Local means local, does it? Regional identification and preferences for local candidates[*]

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Abstract

The literature on candidate selection has found that voters favour local candidates, as they are thought to be more apt to represent their constituents. An important caveat is that it requires that voters have knowledge of the candidates' characteristics, and to value localism. Previous research concentrates on candidate characteristics, leaving unanswered the question of who considers localism to be important when making their vote choices. This research addresses the gap by showing that regional identification has a strong relationship with preference for local candidates. We test this argument by analysing data from the British Election Survey 2015 using multilevel models. The results show that voters who feel stronger about their distinctive regional identities care significantly more about localism. Additionally, this effect is different when the party system includes a party that explicitly channels these feelings, suggesting that the advantage of local candidates is dependent on the context of party competition.

Keywords: Multilevel models, candidate competence, voting behaviour, descriptive representation

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1 Introduction

Candidate attributes are a salient concern in every election, particularly but not exclusively in countries that use first-past-the-post (FPTP) majoritarian rules to elect their representatives. They reflect directly on the level of descriptive representation of particular groups. Yet, concerns about descriptive representation go beyond gender and ethnicity (Reynolds, 2005) and include the study of local representation (Childs and Cowley, 2011). The predominant theory is that local representatives are better equipped to represent the interests of the constituency because they are more knowledgeable about local needs (Tavits, 2010; Shugart et al., 2005).

This provides a clear link between local candidates in FPTP systems, such as that used in the UK and Canada, and voters' preferences. However, there is evidence suggesting that voters in countries that use different electoral systems value localness as well. For example, in Ireland, where a Single Transferable Vote (STV) system is in place (Marsh, 2007; Górecki and Marsh, 2012), Belgium where representatives are elected using Proportional Representation (Put and Maddens, 2015), and Australia where the electoral rule is preferential voting (McAllister, 2015).

Political science has examined the effect of localness on electoral success and how this effect varies as a function of district magnitude (Shugart et al., 2005), following the principle that being perceived as a local candidate is an advantage and a meaningful signal for voters (Jankowski, 2016). This is because local candidates will be able to break party discipline as they rely less on the party for their future career, and because local ties can ensure greater accountability of elected officials to the constituency (Tavits, 2010; Campbell and Cowley, 2014). Other important empirical work on localness has focused on the traits of local candidates that matter to voters (Arzheimer and Evans, 2012; Campbell and Cowley, 2014; Glasgow and Alvarez, 2000) and in disentangling the effect of localness to "friends

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and neighbour effects" that are endogenous to canvassing activities, which explains why the success of candidates varies systematically as a function of their residence (Górecki and Marsh, 2012; Arzheimer and Evans, 2012).

The results generally point to a positive relationship between localness and electoral success, suggesting that local candidates have an advantage over non-local candidates (Campbell and Cowley, 2014; Arzheimer and Evans, 2012; Jankowski, 2016; Rüdig et al., 2016). However, it seems to be a tenuous relationship among partisans who, in their majority, support their party regardless of the quality of the local candidate (Roy and Alcantara, 2015; Blais and Daoust, 2017)/. This suggests that some individuals care more than others about localness (Blais et al., 2003; Blais and Daoust, 2017). Nonetheless, research on which voters care about localness and use it as a cue to vote is still scarce.

In this article we question the identity of voters who care about localism and why they do so. These are important questions that have not been completely answered, as theories of localism focus on testing the relationship between preferences for the local candidate with electoral success. Instead, we take a step back by looking at who prefers local candidates and why these preferences are formed.

The scholarship devoted to understanding the impact of candidate characteristics on voter preferences finds its roots in theories of the personalisation of voting behaviour (Cain et al., 1987; Carey and Shugart, 1995). Such theories argue that the personality and characteristics of leaders have become more prominent in recent decades, shifting public attention from the party to the candidate. The personal charisma of a candidate, then, can strengthen the link with the constituency. When district magnitude is small, a charismatic leader can take advantage of their personal characteristics to win the seat. But this does not mean that as district magnitude increases, the characteristics of the candidate become unimportant. When district magnitude is large, parties can still use charismatic leaders to deliver their message or increase the popularity of other less likeable or unknown candidates (Kitschelt,

2000; McAllister, 2015).

Until recently, the salience of localness in voter choice has received limited attention in the literature (Blais et al., 2003; Marsh, 2007; Górecki and Marsh, 2012). Originally considered to be an issue exclusive of FPTP electoral systems such as that used in Canada and the UK, recent literature has shown that preferences for local candidates are present across countries (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Childs and Cowley, 2011). Blais and Daoust (2017) show that one in 10 Canadian (FPTP) voters backed the local candidate from another party and in two of five of these cases, the preference for the local candidate trumped party preferences. In Canada 5% of the electorate favour the local candidate, especially among rural and highly sophisticated voters (Blais et al., 2003), while in Ireland (STV electoral system) around 40% of voters are candidate-centred (Marsh, 2007).It has been found that in general, personal activity is less important than party activity at the local level in Australia, where the preferential system is used (McAllister, 2015).

Roy and Alcantara (2015) provide evidence derived from an experiment that corroborates the existence of candidate effects but suggesting that the magnitude of this effect varies among voters. Their research concludes that voters who pay more attention to campaigns are more likely to support a strong local candidate and this effect is larger among party supporters. However, while these findings deepen our understanding of preferences for strong local candidates by expanding the focus on partisanship, it is difficult to attribute these effects to the salience of descriptive representation because they rely on an experiment that only contrasts a strong local candidate with two weaker ones. Moreover, the restricted variation in the demographic composition of participants (all are Canadian university students) leaves the door open to further explore this issue.

Thus, despite important advances made by the literature in showing the advantage of local candidates, the reasons why voters support them remain to be seen. We still cannot discern, for example, whether the presence of a local candidate can override tactical voting

or if local voters who identify more strongly with their local identity are more likely to vote for the local candidate than those who have more global or broader identities.

Contributing to our understanding of the advantages of local candidates, demographic representation and voting behaviour, we build on this previous work by identifying the characteristics of voters who are more likely to consider localness as an important cue to vote, an issue of high relevance previously identified by Childs and Cowley (2011). Studying the issue of localism, who cares about it and how these preferences are formed, is crucial to develop better institutional means of descriptive representation. Each voter has multiple identities and, as institutions develop, we need to define which characteristics are better or most valued by society. One of the principles of pursuing descriptive representation is that more similar representatives will better understand the needs and demands of the population they represent but, simultaneously, voters are comprised of multiple identities that intersect, for example, gender, race, and place of birth or residency. This suggests a possible trade-off of preferences when casting a ballot, for example, of gender over localism or vice versa. We need to understand what drives preferences for local candidates to know what is being sacrificed when ranking a candidate's characteristics above localness.

In this article we focus on the role of identities, specifically regional identities[1], in shaping preferences for the local candidate. We argue here that preferences for the local candidate depend on how strongly their distinctive regional identity is felt by voters.

Territorial identities are shaped during early socialisation and are constructed of shared experiences, culture, language, and a particular sense of belonging while emphasising in-group similarities and out-group-differences (Dovi, 2002; Bamberg et al., 2011; Schnaudt

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[1]Around the word regional identities are understood as sub-national identities. For example, in Spain an affinity with the Basque identity will be considered a regional identity. However, in the UK the regions that form the country are referred to as nations. Thus, Scottish, English, Welsh, and Northern Irish identities are referred in the UK as being national identities. In this short article we use the term regional identity for clarity purposes and for the benefit of the non-British reader who may find it confusing if the term 'national identity' is used to refer to something that is indeed a sub-national identity.

et al., 2016). Territorial identities have traditionally been used to explain attitudes towards the European Union (Hooghe and Marks, 2005, 2004; Carey, 2002) and recently, the Brexit referendum in the UK (Hobolt, 2016), for example. Their effect on vote choice is manifested in the distinctive voting patterns and party systems present in different regions of the UK, Belgium, and Spain (Bassi et al., 2011; Chernyha and Burg, 2012; Dandoy and Schakel, 2013). We build on these studies to argue that territorial identities can shape preferences for local candidates and explain why some voters care more than others that their candidates are local.

Nation-states are not the only territorial units with which citizens may identify. They can also identify with their regions, locality, and community (Westle, 2011; Schnaudt et al., 2016). Recent research suggests that territorial identities are not always exclusive as voters can identify with multiple locations, conflating national and sub-national identities. Consequently, we hypothesise that the mechanisms that operate in building regional identities can also take place at a smaller scale (Schnaudt et al., 2016). By appealing to voters' sense of belonging and their tendency to vote for the people that "look similar to them" (what is technically called homophilia), (Bishop, 2008), it is clear that regional identities can shape preferences for local candidates (Childs and Cowley, 2011; Dovi, 2002).

We also focus on regional identities instead of local identities as the former are not necessarily constituency bounded. Constituency boundaries are re-shaped periodically, while regional boundaries are stable. For example, in the particular case of the UK 2015 General Election, the constituency boundaries had changed in 2010 but the regional boundaries remained mainly constant. This stability in boundaries facilitates the development of a distinctive culture and shared experience that is the basis for a sense of belonging (Schnaudt et al., 2016). The literature (Kumar, 2003; Tilley et al., 2004; Schnaudt et al., 2016) also shows that in the UK, there is a clear empirical and conceptual difference between English, Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish identities (Hobolt, 2016; McCrone and Bechhofer,

2015); these give a place for feelings that emphasise the in-group similarities and out-group differences to a greater degree than possible with constituency boundaries.

Both elements, the identities differentiation together with more stability within their boundaries, allow individuals to develop stronger identities attached to their region that can be expressed as preferences for a local candidate. Thus, if the mechanism we are proposing holds, we can expect that voters who have a stronger affinity with their regional identity will care more about candidates being perceived as local.

In an ideal word, we will be able to test different effects between regional and local identities and see if they are exclusive or complementary. Although this connection has been already tested empirically elsewhere (Schnaudt et al., 2016), we are unable to confirm or hypothesise about it here. This is because, as it is discussed below, our analysis is constrained by the data available, which do not contain information about local identities within regions. We formulate the statements above in the following hypotheses :

Hypothesis 1 Voters who identify strongly with their regional identities are more likely to have preferences for a local candidate.

Hypothesis 2 The relationship between regional identities and preference for local MPs is contingent to the political options available to voters that allow them to express their regionalist views.

This article contributes significantly to the literature: a) we show that preferences for a local candidate are not homogeneous among the population, and that variation can be the result of the strength of regional identities; b) we find that, while the literature has long argued that localism is strongly linked to the electoral rule used to elect representatives, the availability of political choice also plays a key role.

To determine whether a candidate is local or not, previous empirical studies have mainly used information relating to the place of residence, the geographical distance between the place of birth and the constituency where the candidate is standing, or information about

their experience working as local council member or local assembly (see for example, Górecki and Marsh (2012); Arzheimer and Evans (2012); Tavits (2010). However, the personal characteristics of a candidate matter in an election only when voters use those cues to vote (Shugart et al., 2005; Rüdig et al., 2016) and voters are likely to use additional information to evaluate localness of a candidate. To account for this we use, instead, voter information *own views of the importance of localness.* Additionally, other researchers have noted that the effect of localness in voting behaviour is endogenous to canvassing activities (Górecki and Marsh, 2012; Arzheimer and Evans, 2012). We instead take advantage of the particularities of the BES 2015 survey design to circumvent this issue. In particular, the fact that the survey took place before the 2015 General Election campaign began, allowing us to isolate the importance of localness from canvassing activities[2]. This permits us to offer a parsimonious model to identify voters who care about localness.

The results confirm previous research that suggested that not all voters care to the same degree and magnitude about candidate localness. They suggest that voters who identify strongly with their regional identity care significantly more about this than voters for whom it is less important. Additionally, we found that electoral choice is affected by the structure of the party system and that the presence of a nationalistic party, such as the Scottish National Party, can outweigh these feelings, probably because it channels regional identities and nationalistic feelings through a different route. The conclusions support arguments advocated by Mann and Fenton (2017) that a certain "resentful nationalism" was growing in strength in England, but not in Scotland and Wales, which is currently playing a new part in English and British politics. The results also confirm the advantage of the local candidate and add a new layer to achieve a better descriptive representation.

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[2]We acknowledge that another, more recent election took place in 2017. However, due to the nature of that snap election the questions about local identification were not again asked.

2 Empirical Strategy and Data

We used data from four main sources: the 4th wave of the British Election Study (BES) (Fieldhouse and Prosser, 2016), the Statements of Persons Nominated (SOPNs) that contain the candidates' addresses[3], the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Postcode dataset[4], and the BES 2015 Results Dataset (Fieldhouse and Prosser, 2015)[5]. The BES wave used for this paper was conducted during March 2015 and contains specific questions regarding the preference for local MPs and candidates. In particular, as our response variable we use a question asking respondents to rank from 0 to 10 the importance they assign to having an MP who is local. The mean score is relatively high, 7.8, with a standard deviation of 2.2[6].

The strength of regional identification is measured through 1-7 scales. The BES asks respondents in England, Scotland, and Wales about how English, Scottish, or Welsh they feel. The scale goes from 1 for "Not at all [English, Scottish, Welsh]", to 7 for "Very Strongly [English, Scottish, Welsh]".

We also included party identification, which has been signalled as an important element of the preferences for local candidates because voters with stronger ties to a party tend to support their party regardless of the candidate's localness (Roy and Alcantara, 2015; McAllister, 2015). Including this variable also allows us to test for other alternative forms in which voters may express their regional identities. This variable is measured through a question in which respondents are asked to identify themselves as supporters of some of the

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[3]SOPNs are the official declarations issued by local authorities in which they publish candidate information. Candidates are asked to disclose their home addresses so they can be published in the SOPNs. If they refuse, the SOPNs will mention their constituency of residence.

[4]The ONS publishes a dataset containing the postcodes comprising a given parliamentary constituency. Due to their nested nature, we use this information to match a candidate's postcode to their constituency of residency

[5]The BES, along with their surveys, publishes a special dataset after every election that contains all results per constituency, along with census data at constituency level.

[6]The question wording is as follows: *All other things being equal, how important do you think it is that your MP lives in your constituency?.* Respondents are then asked to provide a number between 0 and 10, 0 being "not at all important" and 10 "very important"

main UK parties. We use their first responses. For those respondents who did not provide a party in the first instance, we use the "squeezed" response (i.e. the response they give when asked "Do you generally think of yourself a little closer to one of the parties than the others? If yes, which party?").

Finally, we included some traditional controls based on the extant literature on the topic (Roy and Alcantara, 2015; Blais and Daoust, 2017). Age is usually associated with a higher preference of local candidates, while education and political interest seem to run in the opposite direction. We measure education as the age in which respondents finished their final degree and use a 5-point scale to account for political interest. Sex is also relevant, according to the previous studies on the issue, with female voters being more likely to prefer local candidates. Finally, we add ethnicity, measured as a dichotomous variable that accounts for white or non-white candidates. While this is far from ideal in terms of accounting for difference across different (non-white) ethnic groups, it does allow us to account for the preference that non-white voters might have towards non-white candidates, or for the electoral penalty that non-white candidates pay in comparison to white candidates. (Fisher et al., 2015). Finally, we use an ideological scale from left to right, in order to account for potential correlations between ideological positions and preference for local candidates. We do not provide hypotheses for these variables, as that goes beyond the reach of this article. Furthermore, we aimed to create parsimonious models to account for the relevance of localism.

We employ multilevel hierarchical models, in particular, restricted maximum-likelihood (RML) regression, to explore what voter characteristics make them more likely to favour local candidates. Multilevel models are suitable to analyse the data at hand as they allow us to obtain average effects for individual characteristics and use varying slopes to see how these effects vary in the different countries of the UK (excluding Northern Ireland), as opposed to other models that assume that all voters care in the same magnitude and intensity about

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localism. Additionally, this strategy allow us to tap into the regional identities that form the UK. We use both varying intercepts and slopes by country. The varying slopes are used to analyse whether the association between caring for local MPs and the strength of regional identity holds across different countries in the UK. The use of a small number of units at the upper-level is a contested issue in the literature of hierarchical models. Stegmueller (2013) argues that frequentist approaches using maximum likelihood can produce biased estimates when the number of groups is low. He argues for the use of Bayesian methods to avoid these problems. Notwithstanding, recent research (Elff et al., 2016) refutes that claim and recommends the use of restricted maximum likelihood techniques instead, which is the approach followed here. Furthermore, (McNeish, 2016) argues against using Bayesian models with small samples when the priors are default or uninformative. Given the novel nature of our analyses, we do not possess the information to create more instructive priors, and this could lead to biased results (even more so than when using frequentist conservative methods, such as RML). Notwithstanding, as a robustness check, we estimated a Bayesian model and produced comparable results (see Online Appendix).

The purpose of our empirical strategy is twofold. On the one hand, to test the different propositions about what drives the preference for local MPs. On the other, we are interested in observing the differences across the countries within the UK. This is particularly relevant as the difference in political preferences, particularly between Scotland and England, have recently been sharply exposed during the Brexit referendum. While England showed a majority vote for the Conservative party in 2015 and was in favour of leaving the EU in 2016, Scotland elected 56 MPs from the Scottish National Party out of the 59 seats available and showed strong support for remaining in the EU (62%).

3 Discussion of Results

Table 1 shows the results from the multilevel models. As shown in Model 1, the relationship between regional identification and the preference for local MPs is positive and significant, which is consistent with our expectations. This relationship holds in Model 2, where we add all the different control variables. As expected in H1, we observe that there is an average relationship between regional identification and preference for local MPs across the entirety of the UK, even after controlling for the between-country variation through the use of varying intercepts. We then move on to look at this relationship within each of the countries (i.e. England, Scotland, and Wales) using varying slopes (also known as "random effects") for regional identification. We observe that the correlation between regional identification and preference for local MPs holds across the country. However, this is not the case once we add the party identification variable. As Model 4 shows, and consistent with our hypothesis 2, party identification matters for preference for local MPs, but only for one party, the Scottish National Party. This confirms our expectations that party choice matters in the context of personal characteristics of candidates. It is the case that in Scotland SNP voters are more likely to prefer local MPs. So, they find in the party system alternative forms to express their regional identities. Furthermore, we observe that the average effect across Great Britain disappears, which leads us to a further exploration of the relationship within each of the constituent countries.

We explore this result in more detail in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 plots the random effects, that is, the varying intercepts and different coefficients for regional identification by country, based on Model 4. We first show that the intercepts per country are not statistically different from the average intercept for the model. However, we do observe a significant difference in the case of the random slopes. In particular, we see that in the case of Wales and Scotland, the model shows no significant relationship between regional identification and

Figure 1: Coefficients for Varying Intercepts and Slopes
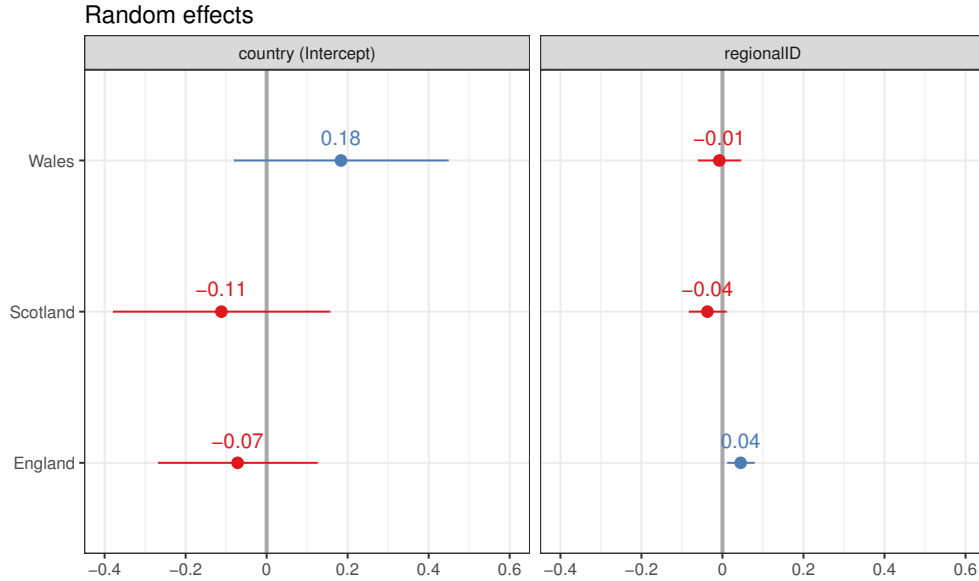
our dependent variables. This is not the case for England, where we do see a significantly positive relationship. In practical terms, this means that there is small variation from the average effect, and that this variation is different than zero, at least at a 95% confidence level.

In order to examine this relationship in more detail, we plotted the slopes for each of the countries in Figure 2. As can be noted, the slope for England is much steeper than the other two countries. Notwithstanding, all slopes are positive, yet flatter for Scotland and Wales (where they are also not significantly different than a flat line). In particular, an increase in English regional identity from 1 to 7 leads to an increase in 1.6 points in the dependent variable at the individual level.

Moving on to our control variables, we observe significant relationships for education and sex. In the case of the former, more educated respondents are less likely to show a high level of preference for local MPs. Conversely, female respondents are more likely to prefer that their MPs are local. We do not observe a relationship between respondent age and

Figure 2: Varying Intercepts and Slopes for strength of Regional Identity by Country
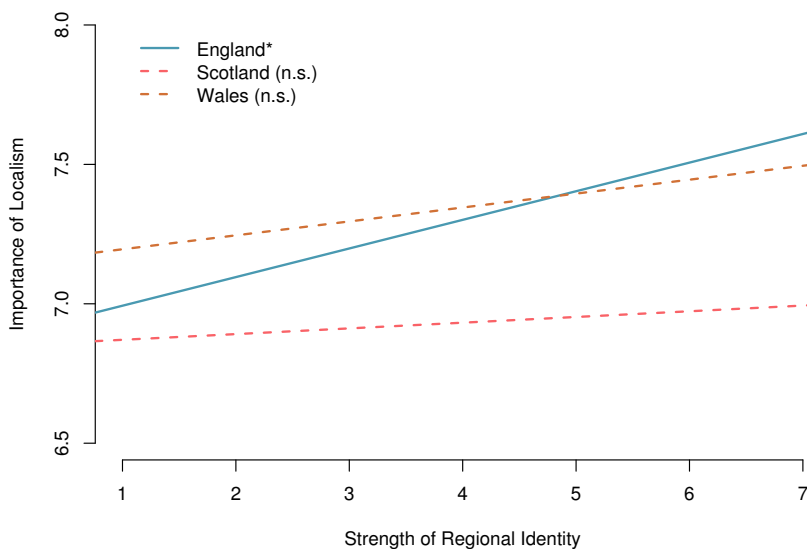
ideological position in the left-right scale with localism. The same happens for ethnicity, with no significant differences between white and non-white respondents. Finally, we do observe a significant and positive relationship for political interest, which is also consistent with the expectations from the literature.

In summary, our results support both hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2. In the case of hypothesis 1, we observe a general positive relationship between regional identification and localism across all respondents in Britain. Respondents that declare a higher level of identity for the country in which they live (whether England, Scotland, or Wales) are, on average, more likely to prefer local MPs. However, the story is not complete there. We show that when we allow for variation across countries, by using random effects, the relationship shows important differences. The most striking one relates to the role of party identification. As we hypothesised, voters can find alternative institutional means to express their feelings. In this particular case, the party system and the option to vote for nationalist/regionalist parties

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seems to moderate the relationship between regional identification and localism. Once we add party identification to our model, the link between regional identification and localism disappears in Scotland, but remains in England. Furthermore, SNP voters are more likely to prefer local MPs.

	Model 1 Varying intercepts	Model 2 Varying intercepts	Model 3 Varying intercepts and slopes	Model 4 Varying intercepts and slopes
(Intercept)	7.20***	6.87***	6.96***	6.96***
	(0.16)	(0.29)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Regional Identification	0.10***	0.08***	0.08**	0.06
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Party Identification: Other	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.
Party Identification: Conservative		−0.09		−0.10
		(0.12)		(0.12)
Party Identification: Labour		−0.06		−0.06
		(0.11)		(0.11)
Party Identification: Liberal Democrat		−0.06		−0.06
		(0.13)		(0.13)
Party Identification: SNP		0.38*		0.46**
		(0.16)		(0.17)
Party Identification: Plaid Cymru		0.38		0.44
		(0.33)		(0.33)
Party Identification: UKIP		0.02		−0.00
		(0.15)		(0.15)
Party Identification: Green Party		0.21		0.22
		(0.16)		(0.16)
Party Identification: BNP		0.35		0.32
		(0.52)		(0.52)
Education		−0.12***	−0.12***	−0.12***
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Female		0.39***	0.39***	0.39***
		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Age		0.00	0.00	0.00
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Left–Right		−0.02	−0.03**	−0.02
		(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Interest in the election		0.18***	0.18***	0.18***
		(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
BME		−0.07	−0.04	−0.06
		(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
AIC	32113.51	27561.17	27548.84	27561.06
BIC	32141.10	27682.62	27629.81	27696.01
Log Likelihood	−16052.75	−13762.58	−13762.42	−13760.53
Num. obs.	7327	6294	6294	6294
Num. groups: country	3	3	3	3

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table 1: Multilevel Models

4 Conclusions

Previous research on descriptive representation has made the case for the importance of local candidates. The electoral advantage of the local candidate has been explained by their ability to better understand local needs and voter beliefs that they can be held accountable to the locality. However, our findings suggest that there is something else that does not necessarily relate to the candidates' characteristics, but with voter attitudes.

Research on identity formation, particularly at a geographical level (Kumar, 2003; Tilley et al., 2004; Schnaudt et al., 2016; Hobolt, 2016; McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015) show the relevance of in-group and out-group ties in the process. The mechanism by which people form these identities seems to be similar at different geographical levels, either regional or local. Our results support this view. People who are more likely to identify with a macro-level geographical region seem to express that attitude when it comes to their political expectations at constituency level.

In this article, we have used data from the BES 2015 survey to isolate the effect from preferences for local MPs and strength of regional identities from campaign and canvassing activities. We found that individuals with stronger regional identities are more likely to care about localness. The results indicate that regional identities matter in expressing preference for the local candidate, they are tied to geography but go beyond the boundaries of the constituency. Furthermore, we also show that in Scotland regional identity can be channelled through the presence of a nationalist party, such as the SNP.

These findings can have broader implications for the study of candidates, voting behaviour and representation. They indicate that regional identities and the availability of political choice can permeate preferences for local candidates and play a key role in achieving descriptive representation. While it is important to acknowledge that these effects are specific to the British case, with strong political and regional identities clearly attached to a

territorial dimension, the results can be applied to other contexts and countries with strong regional identities such as Canada, Spain, or Belgium; indeed, they are also applicable to the North/South divide as seen in the USA. They contribute to the advance of the literature in at least two ways. Firstly, they demonstrate that parties can channel nationalistic feelings in different ways and, secondly, that not all citizens consider the local candidate to be their best option for representation.

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A1   Online Appendix

A1.1   Robustness checks

The first robustness checks we conducted corresponds to the models using log-dependent variable. The purpose of this exercise is to control for the fact that the variable is truncated between 0 and 10. As we can observe from figure A2, the overall distribution does not change much, which anticipates that the results should be comparable.

Figure A1: Distribution of dependent variable and log-dependent variable
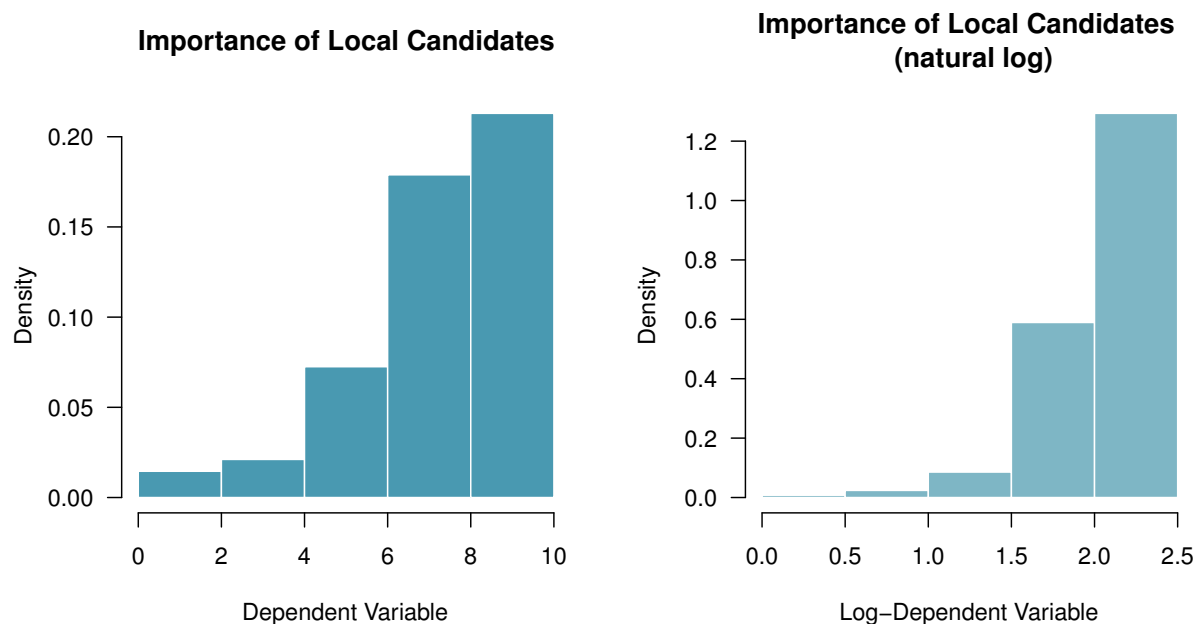
This notion is confirmed when estimating the corresponding models, as shown in table A1. As we can see, the coefficients show the same direction and significance as in the main model.

Furthermore, when we look at the coefficients of the random effects, as expected, we observe the same positive and significant relationship between regional identification within

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	1.91***	1.92***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Regional Identification	0.01**	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education	−0.02***	−0.01***
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Female	0.05***	0.05***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Left - Right	−0.00	−0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Interest in the election	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
BME	−0.02	−0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Party identification: Conservative		−0.03
		(0.02)
Party identification: Labour		−0.02
		(0.02)
Party identification: Liberal Democrat		−0.02
		(0.02)
Party identification: SNP		0.07**
		(0.03)
Party identification: Plaid Cymru		0.07
		(0.05)
Party identification: UKIP		−0.02
		(0.02)
Party identification: Green Party		0.02
		(0.02)
Party identification: BNP		0.03
		(0.08)
AIC	4015.40	4054.72
BIC	4096.21	4189.39
Log Likelihood	-1995.70	-2007.36
Num. obs.	6209	6209
Num. groups: country	3	3

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table A1: Log-dependent variable models

England.

Figure A2: Random effects coefficients using log-dependent variable
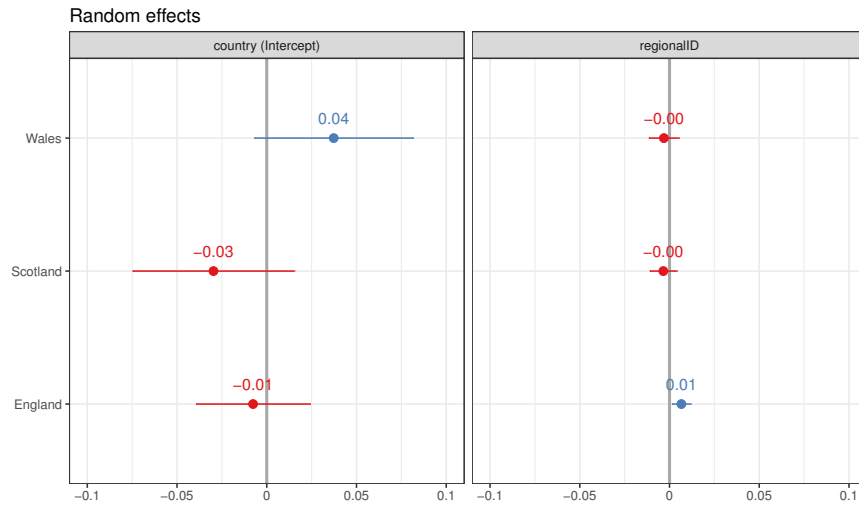
The second approach used to test the robustness of our results is using a Bayesian model. This is an approach suggested by Stegmueller (2013), but as we explain above, we decided not to follow in our main analysis. Nevertheless, we estimated a Bayesian multilevel model using Stan (Carpenter et al., 2017). Due to the lack of information available to construct the prior distributions, we have relied on uninformative ones, preferring the default ones from the `brms` R package (Bürkner, 2017).

The model was estimated with the same variables as Model 4. Figure A3 shows the posterior distributions for the different estimations of the regional identification variable, particularly the average effect, and the effects by country (England and Scotland). Figure A4 shows the distribution for Wales. As we can observe, the results are fairly similar to what we estimated using the RML models.

Finally, we estimated the marginal effects for the regional identification in England, which are shown in Figure A5.

Figure A3: Posterior distributions of the regional identification variable
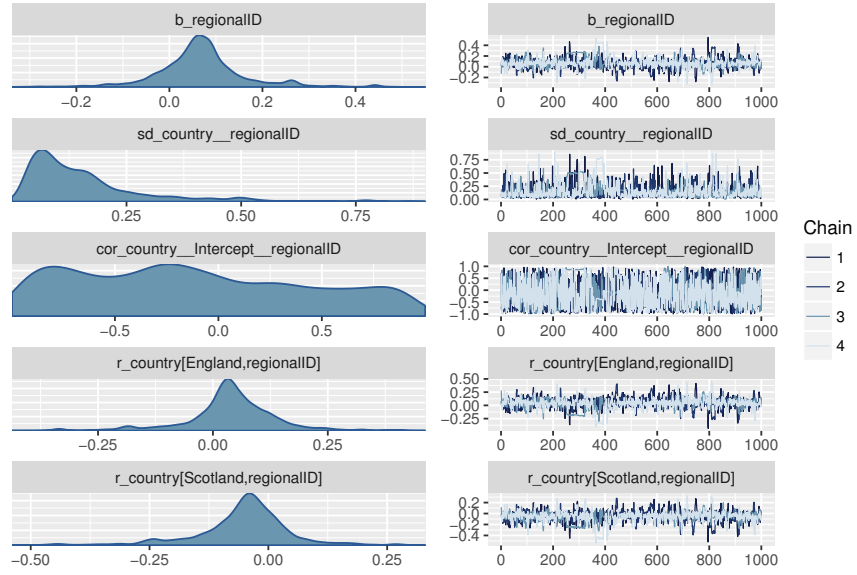

Figure A4: Posterior distributions of the regional identification variable (Wales only)
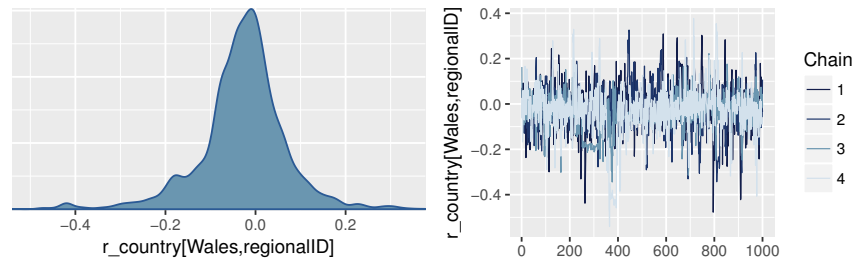
Figure A5: Marginal effects for regional identification in England (Bayesian estimation)