislatures ought to reflect diversity in order to be fairer and more just, as well as more representative. However, as has been demonstrated previously in this chapter, MPs do not always see themselves as representatives for a group, nor do they necessarily wish to be labelled by virtue of their identity. Identity moreover is a complex process, which as the literature has shown, is multiply constructed, understood and performed. This section examines some of the problems with identity labels by reflecting on the issues of intersectionality, hierarchy of oppression and homogeneity. These issues give pause to labelling MPs by virtue of an identity marker because they highlight how identity is multilayered and understood.

#### *Intersectionality*

The term ‘intersectionality’ was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 when describing issues of black women’s employment in the US.<sup>37</sup> Intersectionality refers to the relationship of multiple identities that an individual can possess, and as outlined previously in this thesis, relates to how people can be oppressed or labelled by virtue of one or more of these identities. Feminist scholars have paid particular attention to the intersection of gender, racial and sexual identities (among others) and use the theory of intersectionality to consider the multiple challenges and discrimination faced by those who fall into multiple ‘group identities’.<sup>38</sup>

Explicit discussions of intersectionality of identity was infrequent among interview subjects, but was implied in the struggles of MPs to be seen as ‘more’ than a single identity label. The only explicit mention of intersectional identities and the difficulties in representing the interests of multiple minority groups came from a list MP from New Zealand. Carmel Sepuloni argued that being Pacific and being a woman in Parliament was problematic, not just because of how she was expected to act as a group representative, but also how to balance two possibly competing identities.

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<sup>37</sup> N. Yuval-Davies (2006) “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics” *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, Vol. 13 (3), pp. 193–209.

<sup>38</sup> See for example: V. Purdie-Vaughns & R. P. Eibach (2008) “Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities” *Sex Roles*, Vol. 59 (5-6), pp. 377-391; F. Beale (1979) “Double jeopardy: To be black and female” in *The Black Woman*, T. Cade (ed.), New York: New American Library, pp. 90–100; I Browne & J. Misra (2003) “The intersection of gender and race in the labor market” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 29, pp. 487–513.

I think it's doubly complicated for those of us who are from minority ethnic groups and are women because we share in the gender issues that exist whether it be things like pay parity, whether it be representation at decision making tables, or fair representation; but then as well as that, we've got the added complication of the issues and challenges that exist for our ethnic groups as well. And you can't separate yourself from one or the other and sometimes what you get is, say you're with staunch feminists and you're talking about gender issues, there's an expectation that you prioritise that over any other issue that exists, and for us there's a balance because we also have to prioritise those issues around ethnicity that we're faced with.<sup>39</sup>

Separating identities in order to act as a group representative is not an easy process and competing interests and pressure from groups can force the representative into a frustrating position. Visible as a minority MP because of her gender and their ethnicity, Sepuloni can be seen as a group representative of women, of the Pacific community and of Pacific women. With little consensus among groups over issues, the group representative role is challenging and difficult to negotiate and can potentially provide little room for plurality of identities, with individual MPs tending to emphasise, or being forced to emphasise, one predominant group identity.

### ***Hierarchy of Oppression***

Identities have power in a hierarchal sense which is an important consideration when discussing demands for descriptive representation. This informal system of ranking and hierarchy has been termed a 'hierarchy of oppression',<sup>40</sup> and this provides some challenging questions around the debate on diversity in parliaments, not just because of individual choice and self identification, but as a means of deciding which groups are in need of descriptive representation. Bradshaw argued that there are fundamental differences between the justification for minority representation based on ethnicity and religion, as opposed to demands based on sexuality.

I think that [LGBT MPs] are slightly different from racial and religious minorities [in that] A) you're much more visible and B) you're much less represented and the arguments that are being made equality based on different fundamentals if you like.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Extracted from an interview with Carmel Sepuloni, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Briskin, "Identity Politics and the Hierarchy of Oppression"; Adams, "There's No Place like Home".

<sup>41</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

Bradshaw stated that LGBT MPs (and it is inferred, the LGBT community) are different from racial and religious minorities, because they have less visible markers of their identity and, he argued, the justification for equality in representation is based on different fundamentals. Although he fails to discuss what he believes these fundamentals are, he raises a challenging question concerning minority representation: is there a greater need for representatives of one minority group than another? Is there in fact a hierarchy of oppression that defines groups with visible barriers (physical disabilities, religious garments, language barriers, etc) as having a greater claim to representation than members of groups without these visible identity cues? As we can see from his own ability to opt in or opt out of the LGBT community, individuals without visible identity markers will find it easy to avoid group stereotypes and prejudices, suggesting they may avoid oppression in ways that those with ascriptive identity markers may not be able to do.

Bradshaw goes on to argue why he believes demands for descriptive representation differ for identity groups.

In the end it may be different for BAME, racial and ethnic groups because women aren't a minority actually in statistical terms and although there has been an under representation of women in parliament, there hasn't been such a serious under representation in women as there has been in ethnic and religious minorities. Because ethnic and religious minorities tend to be concentrated in particular constituencies, I think that does change the dynamic.<sup>42</sup>

This draws on numerical authenticity; firstly, women are not a statistical minority in society in the way that racial and religious groups are, and secondly, the representation of women has been more extensive than that of British ethnic minorities, therefore there is a less pressing need to encourage it. Of the 650 British MPs at the 2010 general election, 144 or 22 per cent of representatives were women, significantly less than the 50 per cent population of women in Britain. In contrast to gender divisions, only 27 or 4 per cent of representatives were from ethnic minority groups, representing the approximate 8 per cent of people who identified as BAME at the 2001 census.<sup>43</sup> Women therefore

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<sup>42</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

<sup>43</sup> See House of Commons (2012) "Frequently Asked Questions: MPs" *Parliament website*, <http://www.parliament.uk/about/faqs/house-of-commons-faqs/members-faq-page2/#mem14>, accessed 17 June 2012; D. Owen (2006) "Profile of Black and Minority ethnic groups in the UK" paper presented at the ESRC Seminar Series, 24th January 2006, accessed at



were statistically dramatically under-represented in the British Parliament, but are much less likely to be concentrated in a geographical area or constituency than are ethnic minority groups. Bradshaw draws a link between ethnic clustering in constituencies and subsequent group representation. Although there are echoes of Childs and Cowley's theory about the significance of local candidates, there is no suggestion that the representatives for these predominantly ethnic minority constituencies needs to be *local*, merely that they share identity markers such as ethnicity as the people they represent. This may signify the symbolic importance of having members of minority groups in parliament – they appeal to groups outside their own by virtue of their visibility in the legislature.

### ***Gender and Essentialism***

Representation of an identity group can also become problematic because of the dangers of assuming an essentialist identity. Literature with a particular focus on gender has questioned whether there are “women’s issues” and the ways that female politicians engage or fail to engage with these concepts.<sup>44</sup> Women, although sharing a gender, can be separated by race, religion, age, or class which results in radically different perspectives of the world and the issues which affect them. Jo Swinson argues that

There probably are some women’s issues but they’re quite niche. So for example, something like... even women’s issues are not irrelevant to men but stuff like what happens about maternity, abortions, smear tests, breast screening... these are things that men might be interested in but in reality are going to affect women a lot more because they are about the female body. [But] most issues affect most.<sup>45</sup>

New Zealand Minister for Women’s Affairs, Hekia Parata believes that the difference in construction of identity makes representation based on these grounds problematic. For her, the lack of unity of opinion among women means that representation must be fluid to allow for diversity in opinion, despite the shared gendered identity.

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[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/healthatwarwick/publications/occasional/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/healthatwarwick/publications/occasional/), 21 June 2012. Data on ethnicity gathered in the UK 2011 census has not been released as of June 2012.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example: T.L Osborn (2012) *How Women Represent Women: Political Parties, Gender and Representation in the State Legislatures*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; B. Reingold (2000) *Representing Women: Sex, Gender, and Legislative Behavior in Arizona and California*, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press; M. Sawer, M. Tremblay and L. Trimble (eds.) (2006) *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study*, Oxon: Routledge.

<sup>45</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jo Swinson, MP, UK (November 2011).

In terms of women's issues, I think there's a collection of issues that have been ascribed to women and within that population construct, there's as much difference as there is in the human population, so whether you're interested in issues around pay parity or whether feminism is dead... these are all debates that are ongoing all the time and again I say that I think representation is fluid and issue specific, because those groups themselves demand authenticity around who they think speaks for them and I think that's appropriate.<sup>46</sup>

Defining issues that affect a group is not an easy task and so the role of a group representative can also be problematic. To Parata, authenticity does not mean just sharing identity markers with the group; it involves interaction between the represented and the representative in order to speak 'on behalf of'. Representation is issue-specific because there are no collective opinions on issues that concern women and a representative has to be able to adapt their role as the circumstances demand. Swinson expands this point further by arguing that being female does not automatically mean that you understand or choose to engage with policy areas that are traditionally seen as 'women's issues'.

It's interesting because Sarah Teather doesn't have children and she's been made Minister for Children and Families and nobody thinks that strange because she doesn't have children. They make that almost assumption that she's a woman, so she 'gets' it, whereas actually, and she does an excellent job and I'm not in any sense criticising, but actually you could argue that a bloke with young children might be a more obvious choice but that wouldn't be perceived to be the case. Everyone assumes that women understand kids.<sup>47</sup>

In the case of Sarah Teather, assumptions are made about gender and "women's issues" which in turn affects her representational role. Here, her position is challenged both by the assumption that "she's a woman, so she 'gets' children and families" and conflictingly by the assumption that her gender matters or plays a part in her political appointments. It assumes that there are some issues, in this case family and children, which a woman will understand by virtue of her gender. It can also be perceived that Teather's promotion to this role is contingent on being female and therefore her merits as an individual are overlooked and discounted – it is assumed that it is her gender which earned her the position. Identity affects representational role then, not only

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<sup>46</sup> Extracted from an interview with Hekia Parata, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jo Swinson, MP, UK (November 2011).

because of who an MP self-identifies with but because of the ways they are perceived by others. Despite the way that MPs conceptualize their own identity and representational role, they do not have sole autonomy in this process. Thus, identity is a tool that can affect, and be affected by, the representatives and by groups, political parties, or the wider constituency.

Swinson's comment demonstrates a move from normative theories of why diversity in parliament is important, to the more difficult task of engaging with the practice of descriptive representation. There is a struggle to define which issues affect which groups, and how these can be adequately represented in legislatures. Identity labels are the result of self-identification first and foremost, but also a combination of demand to act as a representative from within the group, or categorisation from the media and general public. These identity labels are attached to values, perceptions and stereotypes that affect the role of the representative. An MP may seek to disassociate their role from representation of a group, but this can be problematic when they are fighting identification from the outside as well as within the political institution. In light of this, the chapter now turns to considering some of the institutional constraints which frame the way identity is performed and understood by MPs.

#### **6.4 *Institutional Constraints***

So far, this chapter has dealt with two of the factors that constrain the ways that descriptive and symbolic representation are understood and performed by MPs: the authenticity paradox, whereby MPs acknowledge the need for diversity but want to avoid being labelled as a 'minority representative', and the complexities of identity construction and group identification. The chapter now turns to exploring another area which influences the way MPs perform identity through their representative role: political institutions. As highlighted previously, political institutions can play an important part in developing the relationship between identity and representation. Political parties, quotas, the ritual of parliament, the list system – these can all act as factors which shape or constrain the portrayals of identity by representatives. The following section of this chapter uses interview data to explore the impact of some of these institutional factors on the way MPs understand and discuss identity and representation.

### 6.4.1 Candidate selection and Quotas

Literature on institutions highlights the importance of the role of parties in the process of candidate selection as parties dictate who they choose to run as electoral candidates or who will stand on the party list.<sup>48</sup> Considerable attention has also been paid to the use of quotas as a means of increasing descriptive representation.<sup>49</sup> This section explores MPs feelings about candidate selection and quota systems to better understand the ways they perceive institutional support for, and barriers to, descriptive representation.

‘Butterfly’ MPs (to borrow terminology from Celis and Wauters) tended to be more vocal about the barriers facing minorities when trying to enter parliaments. David Lammy argued that ethnic minority groups in particular face institutional barriers that can restrict their entry to political life. “We should have at least 80 BEM MPs and the reason we haven’t is because political parties in this country are tribal [and] the barriers to entry are high and have mitigated against ethnic minorities.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Yasmin Qureshi believed that it was ‘definitely’ harder for ethnic minority candidates to be selected in Britain. “People are comfortable with what they’re familiar with...While you can kind of say it’s wrong, I can understand and I think it’s as simple as that. They don’t think “oh they’re Black I won’t vote for them,” they just have certain images that they relate to.”<sup>51</sup> The dominant image of a politician then is someone who is seen as ‘mainstream’ rather than a minority face, and MPs who seek re-election must find ways of presenting themselves as more than a minority label.

BAME candidates were not the only group who found it challenging to be elected. Kris Faafoi noted that in New Zealand “we very rarely get people who’ve been on the bones of their backside get into parliament, but that’s mainly because I think you need a lot of time and resource(s) to be a candidate, let alone a member of parliament.”<sup>52</sup> Despite public recognition and performance of ‘class’ as an identity marker for representatives, there was almost no discussion of this in interviews. Indeed, much as the theoretical

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<sup>48</sup> Lovenduski and Norris, *Gender and Party Politics*; Childs, *Women and British Party Politics*; Saggar, *Race and British electoral politics*.

<sup>49</sup> Krook, Lovenduski, and Squires, “Gender Quotas and Models of Political Citizenship”; Childs and Krook, “Critical Mass Theory and Women’s Political Representation”; D. Dahlerup and L. Freidenvall (2005) “Quotas as a “FastTrack” to Equal Political Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia is No Longer the Model”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 7 (1), pp. 26–48.

<sup>50</sup> Extracted from an interview with David Lammy, MP, UK (May 2011).

<sup>51</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Extracted from an interview with Kris Faafoi, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

literature on descriptive representation, there was a silence around the issue of class. The issue of sexuality and candidate selection was also rarely mentioned, with only one MP (Jan Logie) explicitly discussing the effect her sexuality had on her nomination to the Green Party list.

It's quite interesting because in the political process we have to declare whether there's anything that might come out in the media in terms of getting accepted onto our list and my mother asked me "so did you tell them that you're a lesbian?" I said "No Mum, for the Greens that's not a problem!" That's a bonus because it's about having that diversity of representation. That actually for the Greens, that is a bonus because we recognise that there are communities of interest that we can serve and that there is an expected representation around identity.<sup>53</sup>

Logie is positioning herself here as a representative of identity – her sexuality and more importantly, her *performance* of her sexual identity, becomes an asset to her representative role. Logie was one of the few MPs who consistently made representative claims based on her group identity; both publically and in her interview. As a 'lefty, feminist lesbian' from the Green Party list, she clearly sees her representative role as one in which she both identifies with and 'speaks for' these groups.

Female MPs noted the difficulties for women to be judged on the same criteria as male candidates. Megan Woods pointed out the necessity for selection committees to widen criteria for candidates, in order to ensure women who have not had as much political experience as men can be considered.

[It's] the age old feminist question of equality versus difference, about whether women need to have exactly the same CVs as their male counterparts, [or whether there is] a gendered analysis of someone's CV so that someone's activity in a play centre organisation while they took two years out from the paid workforce can be seen as a big plus for someone seeking a seat – that they've been a community activist, a community organiser in that way... so it's about looking at things differently.<sup>54</sup>

Woods argued that many of the candidates who gain selection to safe seats are those with a political background, from the 'professional political class' who are children of MPs, who have worked in parliament or as policy advisors and who have contacts and

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<sup>53</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jan Logie, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>54</sup> Extracted from an interview with Megan Woods, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

previous knowledge of the political system. She claimed that women are less likely to enter parliament this way, particular those who have been away from the workforce to have children, thereby enforcing the dominance of male politicians in parliaments.

One of the suggestions for electoral reform in both New Zealand and the UK was that a more proportional system would see an increase in the number of minority groups entering legislatures. In the case of New Zealand and its move to MMP in 1996, the change saw a rise in the number of women and ethnic minorities who were elected.<sup>55</sup> While the Report of the Electoral Commission demonstrated that this was a key consideration in suggesting a change to MMP, rhetoric around increasing descriptive representation in the United Kingdom has tended to focus on quotas for women and ethnic minorities.<sup>56</sup> British MP Ben Bradshaw pointed to the rise in minority representation in the UK under a FPP system as an example of how parties can still have considerable impact on diversity, without electoral reform.

I am a supporter of electoral reform, don't get me wrong, but if you look at the record of the UK compared with the other major Western European democracies, we are miles ahead of most of them with female representation, certainly on black and ethnic minorities representation in parliament and on openly gay politicians and that has happened under a First Past the Post selection process... It has happened in my view largely because it was driven by the Labour Party and partly the all-women shortlist. I am not convinced that electoral reform necessarily means that representation becomes more diverse.<sup>57</sup>

The All Women Shortlists (AWS) of the Labour Party were first introduced prior to the 1997 general election, and resulted in a record number of 101 Labour women entering the House of Commons. Since then, AWS has been used to increase the number of women elected to the House of Commons. There were a total of 64 AWS seats at the 2010 general election with women candidates elected in 31 seats.<sup>58</sup> British Labour MP Yasmin Qureshi noted the impact that quotas had produced for women, and argued that

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<sup>55</sup> Levine and Roberts, "The 1996 General Election".

<sup>56</sup> See New Zealand Electoral Commission, *Royal Commission criteria*; Speaker's Conference, *Final Report*.

<sup>57</sup> Extracted from an interview with Ben Bradshaw, MP, UK (August 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Ashe, Campbell, Childs, and Evans, "Stand by your man", p.471.

“[i]f the Labour Party stopped women-only seats - give it another ten years, the pattern will go back to what it was.”<sup>59</sup>

Not all the MPs were in favour of quotas as a means of increasing descriptive representation though. Labour MP Gisela Stuart declared that when it came to quotas she “didn’t like it intellectually but know you need it in practice.”<sup>60</sup> Liberal Democrat MP Jo Swinson argued that quotas would not deal with the supply issue of lack of female candidates.

I think they [quotas] are there to solve particular problems and if you’ve got sexism in the selection process, then you ultimately need to have some sort of positive discrimination to deal with that... [B]ut women are just as likely to get selected as men. They’re NOT just as likely as men to put themselves forward as a candidate, so if you have 3 or 4 times as many men as women coming forward to be candidates, I don’t actually think all-women shortlists solve that problem.<sup>61</sup>

Swinson is the Women's Minister for the Liberal Democrats, a party which traditionally has low levels of female representation. Ashe et al claim that the party’s “poor record is frequently defended by party insiders, and not least by those responsible for women’s recruitment, in terms of an insufficient supply of women”, which was evident in Swinson’s comment above.<sup>62</sup> The party has also been traditionally reluctant to embrace gender quotas and debates around proposals to improve the gender balance of the party which took place in 2001 saw “plans for all-women shortlists were rejected on the basis that rather than sexism in selection being the main problem, the real barrier to equal representation was a lack of women coming forward for roles in politics at all levels.”<sup>63</sup> More recently, Nick Clegg has said that “we cannot claim to represent modern Britain until modern Britain is represented in us” and that he is not ‘theologically opposed’ to gender quotas.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

<sup>60</sup> Extracted from an interview with Gisela Stuart, MP, UK (March 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jo Swinson, MP, UK (November 2011).

<sup>62</sup> Ashe, Campbell, Childs, and Evans, “Stand by your man”, p.462.

<sup>63</sup> Liberal Democrats (2010) *Responses to the Speaker’s Conference (on Parliamentary Representation): Final Report of Session 2009–10*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/449/44909.htm>, accessed 10 February 2013, p.41.

<sup>64</sup> Liberal Democrats, *Responses to the Speaker’s Conference*; Childs and Evans, “Out of the Hands of the Parties,” p.747.

While AWS in the British Labour Party have seen a rise in the number of BAME female MPs elected to the House of Commons,<sup>65</sup> David Lammy argued that AWS can be problematic for the election of BAME men, and for that reason, he advocates ethnic minority shortlists as well as AWS.

I think we have a quota system for women in this country effectively with all-female shortlists in my party, and I think we should be prepared to look at Black Ethnic Minority shortlists in certain circumstances where the party is failing in a selection round to select minority candidates, I think the central party should be prepared to impose in the seats remaining, to get the diversity intake up.<sup>66</sup>

Ethnic minority shortlists have previously been mooted in the British Labour Party and have been met with mixed reactions from both white and BAME MPs. Sadiq Khan noted that establishing BAME shortlists would run the risk that “only people of a certain race or ethnicity can represent constituents of the same race or ethnicity.”<sup>67</sup> The proposal of optional party ethnic shortlists as suggested by the recent Speakers Conference was supported by Labour and the Liberal Democrats and political parties can now “reserve places on electoral shortlists for those with a protected characteristic, such as race, that is underrepresented in politics” although it remains to be seen whether this is taken up at subsequent elections.<sup>68</sup>

Unlike the Labour Party in the UK, New Zealand political parties do not have gender quotas and on the whole, the NZ MPs interviewed did not support their introduction. Both a Labour male MP and a female National MP argued that the ‘culture’ of New Zealand society did not lend itself to legislated measures to improve descriptive representation. National Party MP Hekia Parata believed that New Zealanders would balk at the idea of imposed party quotas.

Different things work in different cultures. Compulsion for New Zealanders, it just doesn’t work. You tell them

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<sup>65</sup> See Childs, *Women and British Party Politics*, p.65; S. Wooley (2013) “Labour has no plan for Black representation” *Operation Black Vote*, <http://www.obv.org.uk/news-blogs/labour-has-no-plan-black-representation>, accessed 20 March 2013; J. Adetunji and M. Tran (2010) “General election 2010: first female Muslim MPs elected” *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/may/07/general-election-female-muslim-mps>, accessed 14 December 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Extracted from an interview with David Lammy, MP, UK (May 2011).

<sup>67</sup> A. Grice (2008) “Black shortlists ‘would create political apartheid’” *The Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/black-shortlists-would-create-political-apartheid-801230.html>, accessed 12 February 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Squires, “Gender and Minority Representation in Parliament,” p.84.



what to do, they'll do the opposite. Quotas are considered to be an infringement of privacy and personal choice... so that won't work in NZ and I don't personally believe in them anyway.<sup>69</sup>

Parata emphasised the idea that quotas are somehow 'unfair' because they limit the choice of the parties to select whomever they wish as candidates. Indeed, one New Zealand MP called quotas an "anathema to principals of equality before the law" and Labour MP Brendan Burns repeated Parata's argument that "New Zealanders are generally not very fond of imposed solutions."<sup>70</sup> Unlike Bradshaw's earlier quote, Burns credited electoral reform with increasing descriptive representation because it allows parties to place ethnic candidates on their lists. "I think that MMP encourages and facilitates that because we as the Labour party want to be the party to whom, for example, Pacifica look to as their natural party of representation, so we have to have good strong Pacifica candidates in winnable seats and good places on our list."<sup>71</sup> While Bradshaw was concerned that party lists would be stacked with "party apparatchiks and time-servers" instead of promoting a diverse range of candidates, Burns indicated that MMP has given parties the opportunity to reach out to ethnic communities and to demonstrate substantive commitment to them by ranking ethnic candidates highly. In a similar way, Kris Faafoi argued that MMP has increased parliamentary diversity but warns against using this to replace 'merit', an argument also used by critics of quotas.<sup>72</sup>

MMP has forced political parties (and I'm not sure if this is positive or negative) to make sure they try and reflect society... but I also think you need to look at merit and ability as well. I don't think we should get to the stage where it basically become a marketing exercise and you just put a whole lot of different looking people out there, hoping that that community will give them the vote. There's got to be a balance.<sup>73</sup>

Opposition to quotas are not solely because of issues of equality however; in New Zealand, Labour MP Jacinda Arden echoed Swinson's earlier concern that quotas for women would not solve more fundamental supply problems of women candidates.

I absolutely want to see more women in parliament, so the question is: is the quota system the best way to achieve

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<sup>69</sup> Extracted from an interview with Hekia Parata, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>70</sup> Extracted from an interview with Hilary Calvert, MP, New Zealand (February 2011) and from an interview with Brendan Burns, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>71</sup> Extracted from an interview with Brendan Burns, MP, New Zealand (February 2011).

<sup>72</sup> Childs and Evans, "Out of the Hands of the Parties," p.743.

<sup>73</sup> Extracted from an interview with Kris Faafoi, MP, NZ (February 2012).

that? My concern is that we're not doing enough early on to bring women into the party and support them within the party until they reach a point where they're interested in entering into the group of people who might be candidates and MPs. So that's what I want to focus on, right at the beginning... I don't know that a quota fixes that foundation issue but I've always been willing to discuss all the options about what we can do to improve the situation.<sup>74</sup>

The decision of women to stand as political candidates is affected not only by the barriers to election however, but also the culture of political life. It has been demonstrated that political institutions influence the way that identity is performed by representatives and they also help shape and constrain identity labels and the ways that representatives are perceived by others. The following section of the chapter explores the notion of political space and performance and highlights the way that institutional discrimination helps to create and solidify identity labels and 'Othering' of minority groups in parliaments.

#### **6.4.2 Space and Performance: Institutional discrimination**

Once MPs are elected to Parliament they are part of a wider institution which is governed by traditional rules, cliques and norms. These form one of the political 'stages' upon which MPs perform their identity and subsequently shape and impact these portrayals. In the wake of increasing calls for descriptive representation and parliamentary diversity, parliaments have been forced to reflect on the culture, norms and values and to adapt from the domain of the 'white, middle-class, male' to an institution that welcomes and accepts people who reflect all members of society. This challenge has been both taken up and rejected, sometimes simultaneously. While there have been some positive moves towards creating a more inclusive political space, Celis and Wauters (2010) found that minority MPs are "more likely to adapt themselves instead of parliamentary norms being changed to acknowledge and embrace diversity."

<sup>75</sup>

Puwar argues that minority MPs are seen as 'space invaders' – bodies who are both visible by their scarcity and "marked out as trespassers" in a world previously limited to the privileged majority.<sup>76</sup> Although formal parliamentary culture is by nature civilised

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<sup>74</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jacinda Arden, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Celis and Wauters, "Pinning the Butterfly," p.391.

<sup>76</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*, p.8.

(particularly in the UK), many minority MPs report incidents of racism, sexism or discrimination based on their identity. While this does not suggest that either the United Kingdom or the New Zealand Parliaments are institutionally discriminatory, reports from MPs reflect the lived experience for many minority Members who cannot escape their identity as a minority, no matter how they construct their own roles as general or mainstream MPs. When interviewed, British MP Yasmin Qureshi argued that discrimination would always be present for minority MPs. “I think if you’re a woman in politics there’s always discrimination. If you’re not white, there’s always going to be discrimination. And discrimination in the sense that it’s not deliberate i.e. he’s black, or she’s a woman [so] I won’t have her, but it’s much more subtle.”<sup>77</sup> Echoing Young and Puwar’s discussion of rhetorical ‘performance’, Jan Logie argued that female MPs were disadvantaged because of the way they spoke: “If you go back to that old school stuff around the way that women speak, typically we speak by asking questions and use ‘I’ statements while the authoritative male voice is emphatic statements that generalise, that everyone’s conditioned to receive as more authoritative.”<sup>78</sup>

Although women make up half of the population and are not a numerical minority group in society, female MPs still face prejudice and battles to establish themselves as ‘more than’ their identity. This can be as a result of being a minority group within parliament and facing what is often known as an ‘old boys club’. New Zealand MP Jan Logie described the difficulties she found in entering parliament as a female MP and being part of a minority. “[M]ost of my world is pretty mixed and probably pretty heavy on the women, lots more women in my life, and to suddenly find myself in this environment where around 30 per cent are women, it’s bizarre.”<sup>79</sup> Sarah Teather, a Liberal Democrat MP, has publically said of her experiences in the British Parliament: “Lots of people say it’s like an old boy’s club. I’ve always said, to me it feels rather more like a teenage public school - you know, a public school full of teenage boys.”<sup>80</sup> Although female MPs are credited by the Speakers Conference final report with providing a “less confrontational and aggressive” culture in Parliament, women still face gendered perceptions of their roles, which progress from their candidacy to their

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<sup>77</sup> Extracted from an interview with Yasmin Qureshi, MP, UK (September 2011).

<sup>78</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jan Logie, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jan Logie, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>80</sup> J. Ashley (2004) “Bullied, patronised and abused - women MPs reveal the truth about life inside Westminster” *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2004/dec/07/uk.gender>, accessed June 2012.

election and promotions. Jacinda Arden, a young politician from New Zealand, became part of a media-labelled “Battle of the Babes” when she contested the Auckland Central seat against another young female MP in 2010.<sup>81</sup> Arden subsequently explained how it felt to be a part of the supposed ‘battle’. “I thought it trivialised a really important race. And I understand that it was a novelty to have two young women running against each other but for that to become the focus in the way that it was became really disappointing because we constantly tried to fight that contest on substance of policy and ideas.”<sup>82</sup> Arden noted that the issue continued even after she was elected to Parliament.

[I]t did have a flow on – after the election when I was promoted, one of the radio interviewers said to me “are you worried about being taken seriously given that you were involved with the battle of the babes?” [I]t was never a term that we coined for ourselves, in fact we always pushed back on it, but for that then to have a flow on about the way you’re perceived is pretty disappointing particularly because there was also this feeling that if you push it back too far, that you’d be seen to be humourless when actually I think there was a pretty important point to be made there.<sup>83</sup>

Female MPs have reported that ‘humour’ is often used as a way of making gendered comments in the House. Barbara Follett, a British MP recalled “I remember some Conservatives: whenever a Labour woman got up to speak they would take their breasts - their imaginary breasts - in their hands and wiggle them and say 'melons' as we spoke.”<sup>84</sup> Others reported that many men could not accept young females were MPs; former MP Dawn Butler recalls being at a function where she was ignored in favour of her male colleague.

When I was at an event with a male MP colleague, white, we met someone who spent a good five minutes talking to him and completely ignoring me. When they were finished, the person turned around and asked, “Oh are you his secretary? Do you work for him?” The male MP quickly said, “Oh my God no, she’s an MP!” And this person went into complete meltdown, apologising, and

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<sup>81</sup> See Stuff.co.nz (2011) “Battle of the Babes”

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/video/6052864/Battle-of-the-babes>; J. Milne (2011) “Nicola Kaye vs Jacinda Arden” *The Listener*, <http://www.listener.co.nz/commentary/nicola-laura-kaye-vs-jacinda-kate-laurell-arden/>; and J. Weekes (2011) “It’s called ‘Battle of the Babes’” *New Zealand Herald*, [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10764176](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10764176). The phrase was coined by male journalist Patrick Gower to supposedly represent ‘their relative parliamentary inexperience’.

<sup>82</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jacinda Arden, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jacinda Arden, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>84</sup> Ashley, “Bullied, patronised and abused”.

saying, “Oh yes, your face does look familiar, but you know, it’s because you look so different, you look so young.” The person then asked, “Well, can we talk to you?” about whatever it was they were talking about. And I turned around and I said, “Absolutely not, you’ve completely blown it.”<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, NZ MP Megan Woods said “I had an older guy in his 70s come into the surgery and I went to meet him and he said “I want to see the MP, not the secretary!” And I said “I am the MP Sir!””<sup>86</sup> It is apparent that female MPs face challenges unlike their male colleagues and are often on the receiving end of sexist or discriminatory remarks because of their gender. Sometimes this comes not just from the media, but from their male colleagues, including remarks “maybe about someone’s legs or someone being a lesbian.”<sup>87</sup> More recently, David Cameron made the news for telling Angela Eagle to ‘Calm down, dear’ and for describing Nadine Dorries, his Conservative colleague, as ‘frustrated’.<sup>88</sup> Former MP Phyllis Starkey believed that some of the remarks from male colleagues were so bad that they were “inappropriate on a building site and certainly totally inappropriate in the House of Commons.”<sup>89</sup> These included comments about the way female MPs looked, sounded or dressed, which led Jacinda Arden to comment:

[N]one of us got into politics in order to have a commentary on our attire and I don’t think people vote for you because they want to see what kind of handkerchief you have in your lapel on any given day, I think they expect more from us, and so I would hope then that equally that there would be a different commentary around what we do. At the same time, you accept the reality whilst wanting to change it.<sup>90</sup>

Women are not the only minority group to experience prejudice as MPs, because of their identity. Ethnic minorities also report incidents of discrimination because of the way they look. Dawn Butler claimed “I thought people in Parliament would be progressive. It is still a shock that they are not... For some politicians, it's still a shock to

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<sup>85</sup> D. Butler (2008) “Being different: My life as a Black woman MP” *Seeing Double: race and gender in ethnic minority women's lives*, <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Seeing%20Double.pdf>, accessed April 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Extracted from an interview with Megan Woods, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

<sup>87</sup> Sones, Moran and Lovenduski, *Women in Parliament*, pp.70-72.

<sup>88</sup> Childs and Evans, “Out of the Hands of the Parties,” p.744.

<sup>89</sup> Sones, Moran and Lovenduski, *Women in Parliament*, p.69.

<sup>90</sup> Extracted from an interview with Jacinda Arden, MP, New Zealand (February 2012).

come face to face with a black woman with any real power. Racism and sexism is Parliament's dirty little secret.”<sup>91</sup> Butler recalled an incident where

“A Tory MP actually said to me, “What are you doing here? This is for members only” when I went to sit in the members’ section on the terrace. He then proceeded to ask me, “Are you a member?” And I said, “Yes I am, are you?” And he turned around and said to his colleague, “They’re letting anybody in nowadays.””<sup>92</sup>

When later confronted about making this comment, David Heathcote-Amory denied making any racist remarks. His reply to the allegation however, demonstrates a great deal about the way that issues of race and group identification are still understood by some individuals: “I simply asked her what she was doing at that end of the terrace, and they are quite sensitive about this kind of thing, they think that any kind of reprimand from anyone is racially motivated.”<sup>93</sup> There is a clear divide made here between ‘us’ (in this case, Heathcote-Amory) and ‘them’ that reflects the ways identity can be used to pass judgement and to exclude.

Both women and ethnic minorities (and especially those who are members of both groups) face discrimination within Parliament and institutions need to address these concerns. While the Speaker’s Conference report demonstrates a commitment to “[making] diversity awareness training, advice and support available to party members involved in candidate selections”<sup>94</sup>, minority MPs still encounter discrimination and oppression because of their identities and the report does little to engage with these institutional problems.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Identity performance has been acknowledged throughout this thesis as a complex and constructed process which is affected by the method of selection of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture and the audience to whom the claims are being made. Chapter 4 reflected upon MPs public performances of identity and the previous empirical chapter used interview data to describe the value that MPs assigned to theories of descriptive and symbolic representation. This chapter inverted these values to consider “*which factors constrain descriptive representation and the performance of*

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<sup>91</sup> A. Hill and J. Revill (2008) “Racism rife in Commons, says MP” *The Observer*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/13/race.houseofcommons>, accessed April 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Butler, “Being different”.

<sup>93</sup> Hill and Revill, “Racism rife in Commons, says MP”.

<sup>94</sup> Speaker's Conference, *Final Report*, p.50.

*identity?*” Interview data demonstrated that representatives consider their identities as flexible enough to move beyond the definition of a descriptive or symbolic representative and between the empirical chapters, we can see that there is evidence that identity performance varies depending on the context. The previous chapter saw MPs discuss the need for parliamentary diversity as a means of justice and equality, as well as for ‘authentic’ representatives who understood the perspectives of the groups they spoke for. However, data gathered in this chapter demonstrates that the construction and performance of identity through representation is affected by and constrained by external as well as internal factors and that the normative values ascribed to descriptive and symbolic representation given in the previous chapter are tempered by a conflicting desire to avoid being labelled on the basis of identity.

Although some MPs admit they are uncomfortable with the idea of representation based on descriptive characteristics, there is little attempt to reconcile this with the fact that many are in favour of a more diverse parliament and having people who reflect the makeup of society and can share those “lived experiences” with their constituents. MPs are aware that there are demands for representation of minority groups or an expectation that they will act as a spokesperson for a group but there was evidence of MPs directly refuting representative claims based on minority identities. All MPs argued that representatives must be able to act in the interests of others; assigning minority interests only to the advocacy of minority MPs could result in a lack of attention from other MPs. This theory contrasted with earlier demands for cultural authenticity and “lived experience” for representatives, and demonstrates one of the ways that demands for descriptive representation clash with the practical experience of political representation.

Individual MPs will not necessarily seek to position themselves as a group representative despite demands from the public or from their party. In the context of interviews, MPs made explicit and implicit claims to representation but many, such as Lammy, Parata and Bradshaw, actively refuted representative claims based on minority identities. This had not taken place during the public performances of identity, suggesting that MPs felt the interview context with a single audience member was a better context for this script. The concept of identity privilege was infrequently addressed by MPs but it was clear that those without ascriptive minority identities could more easily ‘opt-out’ of identity performance or categorisation. The role of the audience who were ‘reading’ the representative claims made by MPs was acknowledged through

discussions of media framing of identity, the way groups saw MPs as symbolic representatives, and the continued emphasis on geographical representation and making claims that appealed to a general audience. Essentialism and intersectionality were other important concepts that affected identity performance and the way MPs thought that they were 'read' by audiences but these were also rarely discussed in any detail by MPs during the interview process.

MPs also acknowledged the institutional factors which shape identity performance. Methods of election in the form of quotas and shortlists led some MPs to become more wary of identifying themselves with minority identities in case they were accused of tokenistic election. In contrast, others argued that MPs with ascriptive minority characteristics faced barriers to entry because of their identity and therefore needed greater assistance to overcome to dominant norms or prejudices. Parliaments are still the domain of the privileged and there is power in being a member of the majority. Performing a minority identity was therefore less common in the UK where method of election and parliamentary culture and norms highlighted the relationship between geographical constituency and the representative. Identity was performed to a greater degree in New Zealand, where the political culture and status of list MPs provided space for MPs to more freely perform identity within their political roles.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

This thesis has moved beyond existing research on identity and political representation by more critically analysing this relationship through the lens of performative claim-making. Identity and representation are fundamentally intertwined; identity can shape the image politicians present to the public, the way they carry out substantive representation, the representative claims they make, and the degree to which they are seen as descriptive or symbolic representatives for groups of constituents. Given that both representation and identity are concepts which have come to be understood as complex and multiply constructed, their interrelationship deserves a more critical and nuanced analysis. Consequently, the thesis began by asking the question: *How is identity performed through political representation in the United Kingdom and New Zealand?* Through the examples of the two case studies of New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the thesis explores the ways that MPs perform their identities in both public and interview settings, and across different electoral systems.

#### 7.1 *Analytical framework*

I have argued that identity, either individual or collective, can be fluid and socially constructed and that understanding how the concepts of identity and political representation intersect requires analysis which takes into account institutional context and the changing nature of performance. This thesis has demonstrated that the way that MPs understand and perform identities, the way they use them to shape representative claims, and the factors that constrain the performances of identity inherently shape representative roles. Building on Saward and Fenno I have argued that identity is used by MPs as a means of qualifying, empathising and identifying themselves with potential constituents.<sup>1</sup> Centrally, drawing on Goffman's conceptualisation of identity as performance, I have suggested that each of these 'uses' of identity are *performances* which can vary depending on the audience, the context and the actors' (in this case MPs') objectives. Instead of conceptualising representation as a top-down relationship between the representative and their constituents, it is a more performative process that

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<sup>1</sup> Saward, *The Representative Claim*; Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*.

allows for the construction, acceptance, or rejection of identities or representations put forward by political actors. Representatives may make claims to represent identity groups but these can be constructed, performed and understood in a variety of ways depending on the audience and the context in which the claims were made. I have further argued throughout that representation as a concept can be modelled as a series of *claims to* and *understandings of* representation. By comparing data from interviews and from more public ‘performances of the self’ in the form of biographies and maiden speeches, the thesis highlights the different way MPs discuss and perform identity in each context as well as factors that increase or inhibit these performances.

Goffman argues that all forms of societal interaction takes place on stages where actors perform roles with scripts, costumes, props and scenery.<sup>2</sup> These naturally differ depending on the goal of the actor, the pre-existing conditions of the role they are playing, or the stage they are on. In addition, he suggests that roles are partly shaped by the actor, partly by the reaction or belief of the audience, and partly by the context within which the role is played. By applying these ideas to MPs, we can characterise their public roles and interactions as political representatives as a range of ‘front stage performances’, which in turn will vary according to contextual shifts. These observations have not been sufficiently addressed by previous studies of political representation. Political institutions, for example, provide both normative and cultural ‘stages’ on which identity is enacted by MPs, and political parties, other MPs, constituents and identity groups are all actors who affect the degree to which identity intersects with representation. These are all factors which must be considered when reflecting on identity and political representation.

The position of personal or group identity within the ‘presentation of the self’ is not explicitly discussed by Goffman. At one end of the spectrum, identity (both individual and collective) can be seen as the result of societal influences, norms and cultures; at the other, identity can be seen as something essential, something fixed and able to be categorised. However, recent interpretations of identity theory and construction accept that people are more than just single categories; that identity is a complex and heterogeneous concept which can be understood, constructed and performed in a variety of ways. Both theories of social construction and Goffman’s presentation of the self argue that the way in which we view ourselves, the way others view us, and the way we

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<sup>2</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

relate to each other are more than just fixed categories and rigidly-defined roles. Political representation can also therefore be seen as performative, rather than a series of typologies and categorised roles. Therefore, as I have argued throughout, identity is less about what is 'real' and authentic and more about how actors perform it at any given time to any given audience.

Understanding why identity is important to theories of political representation requires a consideration of both descriptive and symbolic representation. While these were dismissed in Pitkin's seminal work as 'standing for' rather than 'acting for' forms of representation, they are nonetheless a distinct and important part of representation theory.<sup>3</sup> *Who* the representative presents themselves as is important because it affects the types of representative claims they make and the way they are understood or defined by an audience.<sup>4</sup> Democratic theorists who have focused on descriptive and symbolic representation argue that representation of minority groups gives groups their own political voices, creates authenticity and legitimacy of political decisions and provides role models for previously marginalised groups. Visibility as a minority within parliament, pressure from political parties to gain political support through mobilising groups of voters, or acting as a political voice for a previously marginalised group are all likely to encourage MPs to perform their minority identities within their representative role. Considering parliamentary diversity specifically through the lens of descriptive and symbolic representation can therefore naturally focus discussions on 'who' acts as a representative of an identity group. However, it is equally important to recognise that people are not defined by rigid identity categories. And while there are so few 'gay MPs' or 'Māori MPs' or 'Asian MPs' represented in a legislature, individual MPs will always be identified as a visible minority by virtue of their perceived identities. Until these inequalities of representation are overcome to a degree that difference is no longer noticeable, minority MPs will be forced to 'perform' or engage with these sorts of identity labels to some degree, in a way that white men, as the political majority, are not forced to do. Considering identity-based representation as a form of performance allows for a more nuanced look at the different aspects of identity that political actors may draw on and how these differ between performances, stages and audiences.

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<sup>3</sup> H. Pitkin (1967) *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>4</sup> Puwar, *Space Invaders*.

One way of looking at representation from a wider perspective is through the lens of claim-making. Saward argues that political representation is a process of representative claim-making whereby political actors construct and put forward various claims about their ability to represent constituencies to an audience.<sup>5</sup> In the data analysed for this thesis, the actors (MPs) ‘perform’ identity on three separate stages: within their maiden speeches, within their web biographies, and within a one-on-one interview. These moved from highly formal and ritualised stages of performance (biographies and maiden speeches) to a more informal setting (interviews). They provided a comparison of different but similar arenas within which MPs make representative claims. Web biographies and maiden speeches, for example, are governed both by political convention and tradition, and these highly constrained environments were evaluated to see how identity is performed in fairly traditional arenas. In contrast, interviews are less formal, less ritualised and less public, which provided a new stage on which MPs can perform identity to a single audience.

## **7.2 Findings**

The thesis put forward three expectations that would affect the performance of identity by MPs.

- 1) The performance of identity varies in relation to the method of election of the MP
- 2) The performance of identity varies by parliamentary norms and culture
- 3) The performance of identity varies by audience

In addition, there are three distinctive but interconnected ways in which identity and representation can overlap throughout the three stages of performance in this thesis. These are *explicit representative claims*, *implicit representative claims* and *refuting descriptive representative roles* and MPs may use more than one of the above devices within or between the different media analysed in the study. Explicit representative claim-making involves MPs performing their own identity in specific ways to in order to claim legitimacy to represent identity groups. Implicit representative claim-making is when MPs may make reference to their own personal identity or backgrounds, or describe connection to various ‘identity groups’ without actually making explicit representative claims. This is a useful way for MPs to suggest linkages of qualification,

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<sup>5</sup> Saward, *The Representative Claim*.

empathy and identification with groups of voters without alienation the majority who do not share the same characteristics. Finally, MPs may refute what they perceive to be their ‘expected’ representative role based on their descriptive characteristics. They may deny that they have any ‘obligation’ or qualification to represent a group based on shared characteristics, in an attempt not to be ‘typecast’ or to claim a more diverse and wide-ranging representative role. The key empirical findings of this thesis are outlined in the subsequent section of the chapter, with particular reference to the initial expectations set out in Chapter 3.

### **7.2.1 Methods of Election**

#### *Constituency MPs*

A significant difference between the two case studies of New Zealand and the United Kingdom is that New Zealand’s MMP electoral system allows for two types of MPs: those elected to a geographical electorate and those elected on the party list. At the outset, I suggested that list MPs would be more likely than constituency MPs to make explicit representative claims based on minority identities such as race, gender or sexuality as they lacked a geographical constituency to represent. This proved to be the case, with localness being the most commonly used factor for explicit claim-making by constituency MPs in both the UK and NZ, regardless of the perceived or ascriptive identity of the MP. A notable emphasis on localness was evident in both public and interview performances of identity - all thirty maiden speeches analysed from the United Kingdom used their electorate as the primary focus of the speech and ninety per cent of NZ electorate MPs made direct reference to their constituency in their maiden speeches. Biographies used examples of membership in the community of the constituency, or connections to ‘home’ and history of connection to the constituency, to justify representative claims made by the MP. In the interview data, results were similar, demonstrating a consistency in the way representation was prioritised: localness was still the most commonly featured identification among constituency representatives in both countries. In contrast, identity-based claims such as those of shared race/ethnicity, nationality, class or gender, which are traditionally the focus of theories of descriptive representation, were made less frequently by constituency MPs and tended to be made through implicit claim-making.

There are a number of reasons why this would occur. Firstly, the constituency MP is elected by, and responsible to, their geographical constituency. There is a historical narrative of a 'bond' between the elected representative and the constituency who elected them, which a representative can draw on to shape representative claims and legitimacy. In addition, those MPs who do not hold safe seats are fighting to be re-elected, which requires the continued support of the constituency and a focus on their needs. Secondly, 'localness' is a straightforward claim to both be put forward by the representative, and to be 'read' by the audience. For those who grew up in the constituency, there is a wealth of shared imagery/places/rhetoric they can use to frame their representative claims ("I am one of you, I understand your needs"), and even those who are more recent migrants into the constituency can easily become involved in the community, creating networks and support for their claim of being 'local'. Thirdly, 'localness' is a broad umbrella claim which should not alienate specific groups within a geographical territory, unlike claims based on minority identities. It covers a shared characteristic (location) which can potentially overcome differences of wealth, age, class or language. Finally, localness is what voters *want* in a representative. Childs and Cowley demonstrated that voters favour local representatives over those of the same gender, and there is also evidence that while voters want to see a diverse parliament, the qualities they look for in their own representative are shared beliefs and localness.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that constituency MPs emphasised their localness over other identities when performing their representative role.

One exception to this was the case of constituency MPs who were members of ethnic minority groups. All ten ethnic minority MPs interviewed from New Zealand and the United Kingdom recognised that they were viewed as symbolically representing their ethnic group. They are visible minorities within a privileged space with ascriptive identities which cannot easily be ignored, unlike sexuality, class or religion. They are labelled on the basis of their identity by the media, by voters, and even sometimes by their parties. The degree to which they engaged with symbolic or surrogate representation differed on the individual MP, but there was evidence that racial and ethnic identities were recognised and 'performed' by MPs in a way that other group markers were not. This highlights the importance of the representative-represented relationship in the process of claim-making; MPs can be viewed as symbolic

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<sup>6</sup> Childs and Cowley, "The Politics of Local Presence," and Cowley, "Why not ask the audience?"

representatives by members of the group, even without making explicit representative claims based on identity. Ascriptive characteristics allow the public to ‘read’ MPs in a certain way because of their physical appearance, unlike class, sexuality or religion. And as numbers of ethnic minority representatives in both Britain and New Zealand are relatively low, MPs who are visible as ethnic minorities may feel more responsibility to speak on behalf of under-represented communities.

### *List MPs*

List MPs tended to use identity markers such as gender or sexuality or ethnicity to make explicit representative claims more frequently than constituency MPs, a trend observed in both interviews and public performances of identity. This meant that performance of identities other than localness were more common among MPs in New Zealand than those in the UK. List MPs do not have an electoral mandate from a defined geographical constituency; they owe their election to party support and list positioning. Moreover, many are selected for the party list because of certain perceived or ascriptive identities, in a tactic by parties to increase their voting appeal to a wider audience. Thus party lists see a higher proportion of ethnic minorities, women, or LGBT MPs elected to parliament. The lack of geographical constituency and party emphasis on personal identity means that list MPs often fulfil the role of surrogate representative for previously marginalised groups in parliament and make explicit representative claims to this effect. They seek out identity groups as a form of new constituency, lending legitimacy to their roles as representatives and forming the basis for representative claims based on shared group identity.

List MPs were careful however, to make multiple representative claims and not to describe themselves as only representing a single identity group, even those who made explicit claims linking their identity to their representative role (such as Yang). A second reason for the emphasis on group representation in New Zealand is a cultural one: New Zealand’s history of democracy and engaging with descriptive representation, its bi-cultural heritage and patterns of migration, and its electoral system with list and constituency MPs resulted in greater emphasis on group representation, and public performances of representation based on group identity are not uncommon among MPs. This suggests that both method of selection of MP and parliamentary cultures and

norms were important to the types of identity-based performance given by representatives.

While some aspects of identity, such as localness and ethnicity, tended to be more frequently used as a basis for representative claims, both in public and interview contexts, there were some forms of identity which were absent from the discussions of representatives. Representation of class, sexuality, and nationality were all discussed in public representations of identity but were relatively absent from interview data. In contrast, gendered representation was rarely framed publically by MPs but emerged more prominently from interview data. Gender provided an interesting variable, as it was almost non-existent among the public performances of identity by UK MPs but was more frequently raised in implicit ways throughout maiden speeches in New Zealand. This not only emphasises the importance of institutional norms and culture that provides a space where women MPs can define themselves as representing women, it also demonstrates the way that institutional norms and cultures can marginalise or silence portrayals of identity, as seen in Chapter 6.

### **7.2.2 Parliamentary Norms and Culture**

The history of descriptive representation within the country and the political party, the culture and norms of parliament, the scarcity of representatives from a particular group, and the visibility of identity markers all shape the relationship between identity and representative roles. Demands to act as descriptive representatives can also come from outside the individual, either from 'above' (political parties) or 'below' (group members or the wider public). Although some MPs attempt to resist any identity labels that will affect perceptions of them and their representative role, they often find it challenging to overcome classification and stereotypes based on identity. This is particularly true for MPs with visible identity markers such as race, gender or disabilities which are harder to conceal or 'opt-out' of group membership. This creates a sense of a hierarchy of identity, where membership of some groups is fluid which allows MPs to operate outside of minority labels, while others with visible identity markers mean that it is harder for MPs to deny identification with the group.

While it has been demonstrated that MPs are talking about and even acting on increasing parliamentary representation for under-represented groups, there still remain clashes between these demands and the ways that these are carried out within political



institutions as shown in Chapter 6. Candidate selection is still skewed towards picking someone who is “someone like me” – someone like the majority voter. Ethnic minority MPs often stand in constituencies with large ethnic populations in the hope that they will appeal to minority voters because they share the same identity markers. And once they enter parliament, minority members may find themselves labelled by virtue of their perceived identity and even potentially face prejudice or discrimination on the same basis, while they attempt to shape their representative role. Debates still rage among MPs about the effectiveness or need for legislated measures to increase representation of minority groups, with some supporting these as essential for overcoming the supply and demand factors which may hold back women, ethnic minorities and other minority groups, and others arguing that selection of candidates and MPs should be based on merit, not identity; denying that there is inequality in the opportunities awarded to both majority and minority candidates. These issues demonstrate the difficulties that accompany the intersection of political representation and identity and the clash between what ‘ought to be’ and what ‘is’.

Political parties are the most important political institution for recruiting, selecting and nominating individuals from under-represented groups. They act as gatekeepers to parliament, and without their participation, parliamentary diversity will not be achieved. Previous chapters have discussed the importance of the constituency-representative bond, particularly under Britain’s FPP electoral system. Parties need to select a candidate who will appeal to the greatest number of voters who represent a variety of ethnicities, gender, ages, religions and sexual identities, and this can lead to caution on behalf of party selectors. While fewer minority candidates are the result of both supply and demand factors, it is generally acknowledged that there are barriers for some group members that make entry to elite institutions such as parliaments, harder to accomplish. These can include experiences of direct and indirect discrimination towards those who do not fit the majority mould, leading minority candidates to downplay their difference in favour of seeming more ‘mainstream’ and attractive to selectors.

Parties may attempt to overcome some of these barriers and attempt to attract more members of minority groups by trying to package themselves in a way that will appeal to identity-based groups of voters. Both centre-right parties in the UK and in NZ have seen recent drives to broaden both their image as parties for white, middle-aged men,

and also their approval ratings among ethnic communities and reclaim the voting blocs traditionally held by centre-left parties. One of the easiest ways to demonstrate commitment to these groups is to diversify the candidates running for election: a technique that not only increases political engagement of ethnic communities who see ‘someone like them’ running for parliament but also demonstrates that parties are serious about implementing diversity as well as minority needs and issues. The rise of LGBT MPs from within the Conservative Party, for instance, challenges the dominant theory that identity-based politics are the domain solely of the Left. Centre-left parties therefore fight to retain their traditional support from minority communities and expand their own levels of diversity through all-women shortlists in Britain and varied party lists in New Zealand. The latter has resulted in increased diversity within the New Zealand Parliament but can also lead to candidates being selected solely on the basis of identity markers and then encouraged to take up the role of group representative, as has been demonstrated in the previous empirical chapters.

Both list and constituency MPs in NZ specifically made representative claims based on partisan identification, but parties were rarely explicitly mentioned by the UK MPs in either public or interview data as shown in Chapters 4 and 5. The emphasis of list MPs on partisan representation is unsurprising, given that they rely on parties for their nomination, ranking, and election. However, the differences among constituency MPs in the UK and NZ raises interesting questions about the role of parties in each case study. MMP saw a rise in the number of political parties in the New Zealand parliament which may have contributed to party emphasis and differentiation among MPs. The willingness to engage with descriptive representation in political culture in New Zealand, as seen throughout the empirical chapters, has also affected the norms of public performances of identity in maiden speeches and biographies. There is more space for MPs to talk ‘beyond geographical constituencies’ which may have contributed to representative claims based on parties. Although literature on political parties in the UK has emphasised their importance, there was little explicit discussion of party affiliation or partisan-based representative claims among UK MPs. Party affiliation dominates an MP’s political career and informs their day-to-day political activities and positions so it was surprising that so few MPs interviewed in the UK made specific mention of the role parties played in their understanding of representation and instead linked partisan representation to discussions of constituency representation. These

results may differ with a closer examination of MPs who hold safe seats and are therefore less reliant on constituency support as an individual, but this requires research beyond the scope of this thesis.

The attitudes of political institutions towards descriptive representation and parliamentary diversity have demonstrated that they are beginning to respond to demands for parliaments to have a greater sense of legitimacy. Gender quotas have been demonstrated to increase the number of female MPs, including in Britain, where Labour's women-only shortlists dramatically increased the proportion of women in Parliament. Despite this, many representatives, including those who are minorities in Parliament, do not support the idea of shortlists or special measures based on identity. Chapter 6 highlighted that many MPs preferred instead to focus on individual merit and achievement as a method of selection. Similarly, the reserved parliamentary seats for Māori in New Zealand has caused some division between an acknowledgement that as 'first people' Māori are entitled to parliamentary representation, and a struggle to understand group representation and overcome the sense that somehow reserved seats are 'unfair'. MPs themselves fail to reach an agreement over whether there should be mandated measures to increase parliamentary diversity, although most New Zealand MPs readily admitted that the change to an MMP electoral system has been a positive step in increasing the numbers of women, ethnic minorities and other under-represented groups in Parliament. Proportional Representation systems therefore not only allow for a more proportional parliament in terms of party influence, they also allow for greater diversity in the people who stand for election via the party lists.

These political mechanisms are all institutional responses to the problem of under-representation and demands for authenticity in parliaments and representatives, and reflect the ways that group identity and representation affect political institutions. The impact of identity-based politics and the role of the group representative on political institutions are bilateral: they both shape and influence each other. Institutions respond to demands for diversity and attempt to increase their own vote-share, while at the same time maintaining their own elite norms and barriers to entry, and individual MPs try to avoid identity-based labels that assign them an 'inferior' role as a group representative while at the same time, their presence as a visible minority within Parliament provides pressures to identify with, and substantively represent minority groups.

### 7.2.3 Audience

The change in context for performances of identity within this thesis also reflects a change in audience. Both web biographies and maiden speeches are targeted to large, public audiences. They are heavily constrained by institutional regulations and norms and designed to present an image of the MP to a general, mass audience of potential voters. Interviews, in contrast, have a single audience member which can mean that the interaction is more of a semi-private dialogue than a ritualised, public performance for MPs. Chapter 3 therefore suggested that interviews provide more space for MPs to put forward representative claims based on identity; however, they are also where MPs are more likely to explicitly reject identity-based representation.

Interview data revealed that MPs were more likely to acknowledge explicit or implicit representative claims based on minority identities within this forum than either maiden speeches or biographies. While ‘localness’ was used as a basis for making explicit representative claims in both the public performances of identity and within the interviews, MPs deviated more frequently from institutional norms and traditions within interviews to discuss the representation of identity in a more nuanced way. Within interviews, many MPs used a script which spoke of desiring ‘authentic’ group representation, whereby people were represented by those who were ‘like them’. They assigned value to the importance of not only descriptive, but also symbolic representation. MPs who could be identified as parliamentary minorities by virtue of ascriptive characteristics such as gender or race, acknowledged that they were seen as *symbolically* representing a group despite their own representative claims. This was emphasised by MPs through reference to their own personal identity or backgrounds, or describing connection to various ‘identity groups’ without making explicit representative claims. Despite this, there was also reluctance from MPs to make explicit representative claims based on minority identities, and the normative values ascribed to descriptive and symbolic representation were tempered by a conflicting desire to avoid being labelled on the basis of identity. This led to some MPs refuting descriptive representative roles and denying that they have any ‘obligation’ or qualification to represent a group based on shared characteristics. This was demonstrated particularly in Chapter 6 where the role of the ‘group representative’ or explicit claim-making based on minority identities was rejected in favour of emphasising localness as a basis for

explicit representative claims.<sup>7</sup> Refutation of identity-based representative claims only took place in an interview context, suggesting that heavily formal and institutionalised settings did not support this type of script. For example, Ben Bradshaw's claim that he did not represent gay constituents because of his own sexuality was not something that was carried out within his public performances of identity; instead of actively refuting claims to represent LGBT communities in public forums, he instead emphasised localness as a basis for his representative claim-making or made implicit links to his connection to others in same-sex relationships.

I have argued throughout that identity and representation are not fixed concepts but fluid and multiply constructed. Empirical data has demonstrated however that they are not performed in a random manner; trends can be determined by the factors that influence representative claims and the contexts in which claims are made. Institutional rules, norms and culture significantly condition the types of representative claims made. The emphasis that all MPs placed on localness signifies the traditional importance of geographical constituencies while the dominant white, middle-class culture of parliaments meant MPs were less likely to consistently frame themselves as minority representatives for fear of being thought of as tokenistic. Methods of election played an important role in the extent to which MPs performed minority identities; list MPs were much more likely than constituency MPs to make explicit and implicit representative claims based on forms of identity other than localness. Further, a culture of engagement with descriptive representation in New Zealand meant that identity was more commonly performed by its MPs on both public and interview' stages'.

Context also proved an important consideration for performances of representative claim-making. Interviews with a single audience member provided the most space for MPs to make explicit representative claims about identity but they were also the space where MPs directly challenged or refuted representation based on identity. When talking to an interviewer about their identity and representation, MPs were naturally more likely to foreground identity but what were of interest within this thesis were the types of claims made, the way they were made and the comparison to previous performances of identity.

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<sup>7</sup> Celis and Wauters, "Pinning the Butterfly".

It is clear that all three expectations were met: performance of identity varies in relation to method of selection of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture and audience. *Claims to* representation are therefore a series of discursive or performative moves which evoke identity strategically and vary according to context and audience. Identity has a direct impact on the way MPs view not only themselves, but on their representative role and it is important therefore to explicitly consider the relationship between the two concepts. Drawing on the work of Goffman and Saward, this thesis has used concepts of performance and representative claim-making as frameworks for the intersection of identity and political representation. The implicit overlap of identity and representation is not a new phenomenon; there have been countless studies of gendered representation, and race and representation, as well as theories of descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation. However, this thesis moves beyond these positions to foreground what identity means for representatives in terms of how they construct it, present it and perform within their roles as MPs.

Using different ‘stages’ for performances of identity has provided the opportunity to compare the identity-based representative claims and the contexts around these, while the case studies allowed for a comparison between ‘representation of the self’ in two Westminster democracies with differing electoral systems and democratic histories. As I have suggested, there is a need to look at ‘who’ our representatives are and to challenge this in a meaningful and constructive way and as such, this study goes hand in hand with literature on descriptive and symbolic representation, as well as theories of representative claim-making.

#### **7.4 *Avenues for Future Research***

As with any study, there are limiting parameters to this research which need to be considered. The focus on identity as a constructed performance rules out a more specific focus on aspects of identity such as gender or ethnicity, which might have provided a clearer demographic of interview subjects. However, this thesis adds to the literature on representation precisely by moving beyond rigid identity categories of representation to a wider understanding of identity as a performed concept that differed depending on context. This research could be expanded further by adding more ‘stages’ to analyse in more depth the way that MPs perform identity through representation. These could potentially include social media, debate speeches, voting positions or other forms of media such as newspapers or television. These could add new contexts to performance

of identity by MPs and allow for further comparison between those analysed within this thesis.

While the choice of case studies limits the analysis here to two parliamentary democracies, this study could be replicated with a larger pool of respondents or with a focus on performance of a specific identity (gender, for instance). Similar investigations could also be carried across other countries, taking into account new systems of government and forms of electoral system. It would also be interesting to compare the effect of culture on the way that identity is used politically, as appeared to be the case in New Zealand and Britain; perhaps developing a more inter-disciplinary approach to studying representation.

Drawing more explicitly on the field of political psychology would also be of use for future research; this thesis argues that identity of an MP plays an important part in shaping the way that they perform their representative roles and that it can be used in a strategic manner by political actors. Political psychology offers one way to more closely examine not just how identity is performed by political actors in certain ways, but also explore why identities are formed and chosen by MPs. The thesis also suggests that identity can be used in a strategic fashion, not only by individual actors, but also by political parties and institutions. Further research in this area could involve combining current literature on voting cues and participation with this work on identity performance, and how these impact on elections and voter choice. Combined with more quantitative data on the effects of identity performances by political representatives (including further work on intersectionality, as well as focusing on specific identity ‘categories’), this could offer new data to an important field of political research.

While literature on descriptive representation and participation has demonstrated mixed results concerning the degree to which voters feel empowered by seeing someone ‘like them’ in parliament, the extent to which MPs ‘perform’ collective identity could also affect the levels of engagement and participation among minority groups.<sup>8</sup> There is a need to reflect on symbolic representation, for example, not only through the eyes of the representative, but also the represented – thereby acknowledging representation as a relational performance. The question of whether identity groups *feel* represented by minority MPs is one that ought to be addressed, although there are admittedly as many

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<sup>8</sup> Karp and Banducci, “When politics is not just a man’s game”; Lawless, “Politics of Presence?”; and Wolbrecht and Campbell, “Leading by Example”.

potential difficulties with labelling identity groups as there are with defining group representatives. Ethnographic research is one potential way to 'go deeper' into this area of study, using these findings as an initial launch pad for future research. Further analysis about this aspect of symbolic representation would provide additional data to theories of representative claim-making and help further the understanding of how performances of identity are 'read' by audiences. Finally, a natural progression from this research would be to go beyond descriptive and symbolic representation (or how MPs view themselves), to substantive representation, i.e. how MPs undertake performance through action. By mapping the way representatives carry out identity through substantive action, it would be possible to compare the way MPs talk about representing identity and how this is actually carried out in their everyday roles.

Representation may be a chance for MPs to 'represent the self' but the self they draw on is intersectional, complex and liable to change with the context, audience and objectives. By comparing and contrasting performance of identity by MPs within the three mediums of web biographies, maiden speeches and interviews, we have seen the extent to which political actors make representative claims based on identity in differing contexts. A further consideration of the factors that affect identity performance, such as method of election of the MP, parliamentary norms and culture and audience provides analysis that has been largely absent from discussions of identity and political representation. The relationship between identity and representation is more than categorization and labels; it is a complex performance between actor and audience that influences and is influenced by the role of a political representative.



## **Appendix 1: List of Interview Subjects**

### ***Members of Parliament: United Kingdom***

Anonymous male MP (Conservative Party)

Ben Bradshaw, MP for Exeter (Labour Party)

Alun Cairns, MP for Vale of Glamorgan (Welsh Conservative Party)

Jonathan Evans, MP for Cardiff North (Welsh Conservative Party)

Diana Johnson, MP for Hull North (Labour Party)

David Lammy, MP for Tottenham (Labour Party)

Kerry McCarthy, MP for Bristol East (Labour Party)

Alun Michael, former MP for Cardiff South and Penarth (Labour and Co-operative Party)

Yasmin Qureshi, MP for Bolton South-East (Labour Party)

Caroline Spelman, MP for Meriden (Conservative Party)

Gisela Stuart, MP for Birmingham Edgbaston (Labour Party)

Jo Swinson, MP for East Dunbartonshire (Liberal Democrats)

Hywel Williams, MP for Arfon (Plaid Cymru)

### ***Members of Parliament: New Zealand***

Jacinda Arden, list MP (Labour Party)

Brendan Burns, former MP for Christchurch Central (Labour Party)

Hilary Calvert, former list MP (ACT Party)

David Clendon, list MP (Green Party)

Catherine Delahunty, list MP (Green Party)

Kris Faafoi, MP for Mana (Labour Party)

Kevin Hague, list MP (Green Party)

Jan Logie, list MP (Green Party)

Sam Lotu-liga, MP for Maungakiekie (National Party)

Hekia Parata, list MP (National Party)

Dr Rajen Prasad, list MP (Labour Party)

Carmel Sepuloni, former list MP (Labour Party)

Pita Sharples, MP for Tamaki Makaurau (Māori Party)

Maryan Street, list MP (Labour Party)

Megan Woods, MP for Wigram (Labour Party)

Dr Jian Yang, list MP (National Party)

## **Appendix 2: Sample Interview Questions**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. Who do you see yourself representing in parliament and why?
2. Do the interests of groups you represent ever clash and how do you deal with this?
3. Do you believe political minority groups (women, ethnic minorities etc) need members of their own group to represent them in parliament? (Why/why not?)
4. Do you believe minority groups are currently well represented in your parliament? (Why/why not?)
5. Do you support quota systems to increase minority representation? (Why/why not?)
6. Do you feel that minority MPs need legitimacy from within their communities in order to be seen as leaders?
7. How would you define your identity?

### ***New Zealand Specific Questions***

8. How do you believe a MPs representation roles and responsibilities differ as a list MP to an electorate MP?
9. Do you believe there is still a need for the Māori seats in New Zealand?

### ***UK Specific Questions***

1. Do you support proportional representation as a means of increasing diversity in parliaments?
2. Does your party have a procedure for ensuring diversity?



## Appendix 3: Information Pack for Interview Subjects

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEWS

**Title of Research Project:** Performing Identity: Descriptive and Symbolic Representation in New Zealand and the United Kingdom

#### Details of Project

This thesis is an exploratory study of the relationship between identity and political representation. It outlines the ways in which identity, both self-constructed and ascribed, can contribute to our understanding of political representation, using interviews with MPs in the UK, Sweden and New Zealand.

I am a PhD candidate/research student at the University of Exeter. The project is funded by the University of Exeter.

#### Informed Consent

The purpose of the consent form is to ensure that you understand the information provided and have made an informed decision about the nature of the questions and how the information provided will be used.

It is proposed that you will be identified in the research paper.

#### Nature of the Questions

I would like the interview to be semi-structured, covering:

- Who you represent as an MP
- The political representation of minority groups
- Mechanisms to increase descriptive representation

#### Contact Details

For further information about the research or your interview data, please contact:

Helena Cook                      Department of Politics, University of Exeter

Phone: 07500634708              Email: hmc204@exeter.ac.uk

#### Confidentiality

Interview tapes and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described on the attached consent form and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law). You will be supplied with an audio copy of *your* interview on CD. Your data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act by the researcher for five years, then destroyed, unless you request otherwise.

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

Title of project: **Performing Identity: Descriptive and Symbolic Representation in New Zealand and the United Kingdom**

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor. I understand that the recording of interviews will be electronically wiped at the end of the project unless I indicate that I would like them returned to me.

- ☐ I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research.
- ☐ I would like the recordings of my interview returned to me at the conclusion of the project.
- ☐ I consent to this material being used for
  - ☐ Research and publication
  - ☐ Lecture material and other educational purposes
  - ☐ Electronic publishing
  - ☐ Broadcasting
- ☐ I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my written consent.
- ☐ I agree to assign copyright in this recording to Helena Cook
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date:

(please print clearly)

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