

Democratic Listening? Race and Representation in Local Politics

by

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To my mom and dad, for their love, patience, understanding, and sacrifices

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CHAPTER 1

TAKING LISTENING SERIOUSLY

“Great speeches are recorded, anthologised and mythologised, with oratory treated as emblematic of the craft of politics. Great listening will not find similar honor.” – Gideon Calder¹

For those who are apt to agree with Calder (Bickford 1996; Dobson 2012), there is a pervasive assumption that politics is about speech, so that when one talks about political activities in a democracy, speaking is almost always prioritized over listening. This criticism might even imply that political scientists are guilty of paying a disproportionate amount of attention to who exercises “voice,” which groups exercise an insufficient amount of it, what counts (or should count) as “voice”, etc., relative to the paucity of attention given to who listens well, when citizens and leaders might be inclined to listen critically, or even what “good” listening might be. If this is true, then certainly the “attention deficit” (Calder 2009; Dobson 2012) on listening is puzzling and significant given that the act of listening and speaking are mutually constitutive of one another; one cannot speak well without an audience present to listen and vice versa. However, is it true that political scientists have given scant attention to the practice of listening? The answer depends on how one defines listening. If listening is conceptualized as persuasion or in the figurative sense (e.g. legislative responses to public

¹ Calder, Gideon. “Listening, Democracy and the Environment.” *In-Spire Journal of Politics, Law and Society*. 4.2 (2009): 26-41.

opinion, political news consumption, and so on), then the answer is no. However, if listening is conceptualized in the literal sense (the listening that occurs in face-to-face deliberations, legislative-constituent interactions in town hall meetings), then yes, listening has been neglected as a serious subject of empirical inquiry.

Listening, when defined as “the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and nonverbal) needs, concerns and information offered by other human beings” (Purdy 1997, 11), involves various steps and components. Studies have captured various aspects in the process of listening, such as information reception, comprehension, or response to messages such as persuasion (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Hutchings 2003) although they neither explicitly refer to these components or steps as “listening” nor are not too concerned with a broader conceptualization of listening. Hence, “listening,” if casted in these ways, especially as “persuasion,” is incomplete in the sense that listening actually encompasses a comprehensive range of cognitive activities that is more than just compliance or persuasion. One can listen to and understand a message without having been convinced by it.

Furthermore, while scholars have devoted a significant amount of attention to the reception of and response to information, they have not devoted the same considerable effort to the study of the “interpretation” component of listening. Message interpretation can be defined as “the meanings attributed by a target to a specific message (or set of messages) within a communication context, including how the recipient of the message interprets the source’s relational intent” (Edwards, 1998, p. 54).² Much research on message interpretation focuses on the fact that different individuals may read or hear the same message but draw different

² Meanwhile, studies of source credibility (individuals whose statements recipients are more likely to interpret as accurate or believable) abound in the field of psychology.

meanings from it (Edwards, 2011, p. 50). Furthermore, in interpreting a spoken message, the listener might “hear” something other than what the speaker intended to communicate. Hence, critics such as Bickford and Dobson are not without warrant to be concerned about “distorted” listening in politics, where meanings of the speaker’s words are interpreted through biases and filters that prevent the listener from understanding what the speaker is attempting to communicate, which might happen because “what tends to get heard in public settings is a way of speaking associated with those who control social, political, and economic institutions’ (Bickford 1996, p. 97).

Furthermore, while several components of listening have been differentially emphasized in studies of various communicative contexts, listening in the literal sense has been neglected in citizen to elite communications (the process of representation). To be clear, studies of political representation have focused on the “figurative” act of listening, how elites pay attention to polls, the media, and constituent written communications. However, no scholarly attention has been devoted to how elites might listen to constituents in face-to-face interactions, such as town hall meetings, public meetings, and so forth, and more importantly, how elites might interpret or understand the information they hear from constituents. While the study of listening can be approached in several ways, the critical examination of race can usefully structure one of the approaches since the voices of minority communities have been historically marginalized in the country’s democratic processes. Thus, in this work, I seek to answer the following questions: Who are legislators most likely to listen or respond to in public forums? Specifically, under what conditions does racial identity affect whom legislators listen to? Does the racial identity of the constituent and legislator affect the legislator’s ability to understand constituent messages?

Studying the patterns in which elites listen to, and more interestingly, distort constituent

messages is relevant for various reasons. As Gaines et al. assert – “only when people interpret facts can those facts influence public opinion” (2007, p. 957). While Gaines et al. are referring to the citizenry’s interpretation of information received from elites, the same idea is applicable to information elites receive from citizens. For political elites, the interpretation of a message affects the opinions they form about an issue, which in turn, may influence the course of action they are likely to take. Patterns of “tuning out” certain constituents or only “hearing” certain statements associated with particular groups matter for reasons associated with the quality of representation legislators provide to their constituents.

The Importance of Listening in Representation

Nichols asserts, “few motives in human experience are as powerful as the yearning to be understood. Being listened to means that we are taken seriously, that our ideas and feelings are known and, ultimately, that what we have to say matters” (1995, p. 9). There is no reason to think that this assertion should be less applicable to politics. As normative political theorists have pointed out, listening matters a great deal in politics (Bickford 1996; Dobson 2012; Calder 2009; Coles 2004) whether in conversations among citizens, among elites, or between citizens and elites. Public spaces in the form of deliberative forums have been created where participants can engage in civil discussions and reach a consensus concerning an issue, and where listening (as well as speaking) is paramount to these deliberative processes. Other public spaces where listening and speaking are significant activities include forums in which government officials (elected leaders, administrators, and so forth) and citizens directly interact, forums that constitute part of the representative or democratic process. These public spaces might include town hall meetings, “coffee with your congressman,” public meetings concerning a local issue, and the

public commentary period of local meetings, such as that of the city council, various boards of commissions, and the local school board.

Unfortunately, listening has not been a central concern for scholars of political representation. Admittedly, listening in the figurative sense (how elites respond to polling information, the media, and written forms of constituent messages) has been given considerable attention by scholars (Verba and Nie 1972; Page and Shapiro 1983, 2000; Converse 1987; Butler and Broockman 2011). On the other hand, researchers' attention to literal listening (taking in and understanding spoken messages) has been scant if not absent.

While theorists ascribe the inattention to listening partly to the misplaced active-passive dichotomy imposed on speaking and listening, the paucity of *empirical* work devoted to the relationships among listening (in the literal sense), democratic legitimacy, and political representation might exist for various other reasons. The absence of research on listening in face-to-face communications might be attributed to the argument that public meetings with citizens have little influence on policymaking (Cole and Caputo 1984; Checkoway 1981; Ratliff 1997). Alternatively, the neglect may stem from the assumption that legislators must have listened if there is a correlation between legislative action and constituent preferences on a given issue. One might argue that the assessment of listening is already reflected in measures of how legislators vote on bills and the policy positions they take, which are supposed to convey how well they comply with constituent preferences. However, the link between a legislator's quality of attention to her constituency's concerns and her action on policy items cannot be automatically assumed. Even scholars seek to establish a connection between legislative monitoring of constituent preferences and using that information to make decisions (Herrick

2013).³ Additionally, in their classic study on representation and legislative responsiveness to the attitudes of constituents, Miller and Stokes interview incumbent congress members, their challengers, and constituents, but they do not clarify how representatives might arrive at the perceptions (or even accurate ones) they hold about their constituents' attitudes and preferences (1963). Therefore, it is problematic to assume that the institutional outcomes we observe from legislative decisions are necessarily produced by legislative attention to or monitoring of constituent concerns.

Furthermore, listening is not only relevant in settings where policy or legislative concerns are at stake but also important in representational contexts outside of policymaking. Constituents care about issues that have no direct bearing on legislation, as they communicate to their legislators, especially their local elected leaders, requests for assistance on personal or community issues, various complaints against other residents, neighborhood groups or businesses, and so on. Scholars have certainly not ignored the importance of this other mode of representation, what some might call “service” representation (Butler and Broockman 2011; Cain et al. 1987; Grose et al. 2007; Parker and Davidson 1979; Richardson and Freeman 1995). However, while research on constituency service looks at indirect measures of responsiveness (the characteristics of legislative staff) or evaluates listening in the “figurative” sense (responses to constituent emails), it pays little attention to the service representation that legislators can provide at public meetings, specifically when constituents attend and speak at these meetings to ask for some type of assistance.

³ Specifically, Herrick finds a positive relationship between the effect district preferences have on a legislator's decision to cosponsor bills on lesbian, gay and bisexual issues and the legislator's willingness to listen to constituents. However, Herrick conceptualizes listening more broadly (monitoring of constituent preferences) than I do in this work.

While listening is important because it is a precondition of policy or service-oriented responsiveness, it is valuable even in instances where the representative does not comply with the constituent's views or requests. Listening attentively and critically enables a legislator to properly interpret and contextualize the information she hears even in the absence of being persuaded. In circumstances of disagreement, when legislators listen, it may serve as a mechanism for facilitating understanding between themselves and their constituents. In the decision to abstain from acting on a constituency's request, legislative listening lends more legitimacy to the political process than does ignoring a particular constituency. Even when citizens do not get what they want, constituents who believe that their legislators sincerely listened to their grievances and views might feel more satisfied with the democratic process than those who feel ignored by their elected officials. For members of historically disempowered constituencies, perceptions of institutional legitimacy and trust in leadership are especially important issues to grapple with. Political theorists often emphasize that one precondition of attaining political inclusion for marginalized groups is that members of these groups have the opportunity to exercise "voice" (Williams 2000; Young 2002). However, this "voice" would be hollow if the speaker perceives it as lacking recognition in the first place.

A legislator's willingness to listen to her constituents is relevant not only because those who are ignored are less likely to have their policy preferences come to fruition. It also matters because it potentially affects constituents in other ways, whether adversely impacting constituents' views of their elected officials and the political process or even reducing their willingness to engage in more active forms of participation. While legislators inevitably give some constituents more attention than others, the interesting question is: In face-to-face interactions, who are legislators more willing to listen to and understand? Elites, like

constituents, are not immune to biases that affect their behavior. Additionally, racial biases, which constitute one of the more prevalent forms of cognitive biases, and race-related considerations do affect people's decision-making processes. Thus, as I will elaborate in the next several chapters, *I propose several hypotheses positing that race does affect whom legislators are likely to listen to and understand better in public meetings.*

Overview of Methods

In order to test these hypotheses, the study required independent data collection and analysis since no known data exists that aligns with the purposes of my research. Potential data exists at various venues where government officials and citizens directly interact; these “listening” sites occur at the national, state, or local level. At the national level, congressional representatives may hold events, such as “listening posts,” or “coffee with your congressman,” where congressional legislators meet with their constituents so that constituents may share their thoughts on national legislation or discuss their concerns about the work of the representative. Similarly, state legislators may hold comparable town-hall style meetings with their constituents to discuss state issues and pending legislation and to field questions from constituents. While these sites are certainly an important source of data, I choose the setting of local government for my study.

For some time now, the study of urban politics has largely remained on the periphery of political science scholarship (Trounstine 2009; Judd 2005), yet local politics play an important role in American political life. A large proportion of political activity in the United States is carried out at the local level, and the majority of elected officials serve on local governing boards. Furthermore, municipal bodies legislate on many issues that citizens care deeply about,

such as education, public safety, and land-use rights and privileges (Trounstone 2009). Equally as important, local governing boards offer citizens meaningful opportunities to speak to government officials in face-to-face interactions that are made possible in part by local governance procedures that call for and (in some instances) require citizen input in the policymaking process. Such face-to-face communications are not only rare in mass society but also less common in the state and national levels of government. Hence, local forums are one of the few places where citizens are not only given the occasion to voice their concerns but also a more realistic opportunity to influence political outcomes.

The city or local council is one important institution that provides meaningful opportunities for citizens to directly voice their opinions or concerns to legislators. City council meetings allot a segment of time in which members of the public can comment on anything related to municipal matters, from policy issues to request for personal assistance (this segment goes by various names such as “audience participation,” or “public commentary period”). Citizens also have opportunities to address the council on specific legislative issues during public hearings.

Hence, data was collected from my direct observations of council meetings of four different cities in southeast Michigan from 2012-2015 and from review of the official public records of these meetings. As detailed in the later chapters, the sites I have chosen not only generate a good amount of data, but equally essential, provide sufficient variation to the data. While City A, City B, and possibly City C and City D⁴ are home to councils that are composed mostly of Democrats, these councils differ from one another in terms of the bodies’ gender and

⁴ I do not disclose the identity of these cities because an integral component of my research involved interviewing public officials, to whom I promised anonymity.

racial composition.⁵ The racial composition and socioeconomic conditions of the municipalities themselves also vary. As discussed in more depth in the later chapters, I took field notes when directly observing these meetings, especially noting the number of constituents who spoke at each meeting, their race and gender, the content of what each individual said, and the reactions of the legislator(s) present at the meetings. For some of the meetings, I also produced video-recordings that captured what legislators were doing when each constituent was speaking. These activities allowed me to construct several assessments that captured various stages of the listening process.

During the time the constituent speaks, the only observable indicators of listening (or failing to listen) are external behaviors, such as direct eye contact, nodding as the constituent is speaking, and abstention from engaging in other activities. While these indicators reveal the *perception* of whether or not local leaders are listening more so than the extent to which these public officials *actually* attend to and process the information offered, these non-verbal indicators are nonetheless an important and subtle part of the communication process. Displaying an appearance of being attentive is an important part of the listening process because from the standpoint of the constituent speaking at these meetings, where public officials are not allowed to interject during his presentation, the sense that he is being listened to can only be gleaned from such non-verbal behaviors. Furthermore, legislators who engage in activities that turn their attention away from the speaking constituent not only demonstrate to the constituent and other observers that they are not giving the constituent their full attention and hence only partially absorbing or even completely missing the information presented, but they also show a lack of respect for this constituent when they remain distracted by other activities.

⁵ I provide more details about each city in subsequent chapters.

While the legislators' non-verbal behavior during the public commentary period provides minimal insight into how much information they took in and processed, interviews with local legislators might better reveal whether or not they had actually received and understood the information. Additionally, interviews not only provide rich information on message comprehension but on message salience as well. Therefore, as detailed in Chapter 4, I conducted semi-structured interviews with several council members, where my goal was to learn how local legislators understand constituent messages and whose messages they are most likely to remember.

As previously mentioned, listening is comprised of various stages that not only include attending to and interpreting or making meaning of the information offered but also responding to it as well. Responding to information may be internal, such as when the listener makes a mental note to himself what he thinks of the information, or the response may be external. After a legislator attends to the information offered by the constituent and then assigns meaning to it, she may then choose to verbally respond to it. For example, at the conclusion of the public comment periods or hearings, a council member may ask questions, respond, or make references to a constituent's assertions. Thus, external responses from elites also constitute another measure of listening. Responses may also reveal, to some degree, the legislator's reception and understanding of the constituent's message. In general, measures associated with the components of attention, comprehension, and responsiveness are not exhaustive assessments of listening, but they are nonetheless important for the reasons discussed. Additionally, non-verbal indicators, interview responses, and verbal responsiveness in meetings are observable and hence more or less convertible into indicators of listening.

Overview of the Chapters

In general, the conceptual and empirical study of listening (in the literal sense) has been given very little attention in the existing political science literature. However, this is not to say that existing studies on figurative listening and how citizens and elites attend to and process information cannot provide insights into how to approach the study of listening that occurs in face-to-face interactions. Thus, Chapter 2 provides an overview of how political scientists have investigated different components of the listening process. Specifically, I look at what has been explored in one-way communicative flows from elites to citizens and from citizens to elites, what insights this kind of research might be able to offer, and how this work might build upon the existing body of work.

The chapters following Chapter 2 provide an in-depth analysis of various components or stages of listening and their attendant measures. Chapter 3 centers on the “attending to” component of listening. More specifically, it examines, via the legislator’s non-verbal conduct, how inattentive legislators are when constituents speak. It investigates whether or not (and the conditions under which) the race of the constituent or shared racial identity between the constituent and legislator affects the legislator's propensity to engage in activities of distraction while the constituent is speaking. When watching the meetings’ video-recordings (the municipalities’ official recordings or those I have produced myself), I pay close attention to the body language and cues that suggest distraction, such as whether or not the legislators are looking at their computers, checking phone messages, or even engaging in side conversations. I find an independent effect for race, specifically that White legislators spend a greater proportion of time being distracted when a Black constituent, compared to a White constituent, speaks.

Chapter 4 is based on data extrapolated from my interviews with elected officials. While

these interviews were conducted after the communicative process had transpired, the responses nonetheless provide relevant information on how legislators interpret and understand information and also on how salient certain messages are to them. Furthermore, presumably the interview responses reflect how legislators understood the message at the time the constituent had communicated it. In these interviews, I ask questions pertaining to how legislators remember and understand constituent messages conveyed during the public meetings. I transcribe and coherently summarize the constituents' messages and the legislators' interview responses. Independent evaluators from Amazon Mechanical Turk, a crowdsourcing internet marketplace, are asked to assess the legislator's degree of comprehension of each constituent's message. In contrast to the other empirical findings in this dissertation, I find no support for the expectation that race or shared racial identity between legislators and constituents affect White legislators' ability to remember and understand constituent messages. However, I do find that there are race effects for Black legislators.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the response component of listening. These chapters establish whether or not the race of the individual or the racial composition of the group affects the constituent or group's likelihood of receiving a verbal response from a city council member during the meeting. It also seeks to determine the conditions under which race moderates responsiveness. I find that race effects are conditional and emerge depending on what constituents say, specifically whether or not they speak on issues where much can be at stake (legislative matters) or issues that potentially invoke discomfort (race-related matters).

Finally, in Chapter 7, I summarize the results of my findings from the various chapters, offer ways to make sense of them, and discuss what can be extrapolated from these findings. I also provide insights and suggestions on how to build upon this study. In doing so, I not only re-

emphasize the practice of listening as being integral to a vibrant democracy but also underscore again the importance of investigating the factors that affect listening outcomes.

Contributions to the Discipline

This project contributes to the discipline in several ways. As previously mentioned, scholars usually tend to focus on the information reception and response stages of listening while assuming that messages are received in the manner the speaker intended. By partly focusing on the interpretative component of listening and hence a legislator's understanding of constituent messages, my argument advances the research on an understudied component of listening. Furthermore, the research on political representation, while devoting considerable attention to figurative listening, is largely silent on listening in the literal sense. Given that statements expressed by constituents in direct interactions with their leaders do constitute a form of public opinion (and participation), I argue that spoken messages should not be overlooked as a form of such. Additionally, just as political scientists are curious about which "voices" dominate traditional forms of public opinion (constituency letters, opinion polls, etc.) and hence provoke elite responses, we should be just as interested in uncovering whether the same patterns exist in opinions expressed during public forums even if the participants in these spaces might be a more vociferous, politically active sample of the population.

Additionally, I problematize the popular conceptualization of representation as what Jane Mansbridge would call a promissory relationship between constituents and legislators, where the standard of assessment is legislative compliance with constituent preferences. Mansbridge offers other ways to conceive of and evaluate representation (2003). I not only argue that listening should be considered as an additional criterion of evaluating representation in the various ways that it is conceived, but because one of the primary concerns of this work centers on social

identities, I also offer another way of assessing the political representation of those who have been traditionally marginalized in the political process, especially racial minorities. Furthermore, in doing so, I highlight that “voice,” which political theorists view as essential for the empowerment of political minorities, is highly dependent on the willingness of others to acknowledge and listen to it in the first place.

CHAPTER 2

“LISTENING” AS EXAMINED BY POLITICAL SCIENTISTS

While certain components of listening have been given attention in political science research, very few scholars have called their object of study “listening;” instead they use terms such as “information reception,” “processing,” or “persuasion.” A few political theorists have recognized the importance of explicitly addressing listening or what they perceive as its “deficit” in politics. For example, Susan Bickford incorporates contemporary feminist theory to develop an account of political listening that is active and creative. For Bickford, listening does not necessitate the “purification of motives, abstraction from social identity, empathy, or strong sense of community” (1996, p. 18-19). Rather, listening is an important “constitutive element in the process of figuring out what to do in the face of conflict; listening means I make myself the ‘background and the speaker the figure on who I concentrate’” (1996, 23).

Gideon Calder examines different components of democracy’s “listening deficit”, some of its implications, and the reasons for this deficit. He argues that environmental political theories, especially that of John Dryzek, can meaningfully address this deficit although not necessarily resolve it (2009). Like Calder, Andrew Dobson is also concerned with what he perceives to be a “listening deficit” in political practices. According to Dobson, much of the attention in politics has been given to speaking, both in terms of the skills to be developed and understanding how its role enhances “inclusion” (2012, p. 843). Dobson argues however, that

good listening can also help achieve democratic objectives in several ways: enhancing legitimacy, helping to deal with deep disagreements, improving understanding, and increasing empowerment.

While political theorists have lamented the insignificance attributed to listening, a few empirical scholars have explicitly recognized the importance of listening. Mutz finds that cross cutting political networks (having friends and associates of different political orientations) promotes tolerance and the capacity to account for different perspectives but at the same time reduces the individual's inclination toward political participation (2006). Implicit in Mutz's argument is that cross cutting political networks (more so than homogeneous political networks) promote a certain attentive listening to political views different from one's own. Those who are persistently exposed to a heterogeneity of views will, in fact, listen to the "other side." However, Mutz's work addresses the benefits that arise from listening to those with whom one has a personal or professional relationship (in other words, listening to those one interacts with on some regular basis). It does not deal specifically with listening situations in which the speaker and listener have more distant relationships with one another (e.g. representatives listening to constituents, political officials hearing public testimonies, etc.).

Susan Herbst also speaks explicitly about the importance of listening to the other side even if she does so minimally. In *Rude Democracy*, Herbst calls for improving a culture of argument in pursuit of civility and tolerance of incivility, and this improved argument culture demands both arguing and *listening*, while respecting the deliberative process. Herbst encourages citizens to adopt listening skills because it "fits neatly with our project of sharpening our argumentative skills and spreading strategic civility" (2010, p. 144). She also calls for the

adoption of talking and listening models in educational institutions from the elementary to high school levels.

While the scholars above have explicitly addressed listening as important to the democratic process and to political life, listening appears to be downplayed as a practice fundamental to a vibrant and healthy democracy and as a phenomenon worth investigating. At least this is what political science and communication critics argue (Bickford 1996; Dobson 2012; Calder 2009; Wolvin 2005; Floyd and Clements 2005; Southard and Wolvin 2009). Exploring the way listening has been studied and treated in various contexts might explain why there appears to be ample attention given to who exercises “voice” and minimal emphasis on who listens.

Communication from Elites to Constituents

Reception and Attention

Studies of elite-to-citizen communication concerned with various components of listening have focused on sources citizens choose to receive information from and how they respond to information. Lupia, McCubbins, and Zaller are among some of the political scientists who have written on the “information reception” and “attending to” process of listening or, in other words, the kinds of messages citizens choose to pay attention to. Lupia and McCubbins argue that citizens need not know an extensive amount of information in order to make reasoned political choices (1998). They need only possess information sufficient to be knowledgeable, which encompasses the ability to more or less make accurate predictions from the decisions they make. Furthermore, at times, sufficient information can even take the form of heuristics or information shortcuts (e.g. partisan backgrounds of candidates in elections). The normative implication of Lupia and McCubbins’ argument is that it is acceptable for citizens to pay the

most attention (or listen) to those who resemble them (shared partisanship, membership in the same group, etc.). Because their work is about the citizenry's use of information, it does not address elite use of information shortcuts in public venues such as issue-based forums, town-hall meetings, and so on, where standards of democracy and fairness dictate that elites should at least attempt to listen to various perspectives (including the perspectives of those who do not resemble them at all).

Complicating the view that citizens choose to pay attention to those like themselves, Zaller argues that political awareness not only affects the reception and comprehension of information but also the resistance to persuasion. Zaller argues and demonstrates that the greater a person's awareness of or "cognitive engagement" with an issue, the more likely it is that the person will be exposed to and comprehend the political messages regarding that issue (1992, p. 42). Additionally, individuals tend to resist arguments that are inconsistent with their political predispositions if they possess the contextual information necessary to establish a link between the issue and their predispositions (p. 44).

Response and Persuasion

Another component of listening, the response factor, has also been given considerable attention in political science. Response to information also includes internal response, such as whether or not the listener is persuaded by the message or information. Scholars have studied how persuasion takes place in various communicative contexts such as the media (Iyengar and Kinder 1987), messages from elites (McGraw and Hubbard 1996; Sigelman and Rosenblatt 1996), and situations where common frames of reference influence the process (Chong 1996). Lupia and McCubbins' theory not only explains to whom one pays attention but also how and under what conditions one can be persuaded. They assert that absent external structures,

persuasion requires that 1) the receiver of information perceive himself and the speaker as having common interests and 2) the recipient perceive the speaker as knowledgeable (1998, p. 50-51). However, external forces, such as the ability to verify the statements of the speaker, penalties for lying, and the speaker's observable and costly effort, can facilitate persuasion in the absence of perceived common interests (55).

Zaller also addresses the subject of persuasion but mostly in terms of how political sophistication influences who is most vulnerable to persuasion and who is most likely to resist it.⁶ He finds that politically sophisticated individuals possess the ability to receive and comprehend the most information but are also the most capable of resisting information that are incongruent with their beliefs.⁷ Like their highly aware counterparts but unlike their least aware counterparts, moderately aware individuals are able to receive and comprehend political information. However, unlike their highly sophisticated counterparts, they may not be consistently aware of the contextual cues that allow them the means to resist information at variance with their predispositions.

The Missing Component – Interpretation

While political scientists have studied several stages in the listening process such as the reception of, attention, and response to information, they have not focused on the interpretation component of listening. Perhaps most assume that the recipient has understood the information in the way the communicator had intended. For example, Zaller acknowledges that an interpretation component is not embedded in his theory, yet he concedes that different people can

⁶ He also reconceptualizes attitude change (a more enduring form of being persuaded), redefining it from being a conversion experience, where one "crystalized opinion" replaces another, to being a change in the balance of negative and positive considerations on a given issue (p. 118).

⁷ It is important to note that for Zaller, the resistance of highly informed individuals also depends upon elite disagreement on the issue along partisan lines. On the other hand, when partisan elites agree on a particular issue, then the highly informed are most likely to adopt the elite view, even if that view contradicts their previous predispositions.

be exposed to the same message and yet receive quite different information or even no intelligible messages depending on the prior knowledge of the issue (1992, p. 274). In other words, individuals exposed to the same message might perceive it differently. However, “the RAS model, as presently constituted, makes no allowance for (the) ways in which prior opinion may affect reception and partisan perception of the communication one encounters” (ibid).

Zaller is among a number of political scientists who pay minimal or no attention to how citizens interpret the messages they receive. Fortunately, however, a few scholars have come to recognize and remedy this neglect. As Kuklinski and Hurley put it, “What most research implicitly assumes, that elite messages flow inexorably and unalterably into the auditory canals of a listening citizenry, we take as the focus on our inquiry” (1996, p. 127). Individuals can come to know and hear the same information but in fact, might assign different meanings to those facts. Hence Kuklinski, Hurley, and a few others have explored how the racial, social, and political identities of both the source and the recipient of the message shape the interpretation that the recipient gives to the message.

Using panel studies over a period of six months after the American invasion of Iraq, Gaines et al. found that partisanship had a strong influence in how people interpreted facts about the war in Iraq (2007). Democrats engaged in what they call “complete updating,” a process in which people not only change their factual beliefs as reality changes but also alter their interpretations in a consistent manner and hence update their opinions based on the new interpretations (960, 2007). On the other hand, Republicans engaged in what they call “meaning avoidance,” a process in which people update their factual beliefs as the reality changes but then fail to change their interpretations, hence retaining their original position (ibid.).

In another experimental study on message interpretation, in which Kuklinski and Hurley

conclude with a cautionary note on the optimism of cue-taking, the researchers find that Blacks are more likely to agree with a certain statement if it is made by a Black leader than by a White leader even in circumstances where “ideological reputation... presumably could serve as an even more telling contextual information than race” (p. 748). Furthermore, in their study, African Americans are more likely than not to give different interpretations to the same statement when supposedly spoken by elites of different racial identities. Although Kuklinski and Hurley concede that, “when black citizens listen to black leaders, they probably get it right most of the time,” they add that there are exceptions to the rule, and it is these exceptions that are more interesting (p. 748).

The few studies conducted on message interpretation provide a missing and crucial link between how citizens receive information and how they respond to it. In other words, these studies make a noteworthy contribution to the existing literature on listening and its relationship to the formation of public opinion, which before focused primarily on the reception of, attention, and response to information. However, studies on message interpretation and other components of listening have centered on elite to citizen communications and in some cases on citizen-to-citizen communication (Ackerman and Fishkin 2003; Mendelberg and Karpowitz 2007; Mutz 2006; Sanders 1997). Listening in the literal sense has been given insufficient attention in research on citizen to elite communication, to which I now direct my attention.

Communication from Citizens to Elites

The assessments of face-to-face conversations have not occupied a central place in studies of political representation. While the neglect of listening in studies of representation might be attributed to the perception that public meetings have little effect on policy outcomes, it

may also stem from the prevailing practice of assessing representation. Where representation is conceptualized as responsiveness, empirical scholars largely rely on the characteristics of the district and/or public opinion surveys to gauge preferences, thereby precluding the need to study direct interactions between legislators and constituents. Additionally, scholars might also assume the preferences of a constituency, especially if the constituency is considered to be a politically relevant group. For example, in the studies of descriptive representation, the idea that constituents are best represented by legislators who resemble them in some significant sense, empirical researchers will delineate a set of “women,” “Black,” or “Latino” interests, predicated on an assumption of what a group would prefer given its social, economic, and political circumstances, and then evaluate how well representatives act on these interests either through roll call votes, bill sponsorship, floor speeches, and so forth (Swain 1993; Tate 2003; Grose 2005; Canon 1999; Bratton 2005; Childs 2006; Tremblay and Pelletier 2000; Swers 2002). While such information is definitely useful, examining how descriptive representatives arrive at their perceptions of what their constituencies want, especially through face-to-face interactions, might further clarify the representative process and perhaps enable researchers to reconceptualize assessments of representation.

One study that addresses the issue of legislative perception is Miller and Stoke’s classic study on representation, which lays out the mechanisms by which constituents can influence the actions of their representatives: one through selecting a representative who has policy preferences similar to those of the constituents, and the other through a representative who will follow her (at least accurate) perceptions of what the constituents want (1963). In conducting their study of how responsive congressional members are to the attitudes of their constituents in several policy domains, they interviewed the incumbent congress member, the challenger, and

constituents. However, Miller and Stokes do not clarify how the representatives might arrive at the perceptions (or even accurate ones) they hold about their constituents' attitudes and preferences.

Another classic study that examines legislative perception is Fenno's seminal work on congressional members in their districts; yet an account of listening is notably absent. Fenno begins by posing the inquiries: "What does an elected representative see when he or she sees a constituency?...What consequences do these perceptions have for his or her behavior?" (1977). He finds that perceptions of the district affect the way representatives behave toward their constituents and the "homestyle" they develop in cultivating a relationship with their constituents. A member's homestyle affects how a representative allocates her resources between her office and the district, how she projects a presentation of self, and how she explains her Washington activity.⁸

Following up on Fenno's work, Miler poses a similar question about a legislator's perceptions of her district - whether or not a constituency is even seen or on the legislator's "radar screen" (2010, p. 599). Drawing from the work on the cognitive model of information processing that maintains individuals are "cognitive misers" who use mental shortcuts to process and retrieve information and make decisions, Miler finds that congressional offices only see a "small subset of relevant constituents" in the district and that legislative perceptions are biased toward those who regularly contact and make financial contributions to the legislative office (p. 620). Hence, it appears that legislators do not "see" everyone.

⁸ Presentation of self is the expression a congress member "gives and gives off" (p. 898) for the purpose of gaining trust from his constituents. She acquires this trust by promoting her qualifications, identifying with her constituents, and conveying a sense of empathy to them.

While the inquiry about legislative perception (in regards to seeing a constituency) is a relevant one, an equally compelling question is: “When representatives listen to their constituencies, whom do they hear?” Do they hear what their constituents want them to hear? Equally importantly, does their listening behavior replicate their “seeing” behavior (as Miler would put it)? In other words, do they listen to some constituents while ignoring others? As relevant as these questions are, Fenno never makes these inquiries, yet listening (and listening well for that matter) presumably is an important part of the “homestyle” process, especially in the congressman’s effort to identify with constituents and empathize with them.

Listening is an important constitutive element in the legislator’s ability to cultivate relationships with her constituents. Hence, when cognitive biases and other factors resulting in discrimination distort the legislator’s listening behavior just as they affect her perception, this should give rise to concerns about ways that representation can be compromised.

The Intersection of Race, Representation, and Listening

For some time now, minorities (especially Blacks) and Whites have expressed largely diverging political preferences on a number of salient policy issues, especially those that are intended to help advance the socioeconomic status of minorities (Tate 1994; Dawson 1994; Hutchings and Valentino 2003). Specifically, a non-trivial number of White Americans oppose racially targeted programs aimed at benefitting minorities and even resist those that are race-neutral on its face but have become associated with non-White groups over time. Some scholars theorize that these racial attitudes stem from a new form of racism that reflects a combination of traditional American values and anti-Black affect instead of notions of biological inferiority associated with older forms of racism (Kinder and Sears 1981; Kinder and Sanders 1996). Others argue that the differences in racial attitudes are rooted less in individual feelings of

hostility and more in a group's interest to advance or maintain its own position (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1983; Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). While debates about these theories (among others) persist, racial differences in attitudes continue to endure despite the election of an African American president (Hutchings 2009). Furthermore, White opposition to liberal, race-related policies stem from anti-Black attitudes or indifference to the problems faced by Blacks (ibid.).

Moreover, elites appear to align themselves with the policy preferences and attitudes of constituents who racially resemble them. Empirical work on descriptive representation finds that minority legislators (Blacks and Latinos) better represent the substantive interests of minorities than do White legislators (Whitby 1997; Canon 1999; Tate 2003; Preuhs 2006, 2007; Broockman 2013). Specifically, minority legislators are more likely than White legislators to vote in favor of legislation that advances the interests of minority groups (Whitby 1997; Canon 1999; Tate 2003; Cobb and Jenkins 2001; Whitby and Krause 2001). Minority legislators are also more likely than White legislators to sponsor legislation that benefits members of their racial group (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Canon 1999), to give race-related speeches on the House floor (Canon 1999), to participate in racially-related oversight hearings in Congress (Minta 2009), and to work harder in committees to advance the interests of their group (Hall 1996).

These findings lend support to the position of normative theorists in favor of descriptive representation and who therefore argue that constituents, especially racial minorities, women, and others who have been traditionally disempowered in the political sense, are best represented by legislators who resemble them in some socially salient way (Mansbridge 1999; Williams 1998; Young 2002). According to proponents, the similarity in social experiences and perspectives facilitates the representative's better comprehension of her constituents' interest and

hence superior substantive and symbolic representation than in the absence of descriptive representation. Therefore, advocates of descriptive representation should neither be surprised, for example, by studies supporting the conclusion that female leaders are more likely than male leaders to represent the substantive interests of women (Bratton 2005; Childs 2006; Swers 2002; Tremblay and Pelletier 2000) nor by studies demonstrating that descriptive representation is associated with increased political participation among women and Blacks (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Tate 2003; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007) and lower levels of political alienation among Latino constituents (Pantoja and Segura 2003). Furthermore, Black and female constituents are more likely to positively evaluate their legislators when they are descriptively represented than when they are not (Gay 2001; Lawless 2004).

While minority legislators are more likely than White legislators to advocate on behalf of their racial group's interests, evidence suggest that they are also more likely to provide better "service" representation than their White counterparts (Grose et al. 2007; Butler and Broockman 2011; Broockman 2013). For example, Black-majority districts and the presence of Black and Democratic legislators are associated with a higher proportion of Black district staff (Grose et al. 2007). Furthermore, evidence shows that shared racial identity plays a non-negligible role in how representatives respond to written forms of communications from their constituents. In a field experiment where Butler and Broockman sent the same emails, ostensibly from genuine constituents, to state legislators but varied the constituents' names associated with the emails, they find that White state legislators are more likely to respond to email communications from constituents with White-sounding names than to the same emails when attributed to constituents with names more closely associated with African Americans (2011). Meanwhile, the same study also finds that minority legislators are more likely to respond to constituents having names

associated with Black Americans than to those with names linked with White Americans. In another field experiment, Broockman finds that Black state legislators (more so than their non-Black counterparts) continued to respond to email messages from constituents with Black aliases asking for assistance with state unemployment benefits even when the political incentives to respond were reduced – the constituent did not reside in the legislator’s district (2013). These field experiments suggest that (at least for White legislators) convergence in racial identity appears to play a role in how state legislators, or whoever is responsible in their office for responding to their e-mails, “listen” to their constituents in the figurative sense.

In general, evidence shows that minority legislators are more likely than their White counterparts to advocate on behalf of their racial group’s interests (or minority group interests) in sponsoring and supporting legislation. Non-White legislators are also more likely than their White counterparts to provide their groups with symbolic benefits and better constituency service. It may not be unreasonable then to argue from such findings that descriptive representatives are more likely than non-descriptive legislators to pay attention to and hence listen to their constituents in the literal sense. However, we must admit that studies mostly examining how minority legislators sponsor and vote on bills or how their presence in the legislative body leads to constituent political empowerment do not conclusively tell us what happens when constituents and legislators meet face-to-face. Furthermore, Butler and Broockman’s study involves a form of communication between elites and constituents that is out of the public view. Additionally, the study doesn’t preclude the possibility that staff members, rather than legislators, are responding to the constituents. Should we expect legislators to behave in similar ways (listening better or responding at higher rates to those who resemble them than to those who do not) when the setting becomes a public forum viewable not only to those who are

present at the meeting but also accessible to a broader audience through the availability of official minutes and video recordings? Furthermore, it is easy to ignore a constituent over email communication, but when officials are confronted with a constituent in direct interactions such as public meetings, it may then become more difficult to dismiss the individual.

Theoretical Expectations

Despite the transparency of these public meetings, however, elites may still behave in ways that resemble their private conduct, but the race-related differences exhibited during public forum correspondences may not be as obvious as (or may be less than) those shown during correspondences that are not easily accessible to the public, such as email communication. The differences may occur minimally when actions are viewable to the public, or they may be manifested only under specific conditions. However, the goal of this project is not to determine whether the racial discrimination elites exhibit in public are different in magnitude than those shown in private, but to determine whether this discrimination exists in elite interactions with constituents in public meetings. I hypothesize that in public forums, legislators do engage in a form of racially discriminating listening that outweighs the consideration of any “audience cost,” in which the publicity of the meeting induces the legislator to monitor her behavior. *I want to clarify here that I use the terms “discrimination” or “bias” generally to refer to the race-related differences in elite behavior. In other words, I do NOT make any definitive claims that legislators, especially White legislators, who engage in discriminating behavior are motivated by racial animus, hostility to, or prejudice against certain racial groups.* Additionally, legislators, even those who believe that they possess good intentions, may not even be aware of their

differential treatment toward particular groups.⁹ Rather, as I explain below, a legislator's propensity to listen discriminately along racialized lines might be motivated by a range of factors.

White legislators may be driven to listen "better" to White constituents than to minority constituents. In listening "better," the legislator may spend less time engaged in activities that divert her attention away from the constituent, the legislator may understand more thoroughly the message of one constituent over that of another, and/or the legislator may respond, or make attempts to respond, to one constituent rather than to another. White legislators may engage in a relatively superior form of listening in their reaction to White constituents out of a preference for members of their own racial group, and this preference may be motivated by a range of factors, including but not limited to, the comfort that is associated with the familiarity of interacting with individuals who racially identify with the legislator and/or feelings of indifference toward minority groups. Similarly, the receptivity and responsiveness of minority legislators in public meetings may also be driven by a sense of affinity to constituents like them, but which may stem from shared experiences with marginalization and/or the desire to elevate the position of the group. Alternatively, a strategic calculus may be motivating the listening behavior of both White and minority legislators – specifically, legislators listen better to members belonging to their racial group because they perceive these constituents as being their primary financial and electoral supporters. *Therefore, I expect that legislators listen better in the instance of shared racial identity between the legislator and constituent than in the instance of racial difference between the two.*¹⁰

⁹ Mullainathan, Sendhil. "Racial Bias, Even When We Have Good Intentions." *The Upshot - New York Times* N.p. 3 Jan. 2015. Web. 4 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰ Specific hypotheses are laid out in the next several chapters.

Furthermore, whether or not legislators *generally* listen better to constituents who share their racial identity than to those who racially identify otherwise, there may be *specific* conditions under which the race of the constituent improves or degrades legislative listening. The racial difference may be inconspicuous when there is a lack of overall discrimination in listening, but it may emerge under certain situations. For example, racial identity may affect the propensity of legislators to listen attentively to certain speech content of constituents. Racial identities might affect the legislators' inclination to listen to constituent statements about race-related or racially polarizing issues. Messages with racialized content might include, for example, requests for a resolution to condemn Stand Your Ground laws because of the perceived racial biases inherent in the beneficiaries and victims of the laws. Additionally, there might be occasions in which constituents do not explicitly mention race but nonetheless allude to it. For instance, overwhelming members of the African American community might oppose an ordinance concerning recreational drugs being used for medicinal purposes because of the perceived harm it does to the community. Although these constituents may not explicitly say the ordinance has a detrimental effect on African Americans, they may say that it negatively affects their communities and their children. These issues may be considered racialized, especially if Blacks and Whites are polarized on it.¹¹

As previously mentioned, White and Black public support for racially-targeted policies diverge significantly, with Whites being much less likely to support these policies than Blacks. White legislators' preferences concerning race-related policies may resemble those of their constituents since they are less likely than minority legislators to advocate on behalf of and vote for race-related policies aimed at assisting minority groups. This reduced support may affect

¹¹ About 40% of statements from Black constituents in this study address racial issues or racialized topics. Meanwhile, only 7% of statements from White constituents touch upon race-related issues.

their propensity to listen to statements about race or topics are that racially polarizing. Alternatively, White legislators may listen less attentively to comments about race for strategic reasons – they fear backlash from the White electorate who may perceive them as being too concerned with race-related matters. Given these possibilities, I would expect that *in public forums, White legislators are generally less likely to listen to individuals who make race-related comments or speak about issues that are race-based or racially polarizing than to constituents who speak about issues orthogonal to race.* I would also expect that *in public forums, White legislators are less likely to listen when **racial minorities** make racialized or race-based statements than when they speak about topics unrelated to race.*

Also, race may affect the influence of other speech content on legislative listening. One of the primary functions of city councils is to discuss and pass local legislation, and consequently, constituents come to council meetings to speak about prospective local ordinances and resolutions. Additionally, speech content of constituents in local meetings can be divided into two broad categories: legislative issues being debated that night and non-legislative matters (asking the city for assistance on a personal issue, complaining about city services, criticizing officials). As previously discussed, studies have found that White legislators are less likely than minority legislators to advocate for the policy/legislative issues important to minority constituents. Thus, it is possible that this difference in support might play out in local public forums when constituents express their positions on a proposed policy, especially when it is contentious and/or racially polarizing. However, there are instances in which minority constituents express positions similar to those of White constituents on various legislative issues. Furthermore, minority constituents also speak about local ordinances that are race-neutral in

content.¹² In these circumstances, would legislators still be more likely to pay attention to, comprehend, remember, and/or respond to the statements of constituents who share their race than to those who racially identify otherwise? Given the potentially variegated element of legislative matters and the difficulty of speculating a listening outcome from instances where the legislative issue is neither race-related nor racially charged, I pose the following question rather than posit a hypothesis: *In general, when constituents speak about legislative issues, are legislators more likely to listen (or listen better) to constituents who share their race than to those who racially identify otherwise?*

Additionally, while studies of descriptive representation focus on the relationship between shared social identities and the quality of representation for political minorities, the rationale for most of these studies have been the traditional underrepresentation of racial minorities in the political system. Furthermore, some have examined the stratification that occurs within disadvantaged groups, which creates further marginalized subgroups and problematizes the assumption that leaders support everyone in the group (Cohen 1999; Strolovitch 2007), while others have studied the unique political advantages that economic elites enjoy (Bartels 2009; Schlozman 2012; Gilens 2012). These studies not only suggest that racial homophily is insufficient to achieve the policy outcomes desired by racial minorities, but they also raise the possibility that shared racial identity might be inadequate for inducing non-White legislators to be responsive to non-White constituents. Thus, political elites generally might be less receptive and less responsive to members of traditionally marginalized groups than to members of more socially advantaged groups. Given the power differential that might exist between White legislators and their minority counterparts in a given legislative body, minority members might

¹² Examples include local assessments/taxes that both Black and White constituents may oppose or the approval of downtown business licenses that may have broad constituency support.

be less likely to listen to non-White constituents than to White constituents. Furthermore, minority members might assume that they already know the views of their minority constituents and hence be less likely to listen or respond to them. Alternatively, minority legislators might be more likely to listen to minority constituents, but overall, their receptivity, comprehension, and responsiveness might be overshadowed by the lack of listening from White legislators. Thus, an alternative expectation is that *in public forums, racial minorities will be less likely to elicit legislative attention to, adequate comprehension of, and response to their messages than individuals belonging to more socially advantaged groups, such as Whites*. In other words, this expectation focuses on the independent effect of race (or specifically, White racial advantage), more so than shared racial identity, on the listening behavior of elites.

On the other hand, even if racial minorities do not experience a disadvantage relative to Whites, differences in listening may emerge depending on the conditions. Therefore, the conjecture concerning conditional listening is equally valid here, and I would also expect that *in public forums, individuals who make racialized or race-based comments will be less likely to elicit legislative attention to, adequate comprehension of, and responses to their messages than those who make comments unrelated to race issues*. Another related theoretical expectation is that *in public forums, racial **minorities** who make racialized or race-based statements will be more likely to elicit **inferior** legislative listening compared to racial minorities who speak about non-racialized topics*. Finally, I also inquire whether or not *legislators are generally less likely to listen (or listen well) to racial minorities than to Whites when these constituents speak about legislative matters*.

In general, as the remainder of this work demonstrates, I find support for some of these theoretical expectations. Race and shared racial identity does affect whom legislators listen to in

public meetings. However, the presence and magnitude of race-related differences vary depending on what component of listening is being examined. While race/shared racial identity has an independent effect for one component (as I will explain in the next chapter), for other constitutive elements of listening, the effects of race are conditional upon what constituents say (as I will elaborate on in Chapters 5 and 6).

CHAPTER 3

“ARE YOU TOO BUSY TO LISTEN UP?” LEGISLATIVE (DIS)ENGAGEMENT FROM CONSTITUENTS IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

“I see several people have things to do other than listen to the public speaking. I appreciate it’s a hard and annoying thing to pay attention to the people in front of you, but I think that’s what you get your pay for, among other things. If you feel like you don’t want to earn it, there’s a door over here (gestures toward door). You might want to try walking through it.”

-Constituent speaking during public comment at City A’s council meeting in May 2013¹³

As discussed in a previous chapter, the city or local council is one important institution that provides meaningful opportunities for citizens to directly voice their opinions or concerns to legislators. City council meetings allot a segment of time in which members of the public can comment on anything related to municipal matters, from policy issues to request for personal assistance (this segment goes by various names such as “audience participation,” or “public commentary period”). Citizens also have opportunities to address the council on specific legislative issues during public hearings. Constituents do regard these venues of public expression as serious opportunities to speak to elected officials and oftentimes, not surprisingly, do not treat them lightly. Hence, the statement above reflects the frustrations of an irate constituent who thought that council members were not paying attention to the perspective he had to offer on a housing development project, the approval of which the city was contemplating. This constituent is not alone, however, in expressing irritability when sensing that council

¹³ As mentioned previously, I leave undisclosed the identities of participants and cities to preserve the anonymity of participants in the study.

members appear distracted when one is speaking. For example, in a different meeting of the same city, another constituent emphatically demanded that a council member make eye contact with him as he reminded this member of his “special” obligation “to spearhead a resolution to boycott... to the maximum extent allowed by law” a particular nation the constituent accused of egregious human rights violations. Additionally, in a council meeting of City C, a constituent proceeded to reproach a local legislator for her “snobby” attitude toward the homeless, poor, and disabled, but when he noticed that she was not paying attention, he paused for several seconds to call her out and ask if she was “too busy to listen up.” Constituents like those mentioned above expend resources to attend and speak at public meetings with the expectation that they will be heard at the very least. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that citizens will react with a demand to be respected and taken seriously when they see their elected officials overcome with other activities, such as texting, emailing, looking at their computer screens, reading documents, and talking when members of the public are speaking to them.

In this chapter, I look at non-verbal listening, since non-verbal cues convey the manner and extent of message reception. Non-verbal communication describes all forms of communication not controlled by speech (Kacpersek 1997, p. 276). Thus, I take non-verbal listening to encompass the listener’s conduct that excludes any speech communicated to the speaker. Hence, non-verbal listening cues include, but are not limited to, the duration of eye contact, facial expressions, proclivities toward distraction, and other signals conveyed by the listener’s body language. I explore how the racial identity of both local legislators and their constituents influence the non-verbal conduct of legislators when constituents voice their concerns at public meetings. To what extent do White and Black legislators engage in behaviors signaling distraction (talking, reading, checking email and phone messages, sending text

messages, and so on) when White (as opposed to Black) constituents speak and vice versa? By proposing several hypotheses and testing them, I examine how race affects a legislator's inclination to pay attention to constituents who speak at public meetings.

Why Non-Verbal Behavior?

Before one can understand, remember, and respond to the information provided by a speaker, one must first be willing to pay attention. While the willingness to pay attention can be gauged by the listener's interpretation, recall of, and response to information, it can also be assessed by the non-verbal cues a listener gives off when someone is speaking. A number of scholars, particularly in the fields of healthcare, education, and business/management, have not only emphasized the importance of non-verbal cues in effective communication but have also given attention to the relationship between non-verbal communication (especially non-verbal listening) and the achievement of relevant outcomes. For example, Henry et al.'s meta-analysis of studies focusing on the relationship between clinician-patient nonverbal communication and clinically relevant outcomes suggests that non-verbal communication conveying greater clinician warmth and listening is linked with higher patient satisfaction (2012). In these studies, indicators such as the clinician's posture, facial expression, distance from, and eye contact with the patient are used to assess the clinician's non-verbal communication skills (Bensing 1991; Larsen and Smith 1981; Weinberger et al. 1981). Additionally, speaking less might actually enhance the relationship between practitioners and patients as it allows practitioners to cultivate active listening through cues such as facial expression and body language (Kacperek 1997, p. 277).

The healthcare discipline, however, is not the only field in which studies of non-verbal communication have become more popular. In the areas of business and marketing, scholars too have underscored the importance of non-verbal communication, particularly non-verbal cues that

are gestured during the listening process. For example, Lewis and Reinsch find that in the business organizational setting, employees' conceptions of good listening are not limited to the domain of responding and remembering but also include non-verbal behaviors that signal the listener's interest in the speaker's message or statement (1988). Additionally, in some industries, such as the automobile sales industry, customer perceptions of whether or not a salesperson is listening, which may also be gauged through the maintenance of eye contact and other non-verbal cues, affects the level of trust the customer has in the salesperson (Ramsey and Sohi 1997). In the educational setting, the kind of non-verbal cues an instructor gives off can influence student evaluation of teacher effectiveness and can have an effect on the students' affective learning (Guerrero and Miller 1998; Andersen 1986). While the studies described demonstrate how non-verbal cues reveal the alertness of the listener, non-verbal cues also convey inattentiveness, as distraction by external stimuli and being preoccupied with other activities constitute some of the frequent barriers to effective listening (Golen 1990). In general, non-verbal communication, particularly listening, has gained considerable attention in other disciplines, but it has received almost no attention in political science.

This is not to say, however, that political scientists have paid no attention to the communicative process in face-to-face interactions among political actors. Studies have shown how race, gender, and the intersection of the two play a significant role in the marginalization of female legislators when interacting with male legislators (Hawkesworth 2003; Kathlene 1994). In her illuminating and novel study of women of color legislators in the 103th-104th Congress, Hawkesworth details how the pernicious marginalization of women of color persists not only through institutional practices that "enforce invisibility" but also through interpersonal

interactions and floor debates where other legislators refuse to hear minority women and hence silence their voices.

Similarly, Kathlene finds that female presence in legislative bodies neither confers automatic empowerment nor equality for women legislators. Her innovative study on female state legislators in Colorado focuses on important aspects of the communicative process in committee hearings by employing unconventional indicators, such as the time elapsed before an individual first speaks, the amount of words spoken, and the amount of interruptions made and received. She finds that even after controlling for political and institutional factors, male members, on average, compared to their female counterparts, speak earlier and more frequently and make more (but receive less) interruptions in committee hearings. Additionally, she finds that male verbal aggression persists and even increases as the proportion of female presence in the committee rises, thereby complicating the popular assumption that increased female presence in legislatures leads to more political power and influence for female legislators. While Kathlene's study illuminates an understudied but important phenomenon in legislative behavior, like others, Kathlene assumes that being able to speak is consequential to participation and empowerment. Thus, ultimately, her study focuses more on speech than on listening.

This is not to say, however, that Kathlene does not consider listening or being listened to an important component of political empowerment. In fact, her study not only suggests that female legislators are less listened to than are their male counterparts but also insinuates that having one's statements acknowledged or heard is important, as evidence by the indicator she uses in capturing the amount of interruptions a member receives. Similarly, as mentioned previously, Hawkesworth underscores the harmful link between refusing to even hear the positions of others and attempts at politically disempowering them, as illuminated by an incident

she describes involving Representative Cardiss Collins, a woman of color who was confronted with laughter from her colleagues when delivering strong criticisms about the Personal Responsibility Act on the House Floor (2003, p. 544). While the innovative studies of Hawkesworth and Kathlene suggest that certain verbal cues, such as laughter and interruptions, convey a great deal of information about how attentive and respectful a listener is toward the speaker, the non-verbal conduct of a listener can also reflect useful information about her level of attention.

Specifically, the non-verbal behavior of legislators can signal certain cues about their attention to, respect for, and acknowledgments of constituents who speak at public meetings. When constituents speak, legislators may choose to listen attentively, listen partially, or even abstain from listening entirely. More generally, they are confronted with the choice of giving their full attention to constituents who speak or engaging in activities that divert their attention away from the constituent, such as reading the meeting agenda, catching up on reading materials in preparation for a discussion on pending legislative matters, checking and responding to email communications on the computer, sending text messages, or even conversing with one another. Additionally, the choice of the legislator to remain free from distractions signals to the constituent that perhaps what he says matters, but the choice to engage in prolonged activities of distraction most certainly conveys to the constituent that the view he has to offer does not matter at all. Given the structures of public meetings, especially city council meetings, the conduct associated with non-verbal listening is one of the few ways to gauge whether or not a legislator is paying attention. While verbal responses from legislators give constituents some assurance that they were heard, the probability of eliciting a verbal response is already low (as discussed in later chapters). Additionally, a lack of response does not necessarily signify inattention, but being

distracted, on the other hand, certainly conveys to the constituents at least some lack of attention on the legislator's part.

In general, non-verbal cues are not perfect measures of listening, but they are important nonetheless because they reflect the legislator's willingness to attend to what the constituent has to say and hence signal to the constituent speaking the legislator's level of engagement with or disconnect from him. This has potentially significant implications for legislative action on constituent concerns. Although the legislator may still be paying attention to constituents while executing other tasks, she is more likely to miss some of the information offered than if she had devoted her full attention to the constituent. Thus, she may miss an opportunity to respond to crucial information offered by the constituent or to assist the constituent in a meaningful way. Additionally, when members appear more preoccupied by activities other than listening to constituents, it has implications for constituents' views of their legislators. Fenno not only demonstrates how Congress members seek to cultivate a consistent "homestyle," of which presentation of self is an important component, but also emphasizes that Congress members aim to gain the trust of their constituents by empathizing and identifying with them. While Fenno does not explicitly state that listening matters for the legislator-constituent relationship, presumably it does. However, equally as important, the *perception* that one's legislator listens must play some role in the legislator's efforts to empathize with her constituents and hence acquire constituency trust.

Perceptions of listening may also have implications for constituent views about the efficacy of political participation. Constituents, particularly those who participate in meetings for the first time or do so infrequently, may come to believe that it is not worth their time and effort to reach out to their elected officials. This problem is especially potentially heightened

among racial minorities living in predominantly White communities who might be less inclined to participate in the first place. This begs the questions: In public meetings, do legislators pay more attention to constituents who share their racial identity than to constituents who do not? Alternatively, are legislators generally more attentive and less distracted when White constituents speak than when their minority counterparts speak?

Hypotheses

As mentioned previously, research on public meetings have examined the efficacy of participating in those meetings, such as whether or not citizen participation has led to the outcomes politically active constituents prefer (Sabatier and Mazmanian 1980; Rosener 1982; Cole and Caputo 1984; Checkoway 1981; Ratliff 1997). However, little is known about how the racial identities of participants structure the outcomes of these public meetings, and even less is known about the role of race in eliciting attention from relevant policymakers in the first place.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, empirical work on descriptive representation finds that minority legislators (Blacks and Latinos) better represent the substantive interests of minorities than do White legislators (Canon 1999; Tate 2005; Preuhs 2006, 2007, Whitby 1997) and that racial identities do play a role in the provision of constituency service (Butler and Broockman 2011; Grose et al. 2007). Furthermore, as previously discussed, while it is reasonable to assume that descriptive legislators are more likely than their non-descriptive counterparts to pay attention to and hence listen to their constituents (both in the literal and figurative sense), it must be admitted, however, that empirical studies of descriptive representation do not address how legislators behave when constituents and legislators meet face-to-face, and they certainly do not speak to the non-verbal cues that legislators project as they listen (or do not listen) to constituents who speak. Nonetheless, as previously stated, I

would expect the racial identity of both constituent and legislator to have an effect on elite listening behavior. Hence, race-related predispositions may affect the amount of attention or distraction legislators display during city council meetings. For example, while White legislators may be initially distracted for a brief period of time when a White constituent speaks, they may eventually devote their full attention to him. On the other hand, White legislators, on average, may seem initially attentive to minority constituents when they speak, but this attention may be short-lived as members go about engaging in other activities. While I do not explicitly hypothesize how specific scenarios contribute to the racial disparities in legislative attention, I do hypothesize that generally a legislator's level of attention (as reflected in her non-verbal conduct) will be affected by the racial identity of the constituent. Therefore, I propose one of the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Legislators are more distracted when the constituent speaking does not share the legislator's racial identity than in the instance of shared racial identity.

Furthermore, in the presence or absence of an independent race effect, there may be *specific* conditions under which the race of the constituent and legislator heightens or reduces the level of attention. The race effect might be moderated by the content of a constituent's comments. Perhaps, in general, local legislators might not exhibit any differences in their non-verbal behavior when different groups of constituents speak but may reveal race-related predispositions when constituents speak about issues of race or legislative matters being debated at a particular council meeting. While I proposed in the previous chapter that race-related content in speech has a conditional effect on legislative responses, I do not propose a similar hypothesis in this chapter. There are too few observations (12, 1.38%) in the sample in which constituents speak about race-related issues to draw any meaningful conclusions about the

relationships among racial identity, commentaries on race, and levels of legislative distraction.

However, the data is conducive to an exploration of the conditional effects of racial identity on legislative listening to constituent speech about legislative matters. As mentioned previously, studies have found that White legislators are less likely than Black legislators to advocate for the policy/legislative issues important to Black constituents. Given the possibility that this difference in support might play out in local public forums when constituents express support for or opposition to a proposed policy, members may project different levels of attention when constituents speak on legislative matters, where presumably much can be at stake compared to speaking about non-legislative matters. However, there are instances in which minority constituents express positions similar to those of White constituents on various legislative issues. Furthermore, minority constituents also speak about local ordinances that are race-neutral in content. In these circumstances, would legislators still be more distracted during the commentaries of constituents who do not share the legislator's race than of those who racially identify with the legislator? Given the difficulty of speculating an outcome from instances where the legislative issue is neither race-related nor racially charged, I pose the following question rather than posit a hypothesis.

Question 1: When constituents speak about legislative matters, are legislators less distracted with constituents who racially identify with them than with those who belong to another racial group?

Additionally, studies of descriptive representation have focused on the relationship between shared social identities and the quality of representation for political minorities, but the rationale for most of these studies have been the traditional underrepresentation of racial minorities in the political system. Thus, a related but different conjecture is that in public forums, political elites will generally be less attentive to members of traditionally marginalized

groups than to members of more socially advantaged groups. Given the power differential that might exist between White legislators and their minority counterparts in a given legislative body, minority members might also be less attentive to non-White constituents than to White constituents. Alternatively, minority legislators might be more attentive to minority constituents, but the disproportionate level of distraction White legislators exhibit in the presence of non-White constituents may *overshadow* the high levels of attention that minority legislators provide to members of their racial group. As a consequence, overall, members of legislative bodies might be less attentive to the concerns of racial minorities. Thus, I propose another hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: In public forums, local legislators, on average, are more distracted when racial minorities speak than when White constituents speak.

On the other hand, even if a general disadvantage against racial minorities is lacking, differences in elite engagement with distracting activities may emerge depending on the conditions. Therefore, the question concerning conditional effects is equally valid here, and I propose the following question.

Question 2: In public forums, are legislators generally less distracted when Whites, compared to racial minorities, speak on legislative matters?

The reader may be aware that my hypotheses refer specifically to the legislator's level of distraction, not attentiveness. The decision to use the term "distracted" rather than "attentive" was deliberate given the methodology I employ to study non-verbal listening. I will elaborate on this choice in the next section of the chapter.

Data

Investigation of the hypotheses required independent data collection and analysis. I analyzed an original dataset constructed from observations and video-recordings of the council meetings of four different cities in southeast Michigan during the summer of 2014. City A, City B, City C, and City D constitute the sites for my analysis. The sites I have chosen not only generate a good amount of data, but equally essential, provide sufficient variation to the data. While City A, City B, and possibly City C and D are home to councils that are composed mostly of Democrats, these councils differ from one another in terms of the bodies' gender and racial composition. The tables below provide relevant information about the councils and their respective municipalities.

Table 3.1: Demographic Information for Councils

<i>Council Characteristics</i>				
	<i>Council Size</i>	<i>Racial Composition</i>	<i>Gender Composition</i>	<i>Partisanship</i>
City A	11 Members	1 Asian 10 Whites	6 Women 5 Men	10 Democrats 1 Independent
City B	7 Members	2 Blacks 5 Whites	2 Women 5 Men	7 Democrats
City C	8 Members	3 Blacks 5 Whites	7 Women 1 Men	At-Large Council
City D	7 Members	7 Blacks	1 Woman 6 Men	At-Large Council

Table 3.2: Demographic Information for Cities

<i>City Characteristics</i>				
	<i>Population</i>	<i>Racial Composition</i>	<i>Median Household Income</i>	<i>Citizen Participation in Council Meetings</i>
City A	Midsized	70% White 30% Minorities	Above State Median	40% Women 9% Minorities
City B	Small	61% White 39% Minorities	Below State Median	29% Women 37% Minorities
City C	Midsized	49% White 51% Minorities	Below State Median	30% Women 13% Minorities
City D	Small	21% White 79% Minorities	Below State Median	51% Women 95% Minorities

Based on the pertinent information collected from the observations of these cities, I constructed an original dataset consisting of 887 observations from an analysis of 16 different council meetings occurring between April to December 2014 (3 from City A, 2 from City B, 6 from City C, and 5 from City D). This dataset is not a subset of the data presented in the following chapters although there are some overlapping observations. The observations come from 106 constituents and 32 local legislators. For this dataset, the unit of analysis is the dyadic relationship between each constituent who speaks and each council member present who potentially listens to the information.¹⁴ If 10 individuals address a 10-member city council during a single meeting, there would be a total of 100 observations for that meeting.

From the 887 observations, 602 are from White constituents and 285 are from non-White constituents (247 from Black constituents, 12 from Latino constituents, 6 from Asian constituents, and 20 from minority constituents who are not Black, Asian, or Latino). Also, from the 887 observations, 471 are from 26 White council members, 394 are from 12 Black council members (2 from City B, 3 from City C, and 7 from City D), and 22 are from the only Asian council member, who is in City A.

¹⁴ Council members who were absent during the meetings were not included in the analysis.

Methods

Dependent Variable

Information from the dependent variable comes from video-recordings of the city council meetings my research assistant and I produced. Michigan's Open Meetings Act permits citizens to video-record the proceedings of public meetings as long as the activity does not disrupt the meetings. My research assistant and I openly recorded portions of the meetings that were relevant to the research (during the public comment period or public hearings). We attempted to capture every council member's activities in the background as each constituent spoke. The physical arrangement of some of the council chambers allayed legislators' suspicions that the videographer (my assistant or I) was scrutinizing them. However, the structural features of other council chambers were not so conducive to the ability of the videographer to capture every legislator on film without arousing suspicion that the videographer's main interest was the legislators' activities. In order to avoid or reduce this suspicion, my research assistant would sometimes record one side of the chamber and therefore would not be able to capture all of the legislators present during the meeting. As a consequence, observations associated with some council members were not recorded at these meetings.

Another issue that contributed to missing data was the obstruction of the videographer's view by large objects or people walking through or temporarily standing in front of the camera's view. There were a couple of instances in which the obstruction of the objects did not hinder the provision of pertinent information. Some examples include constituents walking through or momentarily standing in the camera's direct line of view. In these specific incidents, I assume that once the view was restored, the legislator continued engaging in the same activity (listening or otherwise) that was recorded immediately before the camera's view was obstructed.

Additionally, some of the more prolonged obstructed recordings were still capable of yielding useful information. For example, when a constituent speaking obscures the face of the legislator, the exposed visibility of the legislator's hand constantly flipping through pages (along with her head tilted downward) is demonstrative of the legislator's preoccupation with another activity while the constituent is speaking. On the other hand, some of the lengthier obstructed recordings were unable to yield any meaningful information, thus compelling me drop 29 observations as missing data. However, despite the inability to video-record some legislators at particular meetings (213 observations) and the decision to recode some of the observations as missing data (29 observations), the dataset used for this chapter yielded a decent amount of 887 observations.

The video-recordings not only provide objective information such as the total amount of time each constituent speaks but also the total amount of time each legislator engages in activities other than paying attention to the constituent speaking. The dependent variable is the proportion of time the legislator is distracted while the constituent is speaking (the total number of seconds the member is distracted divided by the total number of seconds the constituent speaks).

One might wonder why I choose the rate of distraction as my dependent variable rather than the rate of eye contact. In other words, why do I choose to evaluate legislative inattention rather than the propensity toward listening? I do so because distracting activities convey an overt signal – that legislators are not listening at all or only partially paying attention. On the other hand, while the legislator's eye contact with the constituent may reveal that the legislator is listening to him, the lack of eye contact does not automatically convey neglect on the legislator's part. A legislator may still be listening when she directs her gaze down toward her desk. Thus, participation in distracting activities is a better indicator of inattention or incomplete attention

than is eye contact as a measure of attention. However, when a legislator looks away because of an external stimulus, such as a conversation between two people, the diversion is coded as a distraction.

Below are some of the activities coded as distractions:

- Time spent reading documents (unless the document is a handout the constituent provides to members to follow along during the comments)
- Time spent reading documents on their laptops
- Time spent typing on their laptops
- Time spent sending or checking emails, text messages, or phone messages
- Time spent conversing or whispering to other council members
- Time spent out of one's seat (this is only accounted for if the member leaves her seat while the constituent is speaking).
- Looking away from the constituent because of an external stimuli (e.g. conversation between other council members, conversation between council member and another constituent)

Below are activities NOT coded as distractions (even though some of these activities may momentarily redirect the member's attention from the constituent speaking):

- "Involuntary" body reactions (such as sneezing, prolonged coughing, etc.)
- Adjusting one's seat
- Passing along materials to another council member
- Not looking directly at the constituent (if the member appears not to be preoccupied with other tasks or distracted by other external stimuli)
- Writing down information provided by constituents

At times, legislators may engage in more than one of the distracting activities above while the constituent is speaking or may be preoccupied with only one of them. Additionally, a legislator may appear to pay attention to a constituent expressing his views but then starts to do other tasks, only to redirect her attention back to the constituent. Instead of exhibiting sporadic attention, other legislators may completely disengage from the constituent altogether, such as looking at their computer screens the entire time the constituent is speaking. On the other hand, there are instances when the legislator completely refrains from any doing any distracting activities, appearing to be fully engaged with the constituent's message. I consider the total number of

seconds the legislator is distracted with any of the activities mentioned above (regardless of whether the distraction is continuous or sporadic) and divide it by the total number of seconds the constituent speaks to construct a dependent variable that is continuous but bounded from 0 to 1.

Independent Variables

The constituent and member's race are two of the primary independent variables. (The independent variables for constituent and member race are categorical variables, each composed of three groups – whether the constituent or council member is Black, White, or another minority). For this entire project, I coded constituent race according to my perception when observing the constituents speaking. While I did not include a self-identification measure since I was not able to interview the constituents, the coding of race based on perception is appropriate for my study since my perception may very well reflect that of the legislator. In many instances, local legislators do not personally know the constituent speaking and can therefore only deduce the race of the person by observation.¹⁵ Another primary variable of interest is the interaction term between the constituent and legislator's race.¹⁶ I incorporate this interaction term to test the hypothesis that a legislator is less distracted when the constituent speaking shares the legislator's racial identity. I also include a three-way interaction term to capture a potential conditional effect of shared racial identity on legislators' levels of distraction in the presence or absence of constituent speech about legislative matters.

Additionally, I include a number of control variables. For example, I include variables for the constituent and member's gender. Furthermore, I control for the independent effect of

¹⁵ For the legislators I did not interview, I also coded their race based on my perception.

¹⁶ I do not subset the data by Black and White legislators primarily due the smaller sample size and the potential loss of power in the statistical models.

constituent statements about legislation (*Speak about Legislation*) and whether or not that legislation is a dominant or contentious topic for that particular meeting (the issue generates both significant constituent opposition and/or council debate – *Speak about Dominant Topic*). Presumably, legislators might, on average, engage in less distraction if a constituent speaks about a legislative matter, especially if that legislative matter is a dominant topic of conversation for the evening.¹⁷ Another control variable is whether or not the constituent expresses an opinion that is similar to a view asserted by another constituent during the same meeting. This control factor also captures whether or not the constituent comes to speak as a member of a group. All else equal, councilmembers may be less likely to listen and hence more predisposed toward distraction in the presence of a speaking constituent if they have already heard his particular position from another constituent who had spoken earlier and especially if they have heard the opinion repeatedly. Another speech-related matter I account for is whether or not a constituent speaks about class-related issues, since speaking about class issues may not only affect the legislator’s propensity to listen but may also influence the effect of the constituent’s race on the legislator’s inclination to listen.¹⁸ I also include city fixed effects, the rationale of which I will shortly explain.

Other variables I control for are the total amount of time a constituent speaks and the frequency of instances the constituent speaks during council meetings. The frequency of attendance is a dummy variable – whether or not the constituent is a frequent speaker at the meetings. This captures the potential “gadfly”¹⁹ effect, possible diminished attention members

¹⁷ The “dominant topic” variable also serves as a proxy variable for dates, which, for reasons discussed later on, is not treated as a random effect.

¹⁸ Constituent messages on class issues may include, but are not limited to, statements on homelessness and affordable housing, request for assistance to protect the most vulnerable citizens of society, and so on.

¹⁹ “Gadfly” is a term local newspapers employ to refer to constituents who frequently speak at council meetings. Usually the council “gadfly” is depicted as someone who frequently goes to meetings to disrupt them or chastise

pay to constituents who frequently speak at meetings. The time variable is a 4-level ordinal variable: level 1 captures constituents who speak for 1 minute or less; level 2 captures constituents who speak between 1 and 2 minutes (including those at the 2 minute mark); level 3 captures constituents who speak between 2 and 3 minutes (including those at the 3 minute mark); and level 4 captures constituents who speak more than the maximum amount of time allowed by council rules, which is 3 minutes. All else equal, members may become increasingly distracted as constituents continue speaking.

Descriptive Statistics

Presenting the data in the most basic, preliminary form can reveal whether or not there are differences (even if subtle) in the levels of distraction council members exhibit toward each racial group. Table 3.3 displays the average level of distraction (expressed in terms of a proportion) across all legislators, disaggregated by constituent race.

Table 3.3: Average Distraction Across All Legislators

Constituent Race	# of Constituents	Mean	Standard Deviation
All	887	0.353	0.335
White	602	0.356	0.340
Black	247	0.335	0.325
Other	38	0.409	0.325

Black vs. White one tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.798$; White vs. Other one-tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.178$; Black vs. Other one tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.097$

In the information provided in Table 3.3 above, on average, the proportion of time (distraction/total time of speech) legislators spend on distracting activities seems to differ only

council members. This term comes from *The Apology*, in which Socrates refers to himself as the gadfly, the pest who had good reason to stir trouble for, in his view, the unenlightened and unaware Athenian elites. In this chapter, I use the term with less loaded implications to refer to any constituent who speaks frequently at council meetings.

marginally between different racial groups. When a White constituent speaks, legislators, on average, are distracted 36% of the total seconds the constituent is speaking. The difference between White and Black constituents is about 2 percentage points. On the other hand, non-Black minority constituents, on average, seem to encounter a greater proportion of legislative distraction than their Black and White counterparts. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 show, respectively, the mean proportion of time White and Black legislators spend on distracting activities, disaggregated again by race of the constituent.

Table 3.4: Average Distraction Across White Legislators Only

Constituent Race	# of Constituents	Mean	Standard Deviation
All	471	0.378	0.351
White	405	0.367	0.356
Black	42	0.458	0.302
Other	34	0.415	0.346

Black vs. White one tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.0056$; White vs. Other one-tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.262$; Black vs. Other one tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.700$

Table 3.5: Average Distraction Across Black Legislators Only

Constituent Race	# of Constituents	Mean	Standard Deviation
All	394	0.334	0.317
White	178	0.354	0.309
Black	204	0.311	0.325
Other	12	0.455	0.284

Black vs. White one tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.905$; White vs. Other one-tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.136$; Black vs. Other one tail t-test: $\Pr(T > t) = 0.068$

According to the information provided in Table 3.4, White legislators, on average, seem to be distracted approximately 37% of the total time a White constituent speaks to the council. On the other hand, they seem to be distracted approximately 46% of the total time a Black

constituent speaks (and 42% of the total time a non-Black minority constituent speaks). Meanwhile, Table 3.5 reveals a somewhat different pattern for Black legislators. Black legislators, on average, do not seem to exhibit notable race-related differences in the length of time they are distracted when Black or White constituents speak. On the other hand, they seem most distracted when non-Black minority constituents speak at city council meetings.

Brief Overview of the Statistical Models

While initially informative, the analyses in these tables cannot sufficiently reveal whether some of the differences are indeed meaningful due to the inter-dependence of the observations and the absence of controls. Thus, a statistical model can better determine whether or not these differences are statistically significant. As previously mentioned, the unit of analysis in the data is the dyadic relationship between each constituent who speaks and each council member present at the meeting. These observations are not independent because each council member and constituent constitutes several dyads and thus are crossed with one another. However, the dyads are also grouped within dates, and the dates are grouped within cities.

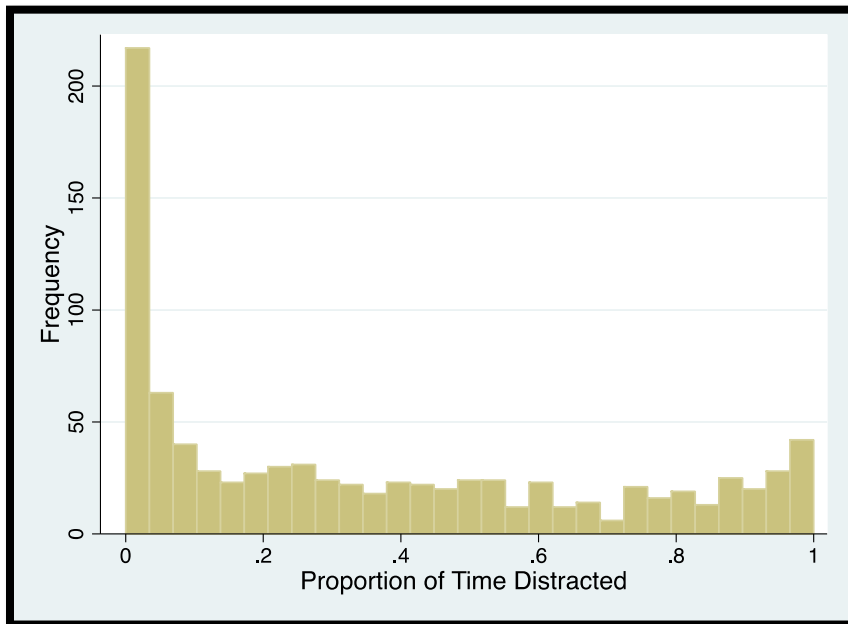
Therefore, the most appropriate model to use would be a model with crossed random effects, where local legislators and constituents are both treated as random effects. On the other hand, dates of the meetings are not treated as random effects.²⁰ However, dates are important only because the model should account for the likelihood that members are less distracted on some days than others, which potentially affects the impact of the constituent's race on legislative propensity toward distraction. Since council members may be less distracted on days when the council holds public hearings for controversial or heated topics *and to constituents who*

²⁰ If members and constituents are nested within dates and therefore the date is treated as a random effect, the model consequently assumes that in City A, for example, the representatives interacting with citizens on Day 1 are different from the same set of representatives legislating on Day 2. This is clearly not the case.

speaking during these public hearings, I include, as mentioned before, a control variable for whether or not a constituent speaks about such topics (*Speak on Dominant Topic*). This control variable also accounts for the variation in legislative responsiveness among different days. I treat the city variable as a fixed effect because the cities are not drawn from a random selection of cities. Furthermore, given the differences between the three cities, especially in the racial composition of the councils and the politically active constituencies, the city variables may not only influence legislative responsiveness but also the racial dynamics of that responsiveness.

Since the response variable is a proportion, an ordinary linear model would not be suitable for the analysis since it may predict values that fall outside the boundaries of 0 and 1. Additionally, while a logit transformation of the data might be an alternative strategy for dealing with bounded variables, it is not appropriate here because the transformation cannot be performed in cases where some observations of the dependent variable take on values at the extreme (0 or 1). Roughly 17% of my data take on the value of 0. See Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Distribution of the Proportion of Time Distracted



Instead, a generalized linear model that makes use of the link logit function and the binomial distribution is used even though the response variable is continuous (Baum 2008).²¹ While the coefficients would be interpreted in the same way as one would with a logit model, marginal effects can be computed to yield results that are more readily interpretable. However, there is one complication associated with the use of this model. Since this model takes the form of a logit regression, a sufficient number of observations must take on the value of 0 for the dependent variable. While this requirement is not problematic for the general analysis, it does become challenging to draw more concrete conclusions about conditional effects associated with specific groups. For example, if I want to determine the conditional effect of race on legislative speech for each group being compared (say *Black constituent* \times *Speak on Legislation* or *White constituent* \times *Speak on Legislation*), there must be some observations with responses that take on the value of 0 (no legislative distraction). If this does not occur, the observations associated with the group (say *Black constituent* \times *Speak on Legislation*) would be automatically dropped because the model predicts “perfect success” for the group under this specific condition. Fortunately, even with the omission of some observations, the model does not interfere with the goals and findings of this chapter, as I will later explain. Therefore, I rely on this model, a crossed random effects generalized linear regression (that specifies a link logit and binomial distribution) to analyze the data.

In the final set of models, council members and constituents are crossed with one another, the primary independent variables are constituent race and the interaction variable of the

²¹ This GLM model is usually specified with robust standard errors. However, robust standard errors cannot be incorporated when using mixed effect models because the residuals in multilevel models are not independent. Thus, in Appendix A, instead of running a multilevel analysis, I use a model that specifies legislator fixed effects with clustered standard errors to indicate that the observations are not independent, but correlated, within constituents. While the size of the effect changes for some of the variables, the statistical significance of these effects remains unchanged.

constituent and council member race. The control variables are gender of the constituent and legislator, the frequency of interactions, and the content and nature of the constituent’s speech. The “dominant topic” variable serves as a proxy for the date effect, and the city effect is included as a dummy variable.

Results from Crossed Random Effects GLM Model

Table 3.6 contains a variety of models that show how racial identities impact members’ propensity for distraction when constituents speak at public meetings. Table 3.6 reports the coefficients associated with each of the variables in the models.

Table 3.6: The Effect of Race/Shared Racial Identity on Distraction

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black Constituent	0.979** (0.467)	3.116*** (1.168)	0.887* (0.517)	2.779** (1.017)
Other Minority Constituent	0.643 (0.734)	0.257 (0.768)	0.370 (0.627)	0.039 (0.652)
Black Member	-----	0.538 (0.813)	0.210 (0.943)	0.352 (0.806)
Asian Member		-0.296 (1.693)	-0.119 (1.542)	-0.279 (1.548)
Black Constituent × Black Member ¹	-----	-3.093** (1.274)	-----	-2.923** (1.139)
Male Constituent	-----	-----	0.646** (0.240)	0.594** (0.238)
Male Member	-----	-----	0.522 (0.692)	0.469 (0.661)
Frequent Const.	-----	-----	0.722** (0.326)	0.782** (0.310)
Speech Time	-----	-----	0.706*** (0.135)	0.697*** (0.136)
Speak on Legislation	-----	-----	0.221 (0.315)	0.247 (0.298)

Continued on next page

Table 3.6 Continued

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Speak on Dominant Topic	-----	-----	0.263 (0.349)	0.256 (0.338)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	-----	-----	0.019 (0.270)	-0.021 (0.262)
Speak on Class	-----	-----	0.334 (0.411)	0.276 (0.404)
Constant	1.851*** (0.361)	1.809*** (0.479)	-1.467 (1.879)	-0.567 (1.320)
Log Likelihood	-346.561	-340.901	-320.141	-315.208
Wald χ^2	4.970	7.750	53.440	59.830
Probability > χ^2	0.084	0.171	0.000	0.000
Observations	887	872	887	872

Notes: Entries are the coefficients and their standard errors from a generalized linear model (binomial-logit). Percent of time distracted is the dependent variable. City variables are included in the analysis, but the coefficients are not reported here. 1. White Constituent and White Member is the reference category. The analyses automatically dropped observations associated with Black Member \times Other Minority Constituent, Asian Member \times Other Minority Constituent, and Asian Member \times Black Constituent for reasons already explained. The first column contains the basic model, in which the race of the constituent is the only independent variable (White, Black, or Other Minority). The first model provides a simple test of the hypothesis that overall, legislators are less distracted when White constituents speak than when non-White constituents address council members. The second model, which contains an interaction term between the constituent and legislator's race, provides a basic test to the hypothesis that legislators (particularly White legislators) are less distracted when the constituent speaking racially identifies with the legislator than when otherwise. The third model contains all the relevant control variables but without the interaction terms and provides a more comprehensive test on the legislator's level of distraction toward different racial groups than the first model does. Likewise, the fourth model, which includes the constituent-member interaction terms, provides a more comprehensive test of the hypothesis that legislators are less distracted when the constituent speaking shares the legislator's racial identity than in the absence of shared racial identity. *p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01

One will notice that in models 1 and 3 of Table 3.6, there are 887 observations, but the observations are reduced to 872 in the interaction models. This reduction in observations reflects the problem I alluded to earlier. Specifically, the observations that were dropped are those associated with any interactions between 1) a Black Member and a non-Black minority constituent, 2) an Asian Member and a non-Black minority constituent, 3) and an Asian member and a Black constituent because none of these interactions yielded any outcomes that took on the value of 0. Due to these omitted observations, I cannot compare a Black legislator's level of

distraction toward non-Black minority constituents with her level of distraction toward Black or White constituents. Furthermore, I am unable to meaningfully compare the Asian legislator's distraction level toward Blacks or non-Black minorities against her distraction level toward White constituents. However, had the observations even remained, it is unlikely that any substantive conclusions could have been drawn due to the limited amount of observations associated with each condition. For example, there is only one black constituent data point (and 2 non-Black minority data points) associated with the 22 observations for the Asian legislator. Furthermore, none of these omitted observations interfered with the comparisons that can be drawn between Black and White constituents and legislators.

In terms of the control variables, the coefficients that consistently attain statistical significance throughout the models are those associated with gender, the frequency of appearances the constituent makes before the Council, and the length of time he expresses his views. Specifically, members spend a higher proportion of time on distracted activities when male constituents speak than when their female counterparts address the Council. This finding is somewhat surprising, especially in light of research findings revealing the attempts of political actors to silence and marginalize female voices (Hawkesworth 2003; Kathlene 1994). Not surprisingly, council members spend a greater proportion of the constituent's speaking time being distracted when constituents attend and speak at meetings frequently than when constituents make themselves less available. Also, as expected, local legislators spend a higher proportion of the constituent's speaking time preoccupied with other activities the longer the constituent speaks.

As for the primary variables of interest, I do find that racial identity affects the legislator's propensity toward distraction. I find that, in general, legislators engage in higher

levels of diversion when Black constituents speak than when their White counterparts address the council, as shown in model 3 (although the coefficient is only marginally significant). I find no difference between the legislative behavior shown toward White constituents and that exhibited toward non-Black minorities. Additionally, I find some support for my hypothesis that legislators show lower levels of distraction toward constituents who share their race than to those who racially identify otherwise. However, this effect is only limited to White legislators, who exhibit higher levels of distraction when Black constituents speak than when their White counterparts do so. Because the coefficients of logistic regressions are more difficult to interpret than coefficients of models like an ordinary least squares regression, I compute the average marginal effects of each variable to yield more tangible interpretations, as shown in Table 3.7 below.

Table 3.7: Marginal Effects For Shared Racial Identity

	Model 3		Model 4 (Interaction Model)	
	All Legislators	White Legislators	Black Legislators	Asian Legislators
Black Constituent ¹	0.076* (0.043)	0.142*** (0.039)	-0.012 (0.050)	Not Estimated
Other Minority ¹ Constituent	0.036 (0.057)	0.004 (0.070)	Not Estimated	Not Estimated
Black Member	0.019 (0.087)	Not Estimated	-0.032 (0.047)	0.037 (0.078)
Asian Member	-0.012 (0.161)	Not Estimated	Not Estimated	-0.034 (0.198)
Male Constituent	0.060** (0.024)	0.060** (0.027)	0.050** (0.024)	0.078 (0.055)
Male Member	0.049 (0.065)	0.048 (0.068)	0.040 (0.056)	0.061 (0.094)
Frequent Constituent	0.067** (0.032)	0.079** (0.035)	0.066** (0.031)	0.102 (0.072)

Continued on next page

Table 3.7 Continued

	Model 3	Model 4 (Interaction Model)		
	All Legislators	White Legislators	Black Legislators	Asian Legislators
Speech Time	0.066*** (0.016)	0.071*** (0.018)	0.059*** (0.019)	0.091 (0.057)
Speak on Legislation	0.021 (0.030)	0.025 (0.031)	0.021 (0.026)	0.032 (0.044)
Dominant Topic	0.025 (0.033)	0.026 (0.034)	0.022 (0.029)	0.033 (0.048)
Same Opinion	0.002 (0.025)	-0.002 (0.026)	-0.002 (0.022)	-0.003 (0.034)
Content on Class	0.031 (0.039)	0.028 (0.041)	0.023 (0.035)	0.036 (0.057)
City A	0.015 (0.154)	-0.065 (0.128)	-0.054 (0.109)	-0.083 (0.176)
City B	-0.068 (0.127)	-0.163 (0.109)	-0.136 (0.099)	-0.210 (0.196)
City C	0.118 (0.140)	0.037 (0.117)	0.031 (0.098)	0.047 (0.153)

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects and their standard errors. 1. White constituent and White member are the reference categories. *p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01

In Table 3.7, the reported marginal effects associated with each variable are the differences in the percent or proportion of time a legislator is distracted while each constituent is speaking. For example, as shown by the value on column 1, row 1, the percent of time a legislator is distracted, on average, increases by 7.6 percent when a speaking constituent goes from being White to being Black. This average marginal effect represents the difference across all values for the other variables.²² Even more revealing is that this race effect seems to be driven mostly by White legislators. On average, the proportion of time a *White* legislator is distracted during a constituent's speech increases by 14.2 percentage points when the constituent is Black than when the constituent is White. On the other hand, as shown by the marginal effect

²² In other words, this marginal effect is NOT the marginal effect when the other variables are held at their means.

in column 3, row 1, I find no statistically significant race-related difference exhibited by Black legislators against White constituents when undertaking activities of diversion during a city council meeting.

The marginal effects associated with the variables of gender, and frequency and length of speech are statistically significant as expected. However, these effects are considerably smaller than the race effect for White legislators. On average, legislators, both Black and White, are distracted 5-6 percent *more* of the time the constituent speaks when the constituent goes from being a woman to a man. Also, Black and White legislators increase their participation in activities of distraction by 6-8 percent of the constituent's speaking time when the constituent frequently speaks at the meetings. Furthermore, legislative distraction rises by 5-7 percentage points for every level of speech time the constituent surpasses (one-, two-, or three-minute mark).

Complete Absence of Distraction

Legislators, on average, engage in higher levels of distraction toward Black constituents than toward White constituents. However, this racial disparity seems largely driven by White legislators, who demonstrate considerable race-related differences in their level of distraction. Interestingly, this independent race effect is also attributable to the distribution of the dependent variable, where, as previously shown in Figure 3.1, approximately 17% of the observations capture legislators completely abstaining from participating in distracting activities. Furthermore, for White legislators, White constituents capture a disproportionate share of legislative non-distraction. I lay out in Appendix B a detailed analysis of the effect of race on the legislator's propensity to completely refrain from distraction.

The Conditional Effect of Race/Shared Racial Identity on Distraction?

Thus far, I have only investigated some of the hypotheses proposed earlier. Specifically, I have not examined the conditions under which race or shared racial identity may affect legislative attention or distraction. Earlier, I inquired whether or not legislators exhibit lower levels of distraction toward constituents who share their race than to those who racially identify otherwise when both groups of constituents speak about legislative matters. Additionally, in general, do legislators engage in lower levels of distraction when White constituents speak about legislative matters than when their non-White counterparts do the same? In order to answer these questions, I include a two-way interaction capturing the effect of the constituent's race (White vs. non-White) on speech about legislative matters and a three-way interaction term capturing the effect of shared constituent-legislator race (White vs. non-White and Black vs. non-Black) on speech about legislative matters. As one may have noticed, I incorporate two sets of race variables here (White vs. non-White and Black vs. non-Black) rather than the three-category race variable I utilized in the previous models. I do this because the model is not capable of analyzing the interaction between shared racial identity and comments on legislation if each race variable (that of the legislator and constituent) is coded as a three-category variable. Table 3.8 below captures whether or not speech about legislative matters has a moderating effect on the relationship between race/shared racial identity and propensity toward distraction. While Table 3.8 reports the coefficients from the crossed random effects generalized linear regression associated with each variable, Table 3.9 reports the average marginal effects of each variable, disaggregated by Black and White legislators.

Table 3.8: The Moderating Effect of Speech about Legislation on Legislative Distraction

	(1) ^a	(2) ^b		(3) ^c
White Constituent	-1.066** (0.479)	-0.312 (0.627)	Black Constituent	2.386* (1.249)
White Member	-0.141 (0.690)	1.474 (2.862)	Black Member	0.547 (0.864)
White Constituent × White Member	-----	-2.138 (2.403)	Black Constituent × Black Member	-2.310* (1.410)
Speak on Legislation	-0.251 (0.443)	-0.184 (0.552)	Speak on Legislation	0.514 (0.374)
White Constituent × Speak in Legislation	0.611 (0.482)	0.127 (0.687)	Black Constituent × Speak in Legislation	-0.640 (0.722)
White Member × Speak on Legislation	-----	-0.983 (2.679)	Black Member × Speak on Legislation	-0.253 (0.607)
White Constituent × White Member × Speak on Legislation	-----	1.634 (2.669)	Black Constituent × Black Member × Speak on Legislation	(omitted)
Male Constituent	0.686*** (0.236)	0.655*** (0.241)	Male Constituent	0.651*** (0.232)
Male Member	0.557 (0.626)	0.547 (0.716)	Male Member	0.514 (0.619)
Frequent Constituent	0.700** (0.307)	0.773** (0.315)	Frequent Constituent	0.747** (0.302)
Speech Time	0.694*** (0.136)	0.695*** (0.140)	Speech Time	0.684*** (0.134)
Speak on Dominant Topic	0.339 (0.334)	0.296 (0.342)	Dominant Topic	0.347 (0.332)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	-0.029 (0.265)	-0.043 (0.272)	Same Opinion	-0.060 (0.269)
Speak on Class	0.393 (0.403)	0.347 (0.422)	Content Class	0.414 (0.402)
Constant	-0.250 (0.943)	-0.303 (1.159)	Constant	-0.831 (1.219)
Log Likelihood	-319.786	-317.942	Log Likelihood	-315.237
Wald χ^2	59.610	58.800	Wald χ^2	59.930
Probability > χ^2	0.000	0.000	Probability > χ^2	0.000
Observations	887	887	Observations	853

Notes: Entries are coefficients from a crossed random effects GLM (binomial-logit). Percent of time distracted is the dependent variable. City variables were included in the analysis, but the coefficients are not reported here. a. Non-White Constituent × Speak on Non-Legislative Matters is the reference category b. Non-White Constituent × Non-White Member × Speak on Non-Legislative Matters is the reference category c. Non-Black Constituent × Non-Black Member × Speak on Non-Legislative Matters is the reference category. Model 1, the model with the two-

way interaction term, tests the proposition that, on average, legislators are less distracted when White constituents speak about legislation than when minority constituents do the same. Models 2 and 3, which include a three-way interaction term, investigate whether or not legislators are less distracted toward constituents speaking on legislation when constituents share their racial identity than in the absence of shared racial identity. As one may have noticed, Model 3 does not estimate the coefficient for the three-way interaction term (the sharing of Black identity and speech on legislative matters). This is primarily due to the automatic omission of all observations associated with one of its reference categories. None of the observations associated with instances in which non-Black legislators (primarily White legislators) were confronted with Black constituents speaking on legislative matters took on the value of 0. This means that in one form or another, non-Black legislators exhibited at least some level of distraction toward Black constituents speaking on legislative issues. However, although these observations were dropped from one of the models, overall, the models were able to provide sufficient information to answer the inquiry concerning the relationship between racial identity and comments on legislation. * $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$

As Table 3.8 shows, none of the coefficients associated with the relevant interaction terms (the interaction of White constituent and speech on legislation and the interaction of shared White identity and speech on legislation) reaches statistical significance. Although the coefficient for the interaction of shared Black identity and speech on legislation cannot be estimated, the computation of the average marginal effect for constituent race across all legislators and across Black and White legislators allows meaningful comparisons to be made between White and Black constituents speaking about legislative matters.

Table 3.9: Average Marginal Effects (When Constituents Speak on Legislation)

	(1)	(2)		(3)
	All Legislators	Non-White Legislators	White Legislators	Black Legislators
White Constituent ¹	-0.040 (0.036)	-0.017 (0.059)	-0.056 (0.047)	-----
White Member ²	-0.013 (0.064)	0.018 (0.068)	0.003 (0.081)	-----
Black Constituent ³	-----	-----	-----	-0.049 (0.064)
Black Member ⁴	-----	-----	-----	<i>Not Estimated</i>
Male Constituent	0.063*** (0.024)	0.058** (0.027)	0.062** (0.026)	0.058** (0.027)
Male Member	0.051 (0.058)	0.049 (0.065)	0.051 (0.068)	0.046 (0.056)
Frequent Constituent	0.065** (0.030)	0.069** (0.033)	0.073** (0.033)	0.066** (0.032)
Speech Time	0.064*** (0.015)	0.062*** (0.020)	0.065*** (0.018)	0.061*** (0.020)
Speak on Legislation	0.021 (0.029)	-0.010 (0.035)	0.055 (0.043)	-0.006 (0.035)
Speak on Dominant Topic	0.031 (0.032)	0.026 (0.032)	0.028 (0.033)	0.031 (0.032)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	-0.003 (0.024)	-0.004 (0.024)	-0.004 (0.026)	-0.005 (0.024)
Speak on Class	0.036 (0.037)	0.031 (0.038)	0.033 (0.040)	0.037 (0.037)
City A	-0.001 (0.103)	-0.031 (0.127)	-0.033 (0.133)	-0.061 (0.102)
City B	-0.074 (0.096)	-0.103 (0.120)	-0.109 (0.122)	-0.135 (0.102)
City C	0.109 (0.103)	0.076 (0.129)	0.080 (0.136)	0.038 (0.099)

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects and their standard errors. Average marginal effects reflect values when constituents speak about legislation. 1. Non-White constituent as reference category 2. Non-White member as reference category 3. Non-Black constituent as reference category 4. Non-Black member as reference category. *p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01

Table 3.9 reports the average marginal effects of each variable when constituents speak about legislative matters. The marginal effects are also computed across all legislators, White legislators, non-White legislators (including the Asian legislator), and Black legislators. As Table 3.9 shows, when Black constituents, as opposed to non-Black constituents, speak about legislative matters, distraction among Black legislators is reduced by 4.9 percent of the constituent's speech time. However, this reduction or difference is not statistically significant. Furthermore, the results of Table 3.9 also demonstrate that legislators, in general, and White legislators, in particular, do not exhibit statistically significant lower levels of distraction toward Whites than toward non-White constituents when these constituents speak about legislative matters. Therefore, I do not find support for the conjecture concerning the conditional effects of race (or shared racial identity) on levels of council member distraction when constituents express legislative-related comments. Meanwhile, the effects of gender, frequency of speaking, and length of comments remain not only significant across all the interaction models but also similar in magnitude to the effects in previous models.

Discussion of Results

I hypothesized that the race of the constituent or the convergence in racial identity between constituent and legislator has an effect on local legislators' predisposition to engage in activities of distraction (as measured by the total amount of seconds a legislator is distracted divided by the total amount of seconds the constituent speaks). In general, I do find some confirmation for the hypotheses I proposed. I find that race of the constituent has an independent effect on legislative propensity toward distraction. I find that, specifically, legislators engage in higher amounts of distraction when confronted with Black constituents as opposed to White constituents. Additionally, I find that this race effect is largely driven by White legislators, who

are less distracted when White constituents, rather than Black constituents, speak. On the other hand, I find no such statistically significant race difference for Black legislators. Additionally, I do not find evidence for the conditional effects of race on distraction when constituents speak about legislative matters. While gender is not the central focus of this dissertation, I do find a gender effect, although this effect is in the unexpected direction – local legislators spend more time engaged in activities of distraction when male constituents, rather than their female counterparts, speak. I also find that this effect is driven by female legislators, who are more distracted when male constituents, rather than their female counterparts, speak (see Appendix C).

Why do women disproportionately benefit from their active participation in council meetings? One might attribute the positive gender effect to the relative rarity of women's active participation in council meetings compared to that of men, especially if a member's attention is generally heightened when confronted with constituents who participate infrequently. However, this explanation begs a question arising from the particular results of the analyses. If the rarity of presence partly explains the "bonus" women receive from the overcompensating strategy of legislators, why are Black and other minority constituents unable to achieve the additional benefit that accompanies infrequent participation? In fact, minorities attend and speak less frequently at council meetings than do women. Could it be that the infrequency of women's participation, compared to that of men, makes female legislators feel more sympathetic to them, and that this effect of relative sporadic participation eludes legislators when considering the infrequent attendance of non-White constituents at these meetings? Alternatively, even without the lower participation rates of women compared to that of men, female legislators might already be predisposed to favor women over any other group. Perhaps they might view the lesser

political power/status of women compared to men as needing immediate redress, and they might not give as much thought to the burdens of racial minorities especially if the social and political struggles of these constituents are not perceived as salient in the everyday lives of female legislators, particularly White legislators. These explanations are mere speculations, especially since the models I use do not allow for more specific conclusions to be drawn about the sharing of subgroup identity. Obviously, additional research should be done to investigate this potentially interesting gender effect.

In some ways, the results of this chapter support findings of previous scholarship on the influence of race or racial bias on legislative behavior (Butler and Broockman 2011; Broockman 2013). Interestingly, findings in this chapter show the willingness of legislators to exhibit these predispositions even when their behavior is public. On the other hand, legislators might not give much thought to the difference between giving their full attention to one constituent and being initially distracted in the presence of another constituent for what they perceive to be only 10 or 15 seconds before finally paying attention. However, as previously mentioned, constituent perceptions of listening do matter for various reasons. Unlike limited opportunities to respond to each and every constituent during council meetings (as I will later discuss), each local legislator has the opportunity and choice to refrain from undertaking other activities when the constituent is speaking during public commentary time. When the member is distracted with other activities, it signals to the constituent the member is not giving him her full attention. The constituent, in turn, might conclude that the member perceives his words as meaningless or his views as unimportant, and hence might feel less respected as a contributing citizen. This potential effect on citizens' views of participation and their legislators is especially problematic if it is compounded by racial differences.

Limitations to the Study

While the findings in this study appear to reflect phenomenon that diverges from egalitarian norms in a democracy, this study does come with limitations. First, while 887 observations constitute the basis of this study, a significant number of additional observations could have been analyzed had the camera's view been consistently unobstructed and the organization of some of the council chambers conducive to video-recording every member. Furthermore, the models I use cannot accommodate some of the insufficient number of observations, and therefore, I cannot make any generalizations about the relationship of Black legislators to non-Black minority constituents or about the behavior of non-Black minority legislators in general.

Finally, I find a large race effect for the relationship between White legislators and Black constituents,²³ while I find no such effect for the relationship between White legislators and other minority constituents. However, as shown in Table 3.4, there are only 42 observations of White legislator-Black constituent dyads and 34 White legislator-non-Black minority dyads compared to the 405 White legislator-White constituent dyads. Since the dyads are non-independent, it is conceivable that perhaps a few Black constituents are driving the large race effect for White legislators. In other words, the magnitude of the race effect associated with Black constituents might diminish if more White legislator-Black constituent pairings were to be sampled. The opposite could also be true for non-Black minorities – a race effect could indeed be found if additional non-Black minorities were in the sample.

²³ As previously mentioned, in another analysis, see Appendix A, I use a GLM (binomial-logit) fixed effects model with constituent clustered standard errors. The effect size of the race coefficient is smaller but still statistically significant.

Concluding Remarks

Ideally, normative standards of a representative democracy that emphasize fairness and equality at least require that legislators refrain from being partial to any constituency. It also requires that the political community enable meaningful opportunities for all citizens to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Furthermore, legislators can play a part in encouraging participation by showing that the voices of constituents do matter, even, and especially, if legislators cannot comply their preferences. They can achieve this by not only listening in the literal sense but by also conveying to constituents that they are listening. While issuing responses to constituents during public meetings can convey to constituents that legislators are paying attention, so can a legislator's non-verbal conduct and body language. In this chapter, I find that White legislators are more distracted when Black constituents, rather than their White counterparts, speak. This finding does not reflect the standards of a democracy that underscores the importance of acknowledging the voices of all groups, especially those that have been historically marginalized. Because this study is the first of its kind, additional investigations should be undertaken to determine whether or not the results of this study are supported. Do White legislators generally behave with less decorum when Black constituents speak? Is the conduct of a Black legislator less prone to race-related partialities? There may be conditions that mitigate or exacerbate a legislator's less-than-courteous behavior, which my research was not able to uncover given its limitations. Future research should investigate not only the racial dynamics that play out in non-verbal communicative processes but also how non-verbal communication can affect important outcomes, such as citizens' views of their legislators, perceptions of their own efficacy, and their willingness to participate in politics.

CHAPTER 4

“THAT’S NOT WHAT I SAID”: THE EFFECT OF RACE ON RECALL AND COMPREHENSION OF CONSTITUENT MESSAGES

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."
--Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

In reflecting on the quote above, I acknowledge that it is possible that legislators, as with many individuals, listen with the intent to respond rather than to understand. However, as I will demonstrate in the next chapters, legislators are more likely to abstain from responding than to actually respond given the organization of the meetings. When council members do not respond but appear to be paying attention, are they actually listening? Equally important, what do they actually hear? Do they hear what the constituent intended for them to hear? Answering questions such as these requires looking at the interpretative component of listening. As discussed previously, when scholars of political science study “listening,” often a glaring omission in their studies are the inquiries into the ways that individuals assign meanings to messages and the potential for individuals to attribute different meanings to the same message. The study of the interpretative process of listening is important because the meaning associated with a message determines how it is understood. Thus, this chapter elucidates the significance of interpretation and hence comprehension in the listening process, for a legislator cannot provide a proper response or action without adequately understanding what a constituent had said.

Interpretations and Its Role in Listening

Message interpretation affects the process of remembering and responding to information conveyed in face-to-face interactions. There may be instances in which communicators converse with and understand each other quite well due to a confluence of factors. On the other hand, there may be times when individuals do not completely understand a message or will comprehend its meaning differently from the intended meaning of the speaker. A variety of influences, such as group membership, differences in perspectives and experiences, complex jargon, quality of the spoken language, and so forth, may constitute sources of misunderstanding between the speaker and listener. These influences may also lead different individuals listening to the same statement to draw diverging conclusions about the message. For example, in a study, Kuklinksi and Hurley find that African Americans are more likely than not to give different interpretations to the same statement when supposedly spoken by leaders of different racial identities (1994). What factors facilitate the listener's capacity to "correctly" deduce the meanings and implications of the speaker's words in some instances but not in others? What mechanisms lead individuals to draw different meanings from the same message?

Among the interpretative processes that affect the outcomes in the listening process are how the recipient evaluates and explains the message and what she infers from it (Gaines et al., 2007; pg. 959) and from the motives of the messenger. In one study, Gaines et al. found that partisanship had a strong influence in how people interpreted facts about the war on Iraq. For example, Republicans and Democrats attributed different meanings to the same fact – "the U.S. did not find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq" – because they offered different explanations

for the lack of weapons (“they were never there” vs. “Iraq either hid them or destroyed them”).²⁴ If anything, this and similar studies reinforce the long-held idea premise that the interpretative component of listening highly affects its outcomes. Therefore, in this chapter, I have delineated several types of listening, each whose different outcomes are facilitated by various mechanisms that affect the interpretative processes.²⁵

A. “Good” Listening (Listening)

The first kind of listening is what I call “good” listening (I will refer to this as simply “listening”). Broadly speaking, there is congruence in the meaning between the message uttered by the speaker and message heard by the listener. In other words, the listener more or less understands the statement in the manner the speaker intended. Several processes might facilitate this kind of listening. In the instance of this “good” or “congruent” listening, when applicable, the listener makes reasonable inferences and evaluations regarding the statements or makes inferences that align with what the speaker intended to communicate.

What are some factors that might render the listener’s intelligibility and comprehension of a message in a manner that coheres with the speaker’s intent? One obvious factor concerns the message itself - the content of the message is simple and/or conveyed clearly. Aside from the content of the message itself, the characteristics of both the speaker and listener may affect the transmission and reception of the message. The listener, more generally or in that particular conversational situation, may be quite acute in receiving and comprehending the verbal messages

²⁴ While Gaines and colleagues’ experimental conclusions were derived from interpretation of written messages, it is reasonable to deduce that their findings may also be applicable to spoken communications.

²⁵ My typology of listening is neither exhaustive of the types of listening that may be assessed nor one of the dominant or popular typologies. I am aware that communication scholars have categorized listening in various ways that differ from my own.

and nonverbal cues of the speaker. This perceptiveness may also be enabled by similarities in group memberships, perspectives, and frames of references and shared native language. However, even without any individual acute perception or awareness, shared experiences and primary language can also positively impact the individuals' understanding of one another in conversation.

While one major outcome of “good” listening is the listener’s comprehension of the message in alignment with the speaker’s intent, other outcomes may ensue as well. The listener may have understood the message but need not be convinced by it if the message was intended as persuasive communication. Furthermore, the listener may reasonably (and accurately) read nonverbal cues or deduce the emotional state of the speaker and source of the content, even if speaker is not aware of them herself. For example, a mental health specialist (psychiatrist, psychologist, etc.) might not only understand the information being conveyed by the patient but may correctly infer that the message resonates from a source of pain, fear, and so on even if the patient is not initially aware of it. In addition to assigning a reasonable context to the words of the speaker, “good” listening may involve circumstances where the listener makes accurate or reasonable inferences regarding the speaker’s motives, even in cases where the motive is not conducive to the interests of the listener. For example, the individual might engage in what Floyd and Clements call critical listening, where the listener understands the spoken content but rightly detects the speaker’s attempt to manipulate or deceive the listener (2005).

B. “Incongruent” or “Distorted” Listening

While individuals may be able to understand the message’s meaning as intended by the speaker, situations arise in which listeners may misinterpret or distort the information they hear.

In other words, they may not properly “hear” the message’s meaning as the speaker intended or they may assign inaccurate meaning or context to the statement. Although I call such listening “incongruent” or “distorted,” I want to make clear that I do not intend these two terms to be taken as unequivocally pejorative. As I will explicate, distorted or incongruent listening need not arise from any malice or ill will of listeners.

Although distorted listening is not always rooted in any callous intentions on the part of the listener, it does, at times, stem from willful ignorance. Andrew Dobson argues that the development of a culture of listening is the way “listening for” something (as opposed to “listening to” someone) distorts the ways in which we receive certain forms of speech and patterns of speaking. For example, speech by some humans are either dismissed or not heard at all (2012, 851). Dobson adds that true recognition will involve hearing people who have not been heard before and this may require listening to speech *as it is* rather than that enunciated in a form that makes it acceptable (ibid.).

Similarly, Susan Bickford states that oppression happens through the failure to hear particular types of expressions emanating from certain groups and that a particular kind of listening can dismantle linguistic conventions so that a plurality of voices are spoken, seen, and heard (129). While Bickford calls for a receptive attitude to different ways of speaking that might be associated with certain groups, she also acknowledges and cautions against perceiving someone solely through the lens of her group membership such that her uniqueness as a person with distinct opinions is erased (101). In other words, she warns against assuming that one is simply a representation of others who look like her (ibid.).

Thus, distorted listening not only involves failing to hear someone properly because they

have not “enunciated it in a form that makes it acceptable” (as Dobson puts it). It also concerns the influence of stereotype-based thinking on one’s capacity to listen even when the speaker has articulated her claims in an “acceptable” way or, stated differently, inappropriately taking the speaker to be a mere representation of the social group to which she belongs (as Bickford puts it). In these instances, distorted listening happens because one’s biases, filters, and perspectives inhibit one’s understanding of the speaker’s claims.

While Dobson and Bickford emphasize how gendered forms of communication and certain types of speeches associated with socially marginalized groups exemplify the kinds of communicative practices that a listener might regard with a dismissive attitude, not all listening distortions arise from asymmetric power relations. For example, different membership in groups that are similarly situated in terms of social/political power but distinct in culture and norms may contribute to misunderstandings between individuals engaged in a conversation. Similarly, differences in life experiences, which, like group affiliation, may lend itself to different perspectives and frame of references that, in turn, may constitute sources of misinterpreting messages. While I have spoken about the various factors that potentially lead to listening incongruence or distortions, what are the various ways this incongruence might manifest itself?

In other words, what are the mechanisms by which listening distortion occur? As with congruent listening, incongruent listening may involve attributing explanations to, evaluating,²⁶ and making inferences about statements. However, unlike congruent listening, incongruent or distorted listening involves inappropriately or inaccurately contextualizing the information provided by the speaker. An example concerning differences in the speaker and listener’s

²⁶ Gaines and colleagues also find that partisan differences in the evaluation of a quantity or amount of something led to different interpretations given to a message (2007).

assessment or evaluation of information may help illustrate my point. A constituent needing assistance attends a city council meeting to inform members that his house was damaged by a flood and requires \$8,000 in repairs. Arguably, council members are not necessarily listening in a distorted manner when they can correctly infer that the speaker thinks the cost is significant but are not persuaded by his argument. On the other hand, distorted listening may occur if the council alters its perception of the amount due to a change in the source of the statement (i.e. another constituent makes the exact same statement, to which the council members then perceive the \$8,000 to be an enormous burden). In listening to this statement, the Council correctly hears the information (the flooding of the house and the costs of repairs). However, it may evaluate the information (the cost of repairs) differently than how the speaker evaluates it or may evaluate the cost differently based on who made the statement.

Inaccurate assessments may also be linked with *downplaying, ignoring, or changing the meaning of* certain words in a statement. For example, Asch's experiments demonstrate how individuals altered the meaning of or minimized the impact of certain words in a message depending on the source of the message (1952). College students were asked to reflect back on the meaning of the following statement that was either attributed to Thomas Jefferson or Lenin:

“I hold it that a *little rebellion* (my italics), now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms are in the physical world.”

Those who read the statement as being attributable to Jefferson referenced and emphasized the word “little” and took the word “rebellion” to signify a peaceful change in government (p. 423). On the other hand, students who read the same statement but were told that the source was Lenin not only overlooked the word “little” but also interpreted the word “rebellion” as “revolution”

(*ibid.*). In reference to my example, when public officials listen to a constituent say “flood,” they might incorrectly think he really means “rainfall” but is simply making a hyperbole of the term.

Additionally, the Council might make inappropriate or inaccurate explanations or inferences regarding the speaker’s statements or motives. For example, the council members might not doubt the veracity of the flood and the costs of repair, but they may inwardly give an explanation for the damage. They might believe that the constituent’s house suffered damages because he was negligent in the upkeep of its infrastructure even if he had not given any indication of negligence. Alternatively, the council might attribute the damage to the natural disaster itself. The potential for listening distortions increases if one associates certain explanations of statements with a group to which the speaker belongs. Thus, the Council members may “hear” or interpret “negligence” to be the major source of the damage because “those like him behave neglectfully and without proper regard for property.” Furthermore, while this example speaks to drawing inferences about the statement itself, the listener will oftentimes infer the motives of the speaker (why the speaker is conveying the message). For example, the city council members might inappropriately attribute the constituent’s motives for speaking before them to sheer laziness and lack of will to help himself instead of appropriately deducing that he has exhausted all his options and genuinely needs the city’s assistance.

Although certain forms of incongruent interpretation might arguably have minimal or non-adverse effects on how elites respond, others might result in more adverse consequences. For example, cases of distorted evaluations (\$8,000 is not a large amount), distorted explanations (the damage is his fault), or unjustified motive attributions (he is only coming before Council because he is too lazy to deal with it himself) may lead legislators to abstain from helping a constituent who sincerely needs the assistance. While the legislators’ refusal or inability to

understand the constituent might be the outcome of the interaction of group affiliations, stereotyped-based reasoning, and different perspectives, or simply the outcome of each of these alone, message interpretations (or misinterpretations) might also be the product of the listener's personality, cognitive abilities, values, the message's source and features, and the context/situation in which the words are spoken (Edwards 2011, p. 58).

C. Disconnected Listening

As previously discussed, distorted listening does not necessarily mean that the listener incorrectly hears the words coming from the speaker. However, situations may arise where listeners will completely mishear or misunderstand the message the speaker is attempting to convey. For example a constituent informs the Council that her house was flooded and requires repairs, but the members hear that her house was NOT flooded or that it was flooded but does NOT require repairs. I call this kind of listening "disconnected" listening, which is a form of distorted listening but a more extreme version of it (I use the word "extreme" for lack of a better word). While arguably, disconnected listening may not be as prevalent as the distorted listening previously elaborated, it merits some discussion.

As with distorted listening, disconnected listening may arise in conversational situations in which the individuals involved may have different group affinities, perspectives, and frame of references. However, it may also emerge from or be accentuated by poor language enunciation by one of the parties or differences in native languages and particular jargons spoken by the individuals. For example, a layperson unversed in any knowledge about physics may completely misunderstand a physicist's lecture if it is delivered with complex terminologies about quantum mechanics. In some instances, the listener may even completely tune the speaker out or let the

words “go in one ear and right out the other,” as the popular statement goes, because the message content or language barriers make it difficult for the listener to understand. In other situations, the tuning out might occur simply because the listener is bored with the information or already has expectations of what the speaker has to say (so he does not feel compelled to listen at all).

Therefore, the outcome of disconnected listening can be manifested in various ways. The listener may completely mishear a statement, or he may not comprehend it. Subsequently, the listener may respond to the speaker with incoherent statements that demonstrate how unintelligible he perceived the information or how wrongly he understood it. Furthermore, in disconnected listening, the listener may not be able to recall anything the speaker said because he was not paying attention at all. In general, while disconnected listening might arguably be considered a more severe form of distorted listening, among the two, it is probably easier to detect.

D. Defensive Listening

Distorted listening might also take a specific form that is “defensive listening,” which is debilitating, prevents discussions from reaching decisions or compromises acceptable to both parties. In “defensive listening,” the individual receives, pays attention to, and generally understands the statements made, but what appears notable is his resistance to persuasion or neutral consideration of information he deems disagreeable. If he privileges listening at all, he values it merely because it gives him the ammunition to fire back counterarguments. Therefore, the defensive listener dismisses or denigrates the statements the speaker expresses or uses them as fodder for counterarguments. Minimal or no attempt is made to “understand more fully the beliefs, meanings, values, and fears held not only by (one’s interlocutors) but also by (oneself)”

(Hunzer 2008, p. 92). Also, while defensive listening may occur in interactions with those who are socially and culturally different, it appears to dominate political discussions, especially when it comes to discourse about issues that are conflict-ridden or have the strongest opinion divisions on ideological grounds.

Defensive listening is best explained by a pervasive psychological tendency (especially in politics) known as motivated reasoning. "Rather than search rationally for information that either confirms or disconfirms a particular belief, people actually seek out information that confirms what they already believe" (Steven Hoffman, *Newsweek*, 2009). Political scientists have conducted extensive research not only on the role of motivated reasoning in the steadfast maintenance (or the intensification) of partisan or ideological views (Taber et al. 2009) but also on its role in partisanship's influence on presidential approval (Lebo and Cassino 2007) and its influence on the persuasiveness of issue frames (Slothuus and de Vreese 2010).

When people engage in motivated reasoning, "their prior attitudes toward other people, groups, or issues implicated in political arguments strongly bias how they process those arguments" (Taber et al. 2009, p. 138). For example, they will resort to an attitude congruency bias, where they evaluate arguments and evidence that support their prior beliefs as more compelling than arguments that contradict their priors, and/or they will partake in disconfirmation bias, where they spend more time and cognitive resources trying to refute "attitudinally incongruent arguments" (p. 139). Also, motivated reasoning is hard to reconcile with normative standards of Bayesian updating, which requires the evaluation of new evidence that is independent of our prior biases (ibid.).

Thus, when the listener does not engage in Bayesian updating or at least consider the

merits of “the other side” (as Diane Mutz puts it, 2006), he will not only selectively hear some information while ignoring others, but will also expend much energy and effort to dispute the information he does not agree with. Motivated reasoning then explains the tendency for those to listen merely for the sake of counter-arguing a point of contention especially in highly ideological debates. While in some instances of distorted or disconnected listening, the individual may respond based on what he expects to hear, in defensive listening, the individual will react according to what he wants to hear. If what he hears is not acceptable, then he will attempt to locate or express as many counterclaims to the information presented.

The typologies²⁷ above provide a conception of listening that explains why in spoken contexts, some statements are understood and contextualized properly while others are not. While listening distortions can simply be the product of seemingly benign factors (differences in language and jargon, individual perceptive ability, and so on), they can also result from potentially more worrisome social features, such as social identities and group affiliations that nurture and sustain biases and stereotypes in the listening process, especially in the context of power asymmetry among groups. Because social identities and group affiliations can have such a powerful effect on perspectives and frames of references, which in turn affect the interpretation of information, they form the central basis for my hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3: Legislators (White and Black) understand and recall better the messages of constituents who share their racial identity than those of constituents who racially identify otherwise.

One the other hand, shared group membership may be insufficient in bringing an

²⁷ As one can deduce from the discussion of each typology, the categories, especially those of distorted, disconnected, and defensive listening, are not mutually exclusive.

alignment of understanding between legislators and constituents, particularly those belonging to historically marginalized groups. As mentioned in previous chapters, there may be a number of reasons that Black and other non-White members do NOT pay careful attention to the views of constituents who are racial minorities. Legislators themselves might possess this shared perspective from being in positions of power that is shaped by dominant values, which make them less receptive, and perhaps less able, to relate to the concerns of racial minorities. Alternatively, Black and other non-White members might assume that they already know the views of their minority constituents and hence be less likely to listen to them. On the other hand, minority legislators might be more likely to listen to minority constituents, but overall, their comprehension might be overshadowed by the relatively reduced ability of White legislators to relate to the concerns expressed by racial minorities. Thus, I propose another hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Legislators (White and Black) understand and recall better the messages of White constituents than those of constituents who racially identify as non-White.

As I will fully elaborate later, the limitations of the model and data means that I am unable to test the conditional hypotheses concerning the effects of race on the relationship between speech about race-related or legislative issues and the legislator's understanding of constituent messages.

Examples of Listening Categories

I basically transcribed almost verbatim what each constituent had spoken about during either the public hearings on legislative issues or the public comment periods (in which constituents speak about general municipal-related matters). I then conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with council members from the same cities referenced in the previous

chapter, and I asked each council member if she had recalled what each constituent had spoken about during a particular council meeting and if so, what she understood the constituent to be conveying to council members.^{28 29} (Please see Appendix E for a list of questions asked).³⁰ In order to minimize or deflect suspicion that I was investigating the members' listening behavior, I asked several questions of a more general nature, such as what each member perceived to be the central purpose of constituent commentaries and what they viewed as other sources of information about constituent opinions. After conducting the interviews, I also transcribed almost verbatim the member's views concerning each constituent's statements. I then paired each constituent statement with the council member's responses concerning that message. The following are the types of responses taken from my interviews with local legislators that nicely exemplify the listening categories I delineated earlier.

“Good” Listening

The following council member's response (which is preceded by what the constituent actually said) captures what I would characterize as “good” listening. During a particular meeting, one of the frequent attendees came to express his often-stated criticism that council members were inadequately addressing the needs of the poor and working class constituents in City A. Constituent A said:

“I am in favor of requiring that the amendment be attached to all annexation issues, zoning and site plan issues brought before the council that would require open access to the property involved by members of all levels, including certainly the most vulnerable

²⁸ Appendix G contains the email message I sent to council members requesting an interview.

²⁹ Although the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board had determined that my study was exempt from IRB oversight, I nonetheless asked each legislator to sign a consent form that outlines the benefits and minimal risks of participation. See Appendix I.

³⁰ I also asked council members to complete a questionnaire about their race, class, and ideological background. See Appendix H.

residents of the city and that the attendant opportunity for transportation to the properties through para-transit, handicapped transportation, and senior ride transportation... (the constituent doesn't complete sentence). This should be a blanket tape amendment that would assure that the historic prejudice involved and bigotry involved in red lining within the city and the county be overcome and be eliminated. This is too proud of a city, with two prestigious educational institutions together – with the University's Law School inside of the city and the impressive educational institutions, including the University – that we have today the status quo, where properties are annexed, but they are not annexed under conditions requiring opportunity for access by people of all income levels and transportation to these sites by people of all income levels. This is something that is a historic source of bigotry and discrimination and ongoing black eye to the city. Needs to be redressed. Thank you."

When asked to comment on her understanding of what the constituent had expressed to council members, Council Member A from City A responded,

"He has important things to say. But he isn't judicious in how he says them. He spoke later at two different public hearings. And I found myself being distracted by one of the things he was saying because he was saying that we shouldn't accept a property into the city before guaranteeing that that property had access to the bus, which is okay, fine except that property HAS access to the bus line. And so telling us this was not helpful."

"I actually spent time looking up the property itself and looking at its adjacency to the #8 Bus. Because I felt like, "Here it is. Here is the bus." But the constituent wants that included in everything. He wants it to be part of the public record that every parcel is within a certain distance, every parcel is handicap accessible, every parcel is earmarked for affordable housing. And it's hard to say if he's being reasonable about those things because he seems to simply be automatic. He's not looking at the property. He's not doing any research. He's not determining the best way to make an impact. If instead he said, 'I looked at a map, I checked the bus routes, and the closest bus comes here only once an hour and you have to walk half a mile to get it. That's not acceptable. So if we're bringing this into the city, we should be working with city public transportation authority to ensure that the use of this property is enhanced by the access to the bus.' THAT would be compelling."

While the legislator does not agree with the constituent's views, her response demonstrates that she not only remembered, but also understood, the point the constituent was attempting to convey. Additionally, her response shows that she had *critically* thought about why the constituent's message was not persuasive to her and the necessary elements that would make the

message more compelling.

Disconnected Listening

The response above stands in stark contrast to the responses below, given by other legislators about the same constituent, who basically expressed a similar argument but at a different meeting. When I asked these other legislators what they perceived the constituent to be expressing, some of their responses were as follows:

“I don’t know precisely what this constituent said. I’ve taken to not listening to this constituent. He is someone who comes and speaks at every single meeting and at every single opportunity, at the exact same topic, which is generally speaking, social equity and affordability – affordable housing – social and economic equity. Someone who speaks at that level (frequency) is participating for reasons other than – for reasons in addition to – and perhaps overwhelming a citizen’s ordinary right and obligation to participate in the political process.” – Council Member B from City A

“I don’t remember what he said. I kind of tuned him out.” – Council Member C from City A

When asked about the views of another constituent, Constituent B, who had attended a meeting to speak about a local budget resolution that would inject additional funds into the local warming center for homeless people, one of the legislators above replied:

“If you can refresh my recollection, that would be great.” (The legislator is briefly reminded that this constituent is a human rights advocate who spoke about homelessness). *“The gentleman, if my understanding is that he has come to Council before – if I’m connecting the right gentleman – and made broad and unsubstantiated accusations against (the Council), so I did not particularly focus on what the gentleman was saying either.”* Council Member B from City A

Unlike the first legislator whose response captured “good” listening, the responses above reflect what I would characterize as “disconnected listening.” As mentioned before, in “disconnected”

listening, the listener either completely mishears the information provided by the listener or simply does not pay attention at all. In the situations above, the council members had consciously tuned the speakers out because they had certain expectations of what the speakers would have conveyed, and they did not deem these messages as worthy of their attention.

Distorted Listening

In other situations, however, council members neither completely detach themselves from the constituents speaking nor fully understand the constituent's message as the constituent intended. Consider the following view expressed by the constituent, who attended a council meeting to encourage council members to vote against a resolution that would cut funding to his organization. Constituent C said:

"I just want to speak and to encourage you NOT to approve Amendments #1 and #15 and to encourage the Council to continue to be a part of the successful public-private partnership that has created great results in this city over the last nine years. Those other partners include the county, the University, 35 companies, all the other municipalities in the County that are part of that partnership. I did provide through the city manager this particular handout. I think we've all received it. It clearly spells out our results, specifically in the city. Last year, your investments resulted in \$21 million of projects and 752 jobs. I'd like to point out that the 752 jobs are half of all the jobs that S Company (constituent's company) was able to develop through partnerships throughout the County." (The constituent then continued talking about the projects and benefits that his company had brought into the city).

When Council Member D is asked to provide her views of the constituent's message, she expressed:

"Yeah, this speaker is one of those - he's the head of S Company. He just basically said: 'give us all the money.' Well, it's just corporate welfare. So, I don't have much sympathy for corporate welfare because I think rich people have all the sources in the world to help them. Poor people and ordinary people don't, so I feel that my duty is to make sure that I take care of people who don't have other resources. I'm sorry - he just gave the same old kind of feedback - 'oh we're just doing so much good, just give

us all the money; we need all your money.’ I don’t know which amendment he came to speak about but basically Amendment #1, which is mine (that was) basically going to cap the income (that) we give to S Company. The other one was taking out \$75,000 we give to S Company for marketing and giving it to (the) homeless shelter. So he opposed both of (those amendments).”

The response above may be characterized as an example of distorted listening. Although the legislator appears to remember some of the details of the constituent’s argument and to understand the basic point he was attempting to convey – he doesn’t want funds to his company reduced – the legislator appears to improperly attribute the motives of the speaker to being greedy or wanting to “take all the money.” While good listening doesn’t preclude the legislator from disagreeing with the speaker on the value his company contributes to the city, the kind of distorted listening carried out by this legislator potentially prevents the listener from fully hearing the arguments of the speaker, perhaps even downplaying the accomplishments he spoke of about the company. Thus, it may preclude the listener from making the proper deduction that perhaps the funds being curtailed are necessary for the company to thrive. Because the set-up of the meetings is not conducive to back-and-forth conversations between legislators and constituents, there were less compelling examples or clear cases of defensive listening.

Measuring Comprehension

While the interview responses above offer vivid examples of different forms of listening, how does one incorporate these responses into a coding scheme and hence translate them into quantifiable units? Since I have constructed this theoretical framework of message interpretation, I am perhaps the most qualified person to make determinations of what constitutes distorted or disconnected listening. However, as a researcher who has a

stake in finding confirmation for her hypotheses, I am also not immune to biases that may affect the way I code particular statements. Therefore, in an effort to prevent my own biases from influencing the evaluation of the legislators' listening behavior, I chose not to make the determination of what constitutes "good" or "bad" listening. Instead, I asked workers from Amazon Mechanical Turk (M Turk), a crowdsourcing internet marketplace, to evaluate how well legislators remembered and understood the message offered by constituents. There are advantages and disadvantages in asking workers on M Turk to assess the listening behavior of public officials. The biggest advantage is that these are independent evaluators who are unfamiliar with my research and are unaware of my hypotheses. Thus, it reduces the possibility of strategic responses by workers, especially given the task I am asking them to do.³¹ Also, given the large pool of workers, I am able to solicit however many workers I desire at a low cost and stipulate qualifications necessary in order to complete the task.

While there are certainly benefits to employing M Turk workers to do the assessments, there are several drawbacks in relying on these individuals, as I will later explain. For now, I will say that since I have limited time and monetary resources, I cannot expect M Turk workers to spend an inordinate amount of time learning about the different categories I have constructed for message interpretation. Therefore, in order to accommodate the limited time M Turk workers usually spend on a particular task, I simply asked each worker to do an exercise that was accessible to them – rate on a scale from 0 to 4 how well a legislator remembered and understood a constituent's message. I understand that in using such a rating system, I lose the richness and complexity associated with the legislator's listening behavior. For example, I am unable to determine whether the lack of

³¹ I am not asking them to provide their opinions on a political issue or choose among several hypothetical situations. As I will explain later, I am simply asking them to rate how well they think a legislator remembered and understood the constituent's message.

comprehension on the legislator's part is due to incorrect motive attribution, ignoring key elements of the constituent's speech, or even the speaker's inability to effectively communicate his claims. However, I believe that such a coding scheme is still valuable in that it provides insights into whom legislators do understand and whether racial identity affects their ability to understand constituents.

Using Amazon Mechanical Turk

As mentioned before, I basically transcribed almost verbatim what each constituent had spoken about during the public hearings on legislative issues or during the public comment period on general municipal-related matters. After conducting semi-structured interviews with council members, I also transcribed almost verbatim the member's views concerning each constituent's message. I then pair each constituent statement with the council member's responses concerning that message. Since constituents are allowed up to three minutes to speak at the public meetings, inevitably some constituents will use up the entire three minutes to speak, which may result in lengthy transcriptions of some constituents' messages. Likewise, some members may provide an extensive summary of what they perceived to be the constituent's message. Because assessing lengthy summaries may induce readers of these paired statements to drift in and out of an attentive mode, I pare down the longer messages and summaries while attempting as much as possible to preserve the core and wording of the constituent's message and the member's response.

In my efforts to minimize the amount of reading required of the M Turk workers, I usually asked them to read a maximum of two paired statements for each exercise. Alternatively, if more than one legislator provided responses concerning a particular constituent's message, I only included in one exercise that particular constituent's message and

the corresponding responses of up to three legislators. Constructing the exercise in this alternative manner allows the evaluators to make comparisons between the legislators' responses, which may be useful if evaluators are uncertain about what constitutes sufficiently good listening.

For each exercise, I asked the evaluators to rate on a Likert-like scale how well they think each legislator 1) recalled and 2) understood the constituent's message. Assessors were asked to rate the legislator's listening behavior on a scale from 0 to 4, with 0 reflecting a complete lack of recall or comprehension of the constituent's message; 1 reflecting marginal recollection or comprehension of the constituent's message; 2 reflecting moderately good recall or comprehension; 3 reflecting very good recollection or understanding of the constituent's message, and finally, 4 reflecting extremely good recall or comprehension. (Please see Appendix F that details what the evaluators were asked to do). One might wonder why, if the central focus of this chapter is the legislator's understanding of constituent messages, I include a measure of recall. I do so because just as the message interpretation affects a legislator's recall of the message, the reverse is also true – a legislator's recall or inability to recall affects her understanding of a message. In some instances, a legislator may incorrectly remember some details of the constituent's assertions, which then affects her understanding of the constituent's message. Furthermore, the measure of recall is linked with disconnected listening. As demonstrated above, legislators were not able to remember what the constituents had said because they made a conscious decision to completely ignore their statements during the meeting.

Overall, I produced 167 exercises that were uploaded onto Amazon Mechanical Turk. Five individuals were asked to work on each exercise.³² ³³ Two council members conveyed to me that they wanted their responses to remain confidential even after I had expressed to them that their responses would remain completely anonymous and would not be attributed to them. To respect these members' preferences, I instead asked two independent evaluators who would be able to maintain the confidentiality of responses and whose work I am familiar with (an advanced undergraduate research assistant and someone who completed a master's degree) to assess these legislators' responses.³⁴ Overall, these exercises capture 385 constituent-legislator paired statements.

Data

I constructed an original dataset consisting of observations from an analysis of interviews conducted with 15 council members (8 from City A, 4 from City B, 2 from City C, and 1 from City D). A few council members had time to participate in only one interview. The majority of members consented to do two interviews, with a handful agreeing to be interviewed a third time. Overall, I conducted a total of 31 separate interviews (a number of them with the same council members in which I asked about constituents speaking at different meetings). Each council

³² Each worker was paid anywhere from \$0.50 to \$1.80, depending on the amount of time required to complete the exercise.

³³ Generally, the assessments in each exercise did converge around a particular score. However, for those that differed substantially (e.g. instances in which two evaluators rated the legislator as not remembering well and two evaluators assessed the legislator as remembering very well), I collected more evaluations from M Turk. Sometimes, the final assessment that was generated from more than five responses resulted in a situation where most responses congregated around a certain score. However, in other situations, the assessment still remained polarized and hence the final assessment would converge around the midpoint score (moderately good recall or understanding). These instances were probably the result of some peculiarity with the legislator's response that generated variation in terms of assessment. Additionally, I discard any responses that demonstrate that the evaluator haphazardly answered the questions or failed to complete the task adequately. For example, I discard evaluations in which the assessor indicated that the legislator remembered the constituent's message "very well" when the legislator clearly stated that she had tuned the constituent out and thus failed to recollect what the constituent had said.

³⁴ In most cases, their assessments did agree. However, in the few instances where the assessments dramatically differed, I asked another person to complete the exercise that contained the disputed assessment.

member reflected on the messages of anywhere from 6 to 17 constituents in a given interview. Again, the unit of analysis is the dyadic relationship between each constituent who spoke and each council member who commented on the constituent's message. Overall, the responses yielded a total of 385 observations. From these observations, 296 are from White constituents and 89 are from non-White constituents (39 associated with Black constituents, 28 associated with Latino constituents, 8 with Asian constituents, and 14 with minority constituents who are neither Black, Asian, nor Latino). Also, from the 385 observations, 302 are from 11 White council members, 47 are from 3 Black council members (1 from City B, 1 from City C, and 1 from City D), and 36 are from the only Asian council member, who is in City A. Table 4.1 below provides demographic and other pertinent information about each member interviewed.

Table 4.1: Demographic Information of Council Members Interviewed

Council Member ID	City	Race	Gender	Class Background Growing Up	Current Income	Political Views	Age	Number of Interviews
1	City A	White	Female	Poor	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Democrat	Not Given	3
2	City A	Asian	Female	Middle Class	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Liberal	40's	3
3	City A	White	Female	Upper Middle Class	>\$100,000	Liberal	50's	2
4	City A	White	Male	Middle Class	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Liberal	30's	3
5	City A	White	Male	Working Class	>\$100,000	Moderate	50's	2
6	City A	White	Male	Upper Middle Class	>\$100,000	Democrat	40's	2
7	City A	White	Male	Middle Class	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Moderate to Liberal	Not Given	1
8	City A	White	Female	Upper Middle Class	> \$100,000	Liberal	40's	1
9	City B	Black	Female	Poor-Working Class	<\$50,000	Moderate	60+	2
10	City B	White	Male	Lower Middle Class	>\$100,000	Liberal	40's	2
11	City B	White	Male	Middle Class	>\$100,000	Liberal	60+	3
12	City B	White	Male	Working Class	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Liberal	60+	2
13	City C	White	Female	Working Class	<\$50,000	Liberal	60+	2
14	City C	Black	Female	Working – Lower Middle Class	> \$100,000	Liberal	50's	1
15	City D	Black	Male	Working Class	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Moderate	Not Given	2

Methods

Dependent Variable

The main dependent variables capture how well the legislator recalled and understood the constituent's message, according to the assessments of independent evaluators. Because each exercise asked for a rating based on a Likert-like scale, the dependent variable is an ordered variable. The original scale asked evaluators to assess recall and comprehension on a scale from 0 to 4. However, since five (or more) individuals on M Turk were asked to analyze each paired statement, the final rating, most of the time, did not result in a whole number. In instances where the final score was not a whole number, I rounded up (or down) the number by 0.5; thus a rating of 2.61 becomes a 3 or a 2.2 becomes a 2. While some information is lost resorting to this practice, an ordered logit model requires that each score fall into one of the neatly ordered categories of a particular scale.

Additionally, there are only a few observations associated with the extreme categories of the scale, as shown in the tables below. Moreover, the few observations at the extreme end of the scales render it impossible for a model (that employs a five-category ordered dependent variable) to fully converge when control variables are included. Therefore, I collapsed the original 5-category ordered "comprehension" variable into a variable with 3 categories, with the first category capturing a complete absence of or little understanding of the constituent's message, the second category capturing moderately good understanding, and the final category reflecting either very good or extremely good comprehension of the constituent's message. Overall, in the modified ordered dependent variable (for comprehension), there are 74 observations (19.22%) belonging to level 1, 177 (45.97%) associated with level 2, and 134 (34.81%) belonging to level 3. Likewise, I construct a dependent variable for the legislator's

recall of the constituent’s message that follows the same structure of the comprehension variable. In the modified ordered dependent variable reflecting recall, there are 105 observations (27.27%) associated with level 1, 170 (44.16%) associated with level 2, and 110 (28.57%) belonging to level 3. However, as I will later explain, the nature of the data and models compelled me to further collapse this “recall” variable into a dummy variable.

Table 4.2: Original Ordered Categories of Understanding

“Understand” Score	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0	10	2.60	2.60
1	64	16.62	19.22
2	177	45.97	65.19
3	118	30.13	95.32
4	18	4.68	100

Table 4.3: Original Ordered Categories of Recall

“Remember” Score	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
0	12	3.12	3.12
1	93	24.16	27.27
2	170	44.16	71.43
3	90	23.38	94.81
4	20	5.19	100

Independent Variables

The constituent and member’s race are two of the primary independent variables. The independent variable for the constituent’s race is a dummy variable, whether the constituent is

White or non-White.³⁵ The independent variable for the legislator's race is a variable composed of three categories (White, Black, or Asian). Another primary variable of interest is the interaction term between the constituent and legislator's race.³⁶ I incorporate this interaction term to test the hypothesis that a legislator better understands and/or recalls a constituent's message when the constituent speaking shares the legislator's racial identity. Due to certain features of the model being compounded by the relatively smaller number of observations, the model for comprehension is only able to accommodate a limited number of variables. Hence, I am unable to evaluate conditional effects, such as whether or not speech on legislative matters moderates the effect of shared racial identity on a legislator's understanding of a constituent message.³⁷

Additionally, I include in this analysis some of the same control variables from the previous chapter. For example, I include variables for the constituent and member's gender. Furthermore, I control for the independent effect of constituent statements about legislation (*Speak on Legislation*).³⁸ Another control variable is whether or not the constituent expresses an opinion that is similar to a view asserted by another constituent during the same meeting (*Same Opinion as Another Constituent*). This controlling factor also captures whether or not the constituent comes to speak as a member of a group. All else equal, councilmembers may be less likely to remember the details of a particular individual's message if the message is similar to that of another and especially if it is similar to those of several other constituents. However, it is

³⁵ The full model will not converge with a constituent race variable that has more than two categories.

³⁶ I do not subset the data by Black and White legislators primarily due the smaller sample size and the potential loss of power in the statistical models.

³⁷ However, when looking at descriptive statistics and basic ordered logit regressions, racial identity does not seem to have a statistically significant conditional effect on the relationship between speech about legislative matters or race-related matters and legislative comprehension of messages.

³⁸ I was unable to control for whether or not the constituent spoke on a particularly dominant topic of discussion for the evening, but no racial minorities in the sample spoke about any particularly heated legislative issue being debated at the meetings.

possible that they may be more likely to understand a constituent's message if they hear it more than once or if they hear it repeatedly. While I was able to include some of controls used in previous chapters, I was forced to exclude other variables due the relatively limited number of observations. The attempt to include these variables resulted in the models' failure to converge. Therefore, I was unable to include city fixed effects in the regressions modeling legislative comprehension. However, descriptive statistics and basic regression models suggest that the exclusion of these dummy variables does not affect the analyses in any meaningful way.

I control for other variables that are unique to this particular study. I take into consideration potential differences between coding done by research assistants who evaluated about 15% of the paired statements and those done by Amazon Mechanical Turk workers who assessed the rest. Thus, I include a dummy variable for all evaluations completed by the research assistants (*Student Coders*). Since local legislators may experience more difficulty recalling and hence understanding constituent messages as each day elapses between the meeting and the interview, I include a continuous variable to capture the number of days that have passed from the night the council meeting occurred to the day I interviewed the member (*Days Elapsed*). Finally, the quality of a legislator's recall and comprehension of constituent messages may also depend on the length of the interview. Some of these legislators have quite limited time to converse with me (as some agreed to be interviewed during a short lunch break or in the morning before starting work). Thus, it is conceivable that a council member who sits through an interview with me for approximately one hour may provide more thorough and vivid responses concerning each constituent's message than someone who only has 20 minutes to converse with me. Hence, I also include a continuous variable to capture the total number of minutes the local legislator spoke with me (*Length of Interview*).

Descriptive Statistics

Below are the descriptive statistics associated with the legislators (by race) and their levels of recall and comprehension.

Table 4.4: White Legislators Only: Recall

Constituent Race	Not At All/Not Very Well	Moderately Well	Very/Extremely Well
White	64 (27.00%)	106 (44.73%)	67 (28.27%)
Black	5 (22.73%)	10 (45.45%)	7 (31.82%)
Other Minorities	18 (41.86%)	18 (41.86%)	7 (16.28%)

Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.3387$ Pr = 0.254

Table 4.5: White Legislators Only: Comprehension

Constituent Race	Not At All/Not Very Well	Moderately Well	Very/Extremely Well
White	48 (20.25%)	103 (43.46%)	86 (36.29%)
Black	5 (22.73%)	12 (54.55%)	5 (22.73%)
Other Minorities	10 (23.26%)	26 (60.47%)	7 (16.28%)

Pearson $\chi^2 = 7.9462$ Pr = 0.094

When looking at the two outer categories, White legislators seem to recall less when non-Black minorities speak than when White constituents speak. Additionally, White constituents appear more likely than both Black and other minority constituents to fall into the highest category of being understood by White legislators. However, while the differences among racial groups for the comprehension measure are statistically significant at the 0.10 level, the group differences for the recall measure are not statistically significant.

Table 4.6: Black Legislators Only: Recall

Constituent Race	Not At All/Not Very Well	Moderately Well	Very/Extremely Well
White	5 (20.00%)	14 (56.00%)	6 (24.00%)
Black	4 (25.00%)	5 (31.25%)	7 (43.75%)
Other Minorities	1 (16.67%)	3 (50.00%)	2 (33.33%)

Pearson $\chi^2 = 2.6718$ Pr = 0.614

Table 4.7: Black Legislators Only: Comprehension

Constituent Race	Not At All/Not Very Well	Moderately Well	Very/Extremely Well
White	2 (8.00%)	13 (52.00%)	10 (40.00%)
Black	3 (18.75%)	5 (31.25%)	8 (50.00%)
Other Minorities	0 (0.00%)	2 (33.33%)	4 (66.67%)

Pearson $\chi^2 = 3.7039$ Pr = 0.448

On the other hand, Black legislators do not appear to privilege Black constituents over non-Black constituents. While Black constituents seem more likely than their non-Black counterparts to fall into the highest category of the recall variable, they are also more likely to exceed their non-Black counterparts in belonging to the lowest category. Additionally, while the rate at which Black constituents exceed the rate at which White constituents fall into the highest category of the comprehension variable, the rate of Black constituents, in turn, is exceeded by that of other minority constituents. Furthermore, even though it may not be the case that Black legislators privilege their own racial group when remembering or understanding what these constituents say, it may be possible that they generally favor minority constituents (whether Black or non-Black) over White constituents.

While for the most part, the descriptive statistics do not yield statistically significant group differences among Black and White legislators, a statistical model would be better able to determine whether the differences White or Black members exhibit toward various groups are indeed statistically significant. As with the previous chapter, the unit of analysis in the data is the dyadic relationship between each constituent who speaks and each councilmember interviewed. These observations are not independent because each council member and each constituent constitute several dyads and therefore are crossed with one another. Because the dependent variables are composed of ranked categories, I use a crossed random effects ordered logit regression, where constituents and legislators are treated as random effects, to analyze the data.

As alluded to previously, the use of these models do not come without some drawbacks, one of which is the incapacity to include some of the control variables I included in the previous chapter. Another disadvantage is that the models for the “recall” variable fail to converge with the inclusion of control variables and the attempt to test the hypothesis concerning the effect of shared racial identity on a legislator’s recollection of constituent messages.

However, I am equally interested in the effect of race on what I call disconnected listening as I am in how race affects gradations of a legislator’s recollection of messages. As previously mentioned, in disconnected listening, the listener may not be able to recall anything the speaker said because she was not paying attention at all or because she was paying very little attention. Thus, disconnected listening can be roughly captured by a dichotomous variable where I collapse the categories of the recall variable into two – with one category reflecting either no recollection or very minimal recollection and the other category reflecting recollection that is moderately well, very well, or extremely well. However, with this “disconnected”

variable, one is not able to determine in every instance how disconnected listening comes about – whether it arises from problematic situations in which the listener purposefully ignores the constituent or from situations that are perhaps more “benign” in that the legislator makes a good-faith attempt to pay attention to the constituent but eventually stops listening due to the difficulty in understanding the constituent’s message. Additionally, the term “disconnected” listening may be a misnomer in instances where the legislators initially understood and recalled what the constituent had said, but somewhere in the time that passed between the meeting and interview, they consciously or unconsciously discarded the memory of that information. In any case, the “disconnect” variable captures a variety of these scenarios.

In looking at “disconnected” listening, I use a crossed random effects logistic regression. One of the benefits of using this model over an ordered logit model that I exploit for the comprehension measure is that I am able to incorporate a number of controls I included in the previous chapter, along with the newer variables that are distinct to this particular analysis (student research assistant coding, interview length, days elapsed between the meeting and interview). I also include a dummy variable for that one particular constituent alluded to earlier (*Lone Gadget*) who speaks about class issues at every council meeting and is consistently ignored by council members. In the final logit model that evaluates recollection or rather, more specifically, its opposite – disconnected listening, I incorporate the key independent variables of racial identity and relevant interaction terms, along with a number of controls, which include the content of the constituent’s speech, city fixed effects, the characteristics of the interviews, the presence of a particularly persistent constituent, and potential differences between two sets of coders.

Results from the Multilevel Models: Logit and Ordered Logit

Table 4.8 contains a variety of models that show how racial identities impact members' propensity toward recall of messages expressed by constituents in city council meetings. Table 4.8 reports the coefficients associated with each variable.

Table 4.8: The Effect of Race/Shared Racial Identity on “Disconnected” Listening

	Basic Model 1	Basic Model 2	Full Model 3	Full Model 4
White Constituent	-0.443 (0.334)	-0.549 (0.374)	-0.094 (0.312)	-0.152 (0.382)
Black Legislator	-----	-0.856 (0.792)	1.654** (0.807)	0.891 (1.125)
Asian Legislator	-----	0.726 (1.684)	-0.703 (0.566)	0.590 (1.513)
Black Legis. × White Const.	-----	0.708 (0.922)	-----	1.086 (1.017)
Asian Legis. × White Const.	-----	-1.129 (1.625)	-----	-1.432 (1.546)
Male Constituent	-----	-----	-0.156 (0.281)	-0.199 (0.284)
Male Legislator	-----	-----	0.563 (0.380)	0.523 (0.382)
Speak on Legislation	-----	-----	-0.556* (0.312)	-0.531* (0.313)
Same Opinion as Another Const.	-----	-----	0.361 (0.307)	0.346 (0.308)
Speak On Class	-----	-----	0.027 (0.347)	0.011 (0.348)
Speak on Race	-----	-----	0.254 (0.440)	0.296 (0.444)
Lone Gadfly	-----	-----	1.909*** (0.559)	1.954*** (0.562)
City B	-----	-----	-0.804** (0.404)	-0.816** (0.406)
City C	-----	-----	-1.880** (0.791)	-2.043** (0.828)
City D	-----	-----	-2.021* (1.164)	-1.458 (1.298)

Continued on next page

Table 4.8 Continued

	Basic Model 1	Basic Model 2	Full Model 1	Full Model 2
Student Coders	----	----	-2.027*** (0.547)	-1.970*** (0.545)
Days Elapsed	----	----	0.064 (0.056)	0.063 (0.056)
Interview Length	----	----	-0.014* (0.009)	-0.015* (0.009)
Constant	-0.855*** (0.329)	-0.674* (0.376)	-0.270 (0.707)	-0.165 (0.727)
Log Likelihood	-217.883	-216.913	-200.240	-199.156
Wald χ^2	1.760	3.700	39.070	40.450
Probability > χ^2	0.184	0.593	0.001	0.002
Observations	385	385	385	385

Notes: Entries are the coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logit model. The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator fails to recall or only minimally recalls a constituent's message (disconnected listening). Non-white constituent and White member are the reference categories. (The models only converged with these reference categories). The first model provides a simple test for whether or not overall, legislators are less likely to remember the messages of non-White constituents than of White constituents. The second model, which contains an interaction term between the constituent and legislator's race, provides a basic test to the inquiry of whether or not White legislators are less likely to engage in disconnected listening when the constituent speaking racially identifies as White than when otherwise. The third model contains all the relevant control variables but without the interaction terms and provides a more comprehensive test of the independent effect of White racial advantage. Likewise, the fourth model, which includes the constituent-member interaction terms, provides a more comprehensive test of whether or not White legislators are less likely to engage in disconnected listening when the constituent speaking shares the legislator's racial identity than when the constituent racially identifies as non-White. *p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01

Some of the results of the models align with several of my expectations. For example, I find that legislators are more likely to engage in disconnected listening when confronted with that one individual who repeatedly attends meetings to express the same message. On the other hand, there appears to be an inverse relationship between the propensity of a legislator to be assessed as a disengaged listener and the length of time of the legislator is willing or able to sit through the interview. Other statistically significant findings include the effect of different coders and different cities. Specifically, student research assistants are less likely to code legislators as engaging in disconnected listening than are assessors on Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Legislators in City B and City C are less likely to engage in disconnected listening than are the legislators in City A.

As for my primary variables of interest, I find no support for the expectation that legislators are less likely to recall the messages of non-White constituents than those of their White counterparts. I also find no confirmation for the expectation that White legislators are less likely to engage in disconnected listening in the presence of a White constituent than when listening to non-White constituents. Additionally I cannot reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between shared Black identity and a legislator's recall of constituent messages. (In another set of analyses not reported here, I compare a Black legislator's recall of Black constituents' messages to recall of messages from non-Black constituents). I also find no support for the expectation that Black legislators are less likely to engage in disconnected listening when the constituent speaking is non-White. On the other hand, the only race effect I find is that Black legislators are more likely than White legislators to forget or only minimally recall a constituent's message. Table 4.9 below reports results associated with the legislator's comprehension of messages.

Table 4.9: The Effect of Race/Shared Racial Identity on Message Comprehension

	Basic Model 1	Basic Model 2	Full Model 1	Full Model 2
White Constituent	-----	0.597* (0.335)	-0.030 (0.314)	0.240 (0.344)
Black Constituent	-0.188 (0.417)	-----	-----	-----
Other Minority Constituent	-0.409 (0.375)	-----	-----	-----
Black Legislator	-----	1.585** (0.772)	-0.292 (0.469)	0.640 (0.663)
Asian Legislator	-----	0.051 (1.885)	-0.131 (0.558)	-0.697 (1.812)
Black Legis. × White Const.	-----	-1.495* (0.778)	-----	-1.579** (0.764)
Asian Legis. × White Const.	-----	0.306 (1.749)	-----	0.551 (1.786)
Male Constituent	-----	-----	0.220 (0.262)	0.278 (0.264)
Male Legislator	-----	-----	-0.834*** (0.322)	-0.898*** (0.336)
Speak on Legislation	-----	-----	0.418 (0.263)	0.412 (0.264)
Same Opinion	-----	-----	-0.106 (0.256)	-0.025 (0.256)
Student Coders	-----	-----	1.722*** (0.429)	1.769*** (0.448)
Days Elapsed	-----	-----	-0.102** (0.050)	-0.101** (0.051)
Interview Length	-----	-----	-0.001 (0.009)	0.001 (0.009)
Cutpoint 1	-1.857*** (0.282)	-1.191*** (0.384)	-2.073*** (0.652)	-1.779*** (0.672)
Cutpoint 2	0.677*** (0.256)	1.365*** (0.384)	0.474 (0.643)	0.794 (0.665)
Log Likelihood	-380.354	-377.798	-369.296	-366.980
Wald χ^2	1.270	6.230	34.240	35.370
Probability > χ^2	0.531	0.285	0.000	0.000
Observations	385	385	385	385

Notes: Entries are the coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects ordered logit model. The dependent variable is understanding/comprehension of constituent messages (no/little understanding, moderate

understanding, high/very high understanding). Non-white constituents and White council members are the reference categories. The first model provides a simple test of the hypothesis that overall, legislators understand better the messages of White constituents than those of non-White constituents. The second model, which contains an interaction term between the constituent and legislator's race, provides a basic test to the hypothesis that the comprehension of constituent messages increases for White legislators when the constituent speaking racially identifies as White than when otherwise. (The variable in this model, *White Constituent*, reflects the interaction of a White constituent with a White council member). The third model contains all the relevant control variables but without the interaction terms and provides a more comprehensive test of the independent effect of White racial advantage. Likewise, the fourth model, which includes the constituent-member interaction terms, provides a more comprehensive test of Model 2. Cutpoint 1 is the estimated cutpoint on the latent variable used to differentiate no/very little comprehension from moderate and very/extremely high comprehension when the values of the independent variables are set at zero. Cutpoint 2 is the estimated cutpoint on the latent variable used to discern very/extremely high comprehension from moderate and no/very little comprehension when values of the independent variables are zero. Legislators having a value of cutpoint 2 or greater on the underlying latent variable giving rise to the comprehension variable would be classified as very/extremely high comprehension when the independent variables are evaluated at 0. Legislators having a value between cutpoint 1 and cutpoint 2 on the underlying latent variable would be classified as having moderate comprehension.³⁹ *p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01

Similar to the conclusions reached from the analyses of disconnected listening, I find that some results align with my expectations. For example, I find that the coding tendencies of student assessors also differ from those of evaluators on Amazon Mechanical Turk – specifically, the legislator's ordered log-odds of being placed in a higher comprehension category is increased if the coder is a student rather than an M Turk worker. (I will later discuss relevant results in terms of predicted probabilities). Interviews themselves also affect how legislators are evaluated, with the number of days elapsing from the council meeting to the interview, rather than the length of the interview, negatively affecting legislators being assessed in a higher comprehension category. Interestingly, I also find a statistically significant effect for gender – that being a male legislator decreases the log-odds of being placed in a higher category of comprehension.

While again, I find no statistically significant effects associated with shared racial identity, I do discover an interesting result - a statistically significant interaction effect between

³⁹ For a discussion of interpreting cutpoints associated with the results of ordered logit models please refer to the following website: STATA Annotated Output. UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group. from http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/output/stata_ologit_output.htm (accessed March 4, 2016).

Black legislators and non-White constituents (including non-Black minorities). Specifically, the log odds of a Black legislator being placed in a higher category of comprehending constituent messages increases when the constituent goes from being White to non-White. In other words, a Black legislator’s understanding of constituent messages increases when the constituent is non-White (compared to the constituent being White).

Because the coefficients of ordered logit models are difficult to interpret given that they are in log-odds, I calculate the predicted probability of a Black legislator being placed in each outcome category when the constituent is White compared to when the constituent is non-White, setting the control variables at theoretically meaningful values. The results are shown in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Predicted Probabilities of Each Outcome for Comprehension (When Legislator is Black)

	Not at All/Not Very Well	Moderately Well	Very Well/Extremely Well
White Constituents	0.351	0.497	0.152
Non-White Constituents	0.136	0.484	0.380
Difference in Probabilities	0.215 (0.121)	0.013 (0.100)	-0.228 (0.127)
p-value	0.076	0.898	0.074

Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Black legislator=1; male legislator=1 male constituent=1 M Turk coders=1, days elapsed=2; minutes=30; same opinion=0

The predicted probability of a Black legislator’s failure to understand or her marginal comprehension of a constituent’s message is 0.351 when the constituent is White but decreases to 0.136 when the constituent is non-White. This difference is not only statistically significant but substantively significant as well. While the predicted probabilities associated with a Black

legislator's moderate understanding of messages do not show statistically or substantively significant differences between non-White and White constituents, the differences are again statistically and substantively significant when considering the highest category of comprehension. Here, Black legislators are less likely to understand very well or extremely well the messages of Whites than those of non-Whites, as evidenced by the decrease in the probability ($\Delta=-0.228$) of highest comprehension when the constituent goes from being non-White to White. Furthermore, the magnitude of this difference is quite large.

Discussion of Results

In general, I neither find support for the expectation that shared racial identity between legislators and constituents positively affects the legislator's understanding or recall of constituent messages nor for the expectation that White constituents reap an advantage over their non-White counterparts in having their messages better understood or remembered by legislators. What I do find, however, seems to suggest that White constituents are disadvantaged in their interactions with Black legislators, namely in that Black legislators are more likely to understand non-White constituents than White constituents in the highest sense while also being less likely to misunderstand messages issued by non-White constituents than those issued by White constituents. Interestingly, I also find that Black legislators are more likely than White legislators to marginally constituent messages or fail to recall them.

What might explain the peculiar findings associated with Black legislators? Why are Black legislators, compared to White legislators, more likely to NOT remember or only minimally remember constituent messages? Part of the explanation might be linked with Black members' recall of constituent messages when it comes to different racial groups. As shown by

the coefficients associated with the interaction term (*White Constituent* × *Black legislator*) and the corresponding race variable, *White Constituent*, in Table 4.8, Black legislators appear more likely to forget or only slightly remember the messages of White constituents than those of their non-White counterparts (although this result is not statistically significant). White individuals also constitute slightly more than 75% of the data. Furthermore, Table 4.8 demonstrates that Black legislators are more likely than White legislators to forget or only minimally recall the messages of non-White constituents as well although, again, this finding is not statistically significant. While none of these results are statistically significant, when looked at in combination, they may explain why Black legislators, in general, are more likely than White legislators to engage in “disconnected” listening. Black legislators’ recall behavior might be affected by their reduced recollection (when compared to White legislators) of messages by non-White constituents, but it is probably more driven by their reduced recollection of White constituents’ messages relative to the messages from non-White constituents.

This leads to a discussion of a related point – the inquiry concerning why Black members are more likely to understand well the messages issued by non-White constituents than those given by White constituents and more likely to misunderstand or understand only minimally the messages of White constituents than those conveyed by their non-White counterparts. Perhaps shared experiences with racial marginalization and being a person of color in the United States propel Black members toward identification, sympathy, and/or empathy when listening to the views and experiences of non-White constituents speaking at public forums, even if the constituent’s statements have no bearing on race-related matters. Perhaps the Black legislators in this sample, who all grew up with working class backgrounds, relate less to the views of White constituents speaking at these meetings, especially those who may be more affluent.

While these speculations may be plausible explanations, it is too premature to conclude that Black legislators exhibit race-related differences in their comprehension of constituent messages given the small number of Black council members I interviewed. It may be the case that of the three members interviewed, one or two of these legislators are driving the results. Additionally, these council members may not constitute a representative sample of the myriad of Black legislators out there.

While it may be possible that racial identity does not affect a Black legislator's recall and comprehension of constituent messages, the statistically insignificant coefficients associated with White legislators also suggest that White legislators too may not be racially discriminating in their comprehension and recall of messages. Although as shown in previous chapter, White legislators spend a lesser proportion of time being distracted when White constituents speak than when their non-White counterparts do so, here, I find no support for the conjecture that they are more likely to forget what minority constituents say or understand less the messages of non-White constituents. Therefore, despite the differences in lived experiences between Whites and non-Whites, which may result in diverging perceptions of events and policy-related views between them, it is possible that, with the legislators I interviewed, these differences may not have much of a significant impact on the legislator's ability to properly interpret and understand messages. Null effects associated with the race variables may provide some relief to those who are concerned about the quality of representation and strive towards ensuring that voices from different racial groups are equally acknowledged. However, this project would certainly benefit from additional observations in order to make more conclusive claims.

Limitations and Future Research

This investigation into a specific aspect of the listening process does not come without limitations, some of which were already stated. The limited number of interviews and hence the limited number of observations not only preclude me from drawing more specific conclusions, but they may have also contributed to the incapacities of some of the models to converge. Hence, I had to construct more parsimonious models with a limited number of variables, or I was forced to reduce the categories of variables. Thus, future investigation would certainly benefit from additional interviews, especially with legislators who are non-White.

Additionally, I find that student workers had different assessments of listening than those of M Turk workers. Although I resorted to including a control variable for student coders, perhaps in the future, I may require that students assess all of the exercises. Additionally, a critic might counter that I should have asked the constituents themselves to rate the listening behavior of legislators since inevitably they are most aware of the messages they were attempting to convey and may be in a better position to assess who really understood them. While this is a fair criticism, it is unclear how many constituents would have agreed to speak with me. It is safe to assume that I would have failed to secure the cooperation of every constituent who spoke at these meetings. Therefore, I would have needed independent evaluators in any case to do the assessments on behalf of those who I did not interview. Additionally, for those constituents I would have interviewed, they may have been able to deduce whom I had interviewed even without my revelation of the source of the response. Exposing a legislator's negative responses about the messages from constituents who are being referenced may potentially damage their relationships with constituents.

Finally, my investigation into an uncharted territory yielded not only interesting results concerning racial differences, but those regarding gender differences as well. I find that men understand less the messages of constituents than do women legislators. While this finding may not be surprising to some researchers given the existing work on the differences in the communicative styles between men and women (Tannen 1991), more research should be conducted to explain and elucidate this gender difference and to determine whether this difference is heightened under certain conditions. Equally important is the need to investigate the effects of intersectional identities on message comprehension and interpretation. Given my limited dataset, I was unable to do so.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter elucidates an important component of the listening process, for in order to respond and act on a constituent's request, a legislator should be able to properly interpret, contextualize, and hence understand the constituent's message. Failure to do any of these may result in instances where no action is taken or where the improper action is pursued. Also, racial differences in comprehension may compound these problems. Fortunately, the results here suggest that with some exceptions, race might not affect a legislator's ability to comprehend and recall constituent messages. Those concerned with the political representation of traditionally marginalized groups may breathe a sigh of relief in hearing this. However, this sigh may be a bit premature, as additional studies should follow up on this investigation, which to date, has not been preceded by similar studies in political science. Additionally, while the results in this chapter provide limited support for the expectation that there is a relationship between race and message comprehension and this support comes from a very limited number of Black legislators, the previous chapter on non-verbal communication gives stronger evidence of race-related

differences that is a potentially worrisome. Moreover, as I will show in the next two chapters, under certain conditions, race and shared racial identity does have a statistically and substantively significant effect on the responses council members issue to constituents during public meetings.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF RACE ON LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIVENESS

“You know, I was always taught that if somebody says something to you, you need to respond.”
-Council Woman from City B

In an interview I had with the council woman referenced above, she recounted the time when she had recommended to other members of the Council that they set aside a segment during city council meetings where members would respond to constituents who speak during the general public comment period. She informed me that prior to her suggestion, members gave no “feedback” to constituents speaking during the general public comment period.⁴⁰ This council member, however, is not the only legislator to acknowledge the importance of responding to constituents who take the time to be physically present at public meetings to address their local legislators. After a group of constituents had expressed their concerns about a snow removal ordinance during a council meeting in another city where I was a participant observer, a member made an effort to assure her constituents that council members were listening to them by issuing the following statement to the public:

The beauty of having a public forum is really hearing from the public...we are really taking into consideration your feedback on this policy, and this policy is being addressed in the public service committee, so I do want you to know that *you are being heard* (my emphasis).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Council Member from City B, Personal Interview, May 22, 2014.

⁴¹ Statement made during the Council Communications portion of City C’s council meeting in the month of November 2014.

Additionally, a legislator from a different city made a similar gesture to recognize politically active constituents during a council meeting by exhorting his fellow members to listen to speakers, especially since a number of them have, for many years, dedicated the time and effort to learn about the problems confronting the city, problems encompassing issues such as public housing, recreation, sustainability, the environment, the parks, and more.⁴² While these statements do not respond to a specific constituent concern, they do reflect the members' recognition of the constituents' desires to have their spoken messages acknowledged.

In the previous chapter, I stated that listening can be defined as the “active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and *responding* to the expressed (verbal and nonverbal) needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings” (Purdy 1997, p. 11). Thus, an integral component in the listening process is the response to the information received. Responding to a message can be internal, integrating what has been understood and internally commenting on it (ibid.). Responding to messages might include finding the messages persuasive or compelling or, on the other hand, finding the messages unconvincing. Additionally, a response can be external such as (in the context of representation) the legislator replying to constituents' concerns during a public meeting or even taking action on those concerns. This chapter focuses on the external response component that occurs in council meetings because external responses are not only observable to the constituent speaking but they are also discernable to and can be evaluated by the interested researcher. Specifically, this chapter analyzes and discusses the role of racial identities in the legislator's propensity to issue responses to constituent messages.

⁴² Statements made during the Council Communications portion of City A's council meeting in the month of June 2012.

Why is A Verbal Response So Important?

As mentioned previously, there are various ways an individual can demonstrate that she is listening. For example, she can nod, make non-verbal utterances, maintain eye contact with the speaker, or provide a meaningful response. In this chapter, I look specifically at the dimension of verbal responsiveness. While an oral response is not a comprehensive measure of listening, looking at legislative responses to constituent concerns in face-to-face interactions is important for various reasons. The representative navigates the complex realities of fulfilling different roles that go beyond being a mere trustee, and these roles may prevent her from complying with the wishes of her constituents from time to time. When citizens express disagreement in a public forum with their legislators, legislators may sometimes clarify or explain their actions without necessarily agreeing with the views of the constituency. Thus, a response from elected officials to constituents may be a way of facilitating understanding between the two. Furthermore, member responses potentially prevent misinformation from being disseminated especially when members reply to rectify erroneous information provided by constituents during a public meeting. Thus, response is taken to include the legislator's expressions of agreement or disagreement with, or neutrality to, the constituent's spoken viewpoint.

Furthermore, when constituents expend their resources (time and money) to attend public meetings to voice their concerns on an issue, they expect, at the very least, that they will be heard even if their preferences do not come to fruition. Given the structure of some of the public meetings and *from the constituent's standpoint*, a direct response is one of the few ways to gauge whether or not the legislator was paying attention to him. For example, one council structures meetings so that comments on non-legislative matters are at the conclusion of the meetings,

which inevitably makes council members' responses to constituent messages almost rare. There is no period after this comment period in which council members can respond to constituents, and thus the only way to do so is to take a "point of privilege" to respond immediately after the constituent has spoken. However, not every speaking constituent will be at the receiving end of this "point of privilege."

On the other hand, for those councils that do reserve a portion of the meeting to responding to public comments on non-legislative matters, members neither interrupt nor respond to a constituent immediately after the constituent has spoken; rather they wait until all constituents have spoken in order to respond. Thus, the time lapse between the constituent's comments and the opportunity to respond almost guarantees that some constituents will not receive a response. Also, some council members make more of a conscious effort than others to address constituent concerns.

A response then not only affirms that the constituent was heard but more importantly that he was worth the effort of a reply. Also, for constituents who regularly attend and actively participate in public meetings but are continuously denied this affirmation, they may feel frustrated, perceive themselves as being disrespected, and question the efficacy of their political participation. Therefore, one relevant question to ask is: What patterns, if any, do the non-responses exhibit? More specifically, under what circumstances does the racial identity of both constituents and legislators play a role in the disparity of legislative responses?

Hypotheses

As elaborated on in Chapter 2, there is some evidence to suggest that under certain conditions during non-public correspondences between legislators and constituents, some "voices" do not receive as much consideration as others. Specifically, evidence shows that

similarities in racial identity play a non-negligible role in how representatives respond to written forms of communications from their constituents. For example, in a field experiment where Butler and Broockman (2011) sent the same emails, ostensibly from genuine constituents, to state legislators but varied the constituents' names associated with the emails, they find that White state legislators are more likely to respond to email communications from constituents they perceived as White than those they perceived as Black. Meanwhile, the same study also finds that minority legislators are more likely to respond to constituents they perceived as being Black than those they perceived as being White. Therefore, convergence in racial identity (at least for White legislators) seems to play a role in how state legislators, or whoever is responsible in their office for responding to their e-mails, “listen” to their constituents in the figurative sense. Also, evidence from a similar experiment suggests that state administrators responsible for providing election information to the public too engage in discrimination, providing fewer and lower quality responses to constituents with Latino-sounding names than to those with White aliases (White, Faller, and Nathan 2015).

However, these studies do not address the possible outcomes that may emerge when constituents and legislators meet face-to-face. Additionally, Butler and Broockman's study doesn't preclude the possibility that staff members, rather than legislators, are responding to the constituents. Do these findings, which are about private email communications between individuals extend to face-to-face public interactions? There are features of public meetings – namely the transparency and accessibility of meetings – that are absent in the contexts examined by the studies referenced above, and these features may induce elites to monitor their behavior. Thus, race-related differences in legislative behavior may be reduced in public meetings compared to communicative settings that are more or less private.

Despite the transparency of these public meetings, however, elites may still behave in ways that resemble their private conduct, but race-based differences exhibited during public forum correspondences might be substantially lessened relative to those in correspondences that are not easily accessible to the public, such as email communication. The differences might even only occur minimally when actions are viewable to the public, or it might be manifested only under specific conditions. However, the point of this project is not to conjecture about the differences between public and private communications concerning the magnitude of race-related effects. The goal of this chapter is to investigate whether or not there is a race effect on legislative responses in public meetings.

I hypothesize that race-related influences on elite behavior nonetheless manifest themselves in public forums. As alluded to in Chapter 2, legislators may be driven to be more responsive to constituents out of a preference for members of their racial group, and this preference may be motivated by a range of factors, including but not limited to, the comfort that is associated with the familiarity of interacting with individuals who racially identify with the legislator and a sense of affinity to constituents like them. For White legislators, differences in responses may also be motivated by feelings of indifference toward minority groups. For non-White legislators, shared experiences with marginalization and/or the desire to elevate the position of the group may motivate them to respond to constituents who share their racial identity than to those who racially identify otherwise. Alternatively, shared racial identity might drive discriminating responses because legislators might perceive constituents who racially identify with them as their primary financial and electoral supporters. Therefore, I propose one of the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 5: Despite the transparency of public forums, legislators (White and Black) are more likely to respond to constituents who share their racial identity than to those who do not share their racial identity.*⁴³

Furthermore, whether or not legislators *generally* respond more to constituents who share their racial identity than to those who identify otherwise, there may be *specific* conditions under which the race of the constituent heightens or reduces responsiveness. For example, racial identity may affect the propensity of legislators to respond to certain speech content of constituents. Previously, I mentioned that, in general, White legislators are less likely than minority legislators to support the substantive interests of minority constituents, which usually translates into reduced support for race-related policies. This reduced support may play a role in their responsiveness to statements about race. Alternatively, White legislators may respond less to comments about race for strategic reasons – they fear backlash from the White electorate who may perceive them as being disproportionately concerned with race-related or racially polarizing matters. Given these possibilities, I propose the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 5A: In public forums, White legislators are generally less likely to respond to individuals who make race-based or racialized comments than to those who make comments unrelated to issues about race.

*Hypothesis 5B: In public forums, White legislators are less likely to respond when **minorities** make race-based or racialized comments than when they make comments unrelated to issues about race.*

Also, race may affect the influence of other speech content on legislative responsiveness. One of the primary functions of city councils is to discuss and pass local legislation, and consequently, constituents come to council meetings to speak about prospective local ordinances

⁴³ This hypothesis and those that follow pertain only to Black and White legislators and constituents since Whites comprise the largest number of observations in the data while Blacks (both legislators and constituents) constitute the largest number of racial minorities in the data.

and resolutions. As previously discussed, studies have found that White legislators are less likely than minority legislators to advocate for the policy/legislative issues important to minority constituents. Thus, it is possible that this difference in support might play out in local public forums when constituents express their positions on a proposed policy, especially when it is contentious and/or racially polarizing. However, on some legislative issues, minority constituents do at times express positions similar to those of White constituents. Furthermore, they also speak on issues that are presumably race-neutral in content. In these situations, are legislators still more likely to respond to constituents sharing their race? Because constituent positions on legislative matters may vary substantially, it is difficult to speculate whether or not race-related considerations will affect responsiveness. Thus, rather than propose a hypothesis, I ask the following question:

Question 5: In general, when constituents speak about legislative issues, are legislators more likely to respond to constituents who share their race than to those who racially identify otherwise?

Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, racial homophily may be insufficient to achieve the policy outcomes desired by racial minorities, and thus shared racial identity might be inadequate for motivating minority legislators to be responsive to minority constituents. Thus, political elites generally might be less responsive to members of traditionally marginalized groups than to members of more socially advantaged groups. Given the power differential that might exist between White legislators and their minority counterparts in a given legislative body, minority members might be less responsive to non-White constituents than to White constituents. Furthermore, minority members might assume that they already know the views of their minority constituents and hence be less likely to listen or respond to them. Alternatively, minority

legislators might be more likely to respond to minority constituents, but overall, their responsiveness might be overshadowed by the lack of responsiveness from White legislators.

Thus, I propose another hypothesis.

Hypothesis 6: In public forums, racial minorities will be less likely to elicit a legislative response than individuals belonging to more socially advantaged groups, such as Whites.

On the other hand, even if evidence fails to show an independent effect with respect to racial identity, race-related differences in responses may emerge depending on the conditions. Therefore, the conjecture concerning conditional responses is equally valid here, and I propose the following hypotheses and question.

Hypothesis 6A: In public forums, individuals who make racialized or race-based comments will be less likely to elicit a legislative response than those who make comments unrelated to race.

*Hypothesis 6B: In public forums, **minorities** who make racialized or race-based statements will be less likely to elicit a legislative response than minorities who speak about topics that are not race-related.*

Question 6: In public forums, are legislators generally less likely to respond to racial minorities than to Whites when these constituents speak about legislative matters?

Data

Overview of Sites

To test these hypotheses, I analyzed an original dataset constructed from observations of the council meetings of three cities in southeast Michigan from 2012-2014 and from review of official public records of these meetings. The sites providing data for this chapter are also the same sites described in Chapters 3 and 4. However, one important difference is that the meetings

of City D were not analyzed for this chapter. The feasibility of City D as a site for data collection and analysis came to my attention during the final stages of analyzing data for the response component of this project. Thus, while analyses of meetings and legislator interview responses associated with City D are included in the previous chapters, they are absent here. Below are the tables (from Chapter 3) that provide information on demographic characteristics of the residents and councils of City A, B, and C. As mentioned previously, while City A, City B, and possibly City C show little variation in the partisanship make-up of the councils, there is variation in terms of the councils' gender and racial composition.

Table 5.1: Demographic Information for Councils (Excluding City D)

	<i>Council Size</i>	<i>Racial Composition</i>	<i>Gender Composition</i>	<i>Partisanship</i>
City A	11 Members	1 Asian 10 Whites	6 females 5 males	10 Democrats 1 Independent
City B	7 Members	2 Blacks 5 Whites	2 Females 5 Males	7 Democrats
City C	8 Members	3 Blacks 5 Whites	7 Females 1 Male	At-Large Council

Table 5.2: Demographic Information for Cities (Excluding City D)

	<i>Population</i>	<i>Racial Composition</i>	<i>Median Household Income</i>	<i>Citizen Participation in Council Meetings</i>
City A	Midsize	70% White 30% Minorities	Above State Median	40% Women 9% Minorities
City B	Small	61% White 39% Minorities	Below State Median	29% Women 37% Minorities
City C	Midsize	49% White 51% Minorities	Below State Median	30% Women 13% Minorities

Description of the Data

The dataset contains 2,538 observations from an analysis of 36 different council meetings occurring between 2012 – 2014 (15 from City A, 14 from City B, and from 7 from City C). Although there are some overlapping observations with those in the dataset of Chapter 3, overall

this dataset is distinct from the data in that chapter. The 2,538 observations come from 224 constituents and 32 public officials.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ Again, the unit of analysis is the dyadic relationship between each constituent who speaks and each council member present who potentially listens to the information.⁴⁶ From the 2,538 observations, 2,013 are from White constituents and 525 are from non-White constituents (395 from Black constituents, 40 from Asian constituents, 34 from Latino constituents, and 56 from minority constituents who are not Black, Asian, or Latino). Also, from the 2,538 observations, 2,044 are from the 26 White public officials, 429 are from the 5 Black council members (2 from City B and 3 from City C), and 65 are from the only Asian council member, who is in City A.

Methods

Dependent Variables

In this chapter, I only look at legislative responses to *individual* constituents, not to groups of constituents.⁴⁷ The dependent variable is a dichotomy: whether or not each council member responds to a constituent or specifically acknowledges his claims either during council communications or during discussions on specific resolutions.⁴⁸ Instances where elites do not

⁴⁴ For one council meeting of City C, I include the responses of the executive assistant (equivalent to the position of a city manager) because during a particular meeting, he took a significant amount of time responding to the constituents' concerns about a particular ordinance. I exclude Constituent #1 from the analyses because this constituent speaks at every council meeting in City A and almost never elicits a response. He constitutes about 10% of the data – 321 observations - but only received a total of 3 responses from legislators. However, I also conduct a separate set of analyses (not reported here) that include observations associated with Constituent #1 but exclude those associated with the city manager. I find that the results remain robust with respect to the main results of this chapter.

⁴⁵ Because there is only one Asian legislator in the dataset as well as a small number of observations associated with non-Black minorities, I exclude these observations from some of the analyses in this chapter.

⁴⁶ Council members who are absent during the meetings are not included in the analysis.

⁴⁷ Due to the complexity of the coding and an equally complicated analysis, I explore in next chapter the effect of racial identity on legislative responses to groups of individuals expressing a common view.

⁴⁸ Originally, the dependent variable was an ordinal variable capturing four types of reactions that constituents may elicit from the elites: 0) no response 1) very minimal acknowledgment that does not indicate legislative attention to relevant information 2) acknowledgment of the constituent's concerns and 3) acknowledgment of the constituent's concerns accompanied by acting upon the constituent's request or declaring an intention to do so. However, only a

respond at all or only minimally react to the constituent's statement are coded as "0". Minimal reaction means that the legislator does no more than acknowledge the constituent by name and thank him personally for speaking.⁴⁹ Higher order responses are coded as "1." In a higher order response, the legislator expresses a statement that acknowledges the constituent's concerns, such as declaring an intent to comply with a constituent's request, clarifying her position on an issue raised by the constituent, or informing the constituent that although she understands his concern, she does not agree with his message, and so on.

The following interactions (taken from my observations of public meetings) constitute examples of higher order responses. For purposes of brevity, the constituent's comments and the member's response are summarized briefly rather than provided word-for-word, especially since some of the constituents' statements and legislators' responses are quite verbose.

- Example 1: A constituent rebukes the Council for not adequately addressing the problems of global warming. Later during the meeting, a council member expresses his appreciation for the various elements of Mr. X's "forward-looking views" and adds that he hopes Mr. X will "come back and listen to [the city's] sustainability plan."
- Example 2: During his comments on a pending local ordinance that details an arrangement between the city, a housing commission under scrutiny, and the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Office, a community lawyer suggests to council members that they request from the housing commission a written chronology of events that led to its troubled status. Later on, a council member responds, asserting that she agrees with the lawyer, and urges the Council to include in the resolution a formal request to the housing commission to submit a report detailing the chronology of events leading up to its current situation.

few observations are associated with some of the levels (particularly level 3), which may prevent a regression analysis from yielding meaningful results if a 4-level dependent variable were to be used. Therefore, I collapse this ordinal variable into a binary variable.

⁴⁹ This simple acknowledgment provides no indication that the member had actually attended to and processed the information. For example, she goes no further than expressing a statement such as "I would like to thank Mr. Smith for his comments."

In the instances described, a typical observer is able to determine with certainty that the member is responding to a constituent either when the member specifically names the constituent or provides sufficient context that enables observers to ascertain what or who the member is referring to. Overall, there are 148 (5.83%) responses to individual comments out of the 2,538 instances where members could have offered a reply.

While the number of responses seems quite low, this dependent variable only accounts for instances in which a typical observer is able to determine with certainty that the member is responding to a constituent either when the member specifically names the constituent or provides some context that enables observers to ascertain what or who the member is referring to. In other instances, however, observers may not be able to properly discern whether there is a response. In these instances, members may, *without referring to a particular constituent*, agree with an opinion expressed by him during a council meeting, or she may reiterate the view to disagree with it. Therefore, the observer has no way of ascertaining if her statement reflects her own opinion uninfluenced by constituent opinion, if it was triggered by what the constituent had said, or if it indicates that she had actually heard the constituent's message during the public comment period and is responding to it. Nonetheless, these statements are important because an argument can be made that from the constituent's perspective, at least his concerns were being addressed. These "ambiguous" statements deserve consideration even if these statements cannot be properly and unequivocally understood as "explicit" responses.

Therefore, I construct two dependent variables (both dummy variables): 1) "explicit" responses, which include direct, meaningful responses to individual constituents and 2) "substantive" responses, *which encompass not only "explicit" responses but also members' statements that address an issue raised by the constituent during the meeting but makes no*

explicit reference to the constituent. The number of substantive responses remains low – 245 (9.65%) compared to 2293 non-responses – but not surprisingly, it exceeds the number of explicit responses alone. Thus, while the “explicit” measure potentially undercounts legislative responses, the “substantive” measure potentially overcounts them. The following interactions constitute examples of indirect responses:

- Example 1: A constituent expresses opposition to the construction of a new train station near the parklands, arguing that given the city’s “financial issues,” the local government should instead divert the funds set aside for the train station to “essential services.” Later during the meeting, the mayor asks the city administrator to clarify whether or not essential services would be compromised if the government decided to proceed with the construction of the train station.
- Example 2: A constituent urges city council members to support a symbolic resolution that would declare the city’s opposition to Michigan’s version of Stand Your Ground (SYG) laws. In her opinion, SYG laws overturn the century-old common law tradition that demands a duty to retreat from violent confrontation in public spaces. Later during the meeting, a council member affirms her support for the resolution, stating that SYG laws “fly in the face of common law.” However, she makes no reference to the constituent’s arguments.

In the examples above, the council member who issues a statement that affirms or addresses the constituent’s concerns makes no explicit reference to the constituent or his/her comments. Therefore, the observer cannot, with certainty, deduce that the legislator is responding to the constituent. These statements may constitute evidence that the member has heard the constituent’s opinions and thus recognizes his/her concerns. Alternatively, they may be mere reflections of the member’s own views or responses to other council members rather than to constituents. On the other hand, they may be part of a more intricate scenario that involves responses to or acknowledgments of the opinions of both constituents and other council

members. Whatever these statements reflect, they are nonetheless important to consider in the analyses.

Independent Variables

The constituent and member's race are the main variables of interest. As I will later explain, in some analyses, the race of the legislator (as well as the constituent) is a three-category variable, while in other analyses, the race variable is a dummy variable that compares Black and White legislators/constituents. The reference categories for these variables are White legislators and White constituents. To examine the effects of shared racial identity, I construct a variable capturing the interaction between the legislator and constituent's race. To test the hypotheses and answer inquiries concerning conditional effects, I include two-way and three-way interaction terms that account for the possible relationship between race/shared racial identity and speech on race-related topics (*Speak on Race*) or between race/shared racial identity and speech on legislative issues (*Speak on Legislation*).

I include a number of the same control variables utilized in the previous chapters. I control for the legislator and constituent's gender. Additionally, I include controls for the constituent's speech content (besides those of race-related and legislative matters) and for how the speeches are expressed. Specifically, I control for whether or not the constituent speaks on a legislative matter that is a dominant or contentious topic for that particular meeting (the issue generates both significant constituent opposition and/or council debate – *Speak on Dominant Topic*). Presumably, a legislator might be more likely to respond if a constituent speaks on a legislative matter that constitutes a source of significant council conversation for the evening.⁵⁰ I

⁵⁰ The “dominant topic” variable also serves as a proxy variable for dates, which, for reasons discussed in the previous chapter, is not treated as a random effect.

also incorporate a variable for constituent speech on class issues (*Speak on Class*) since legislators might perceive class issues as being tied to race issues.⁵¹ Also, individuals of one racial group may be more likely than those of another to speak about class issues. Another dichotomous control variable captures the propensity of constituents to express an opinion that is similar to a view asserted by another constituent during the same meeting (*Same Opinion as Another Constituent*). This control variable also accounts for whether or not the constituent comes to speak as a member of a group. All else equal, council members may be less likely to listen and hence respond to this individual if they hear an opinion mentioned more than once and especially if they hear it repeatedly. Finally, I include a dummy variable for the city where the council meetings are held. As explained in the previous chapter, I treat the city variable as a fixed effect rather a random or second level effect because the cities are not drawn from a random selection of cities. Furthermore, given the differences between the three cities, especially in the racial composition of the councils and the politically active constituencies, the “city” variables may not only influence legislative responsiveness but also the racial dynamics of that responsiveness.

A Multilevel Model of Legislative Responses

As previously mentioned, the unit of analysis in the data is the dyadic relationship between each constituent who speaks and each council member present who potentially receives the information. These observations are not independent, for both councilpersons and constituents are members of several dyads. Constituents are not so much nested in a particular member and vice versa; rather citizens and members are crossed with one another. Thus, the

⁵¹ Again, constituent messages on class issues may include, but are not limited to, statements on homelessness and affordable housing, request for assistance to protect the most vulnerable citizens of society, and so on.

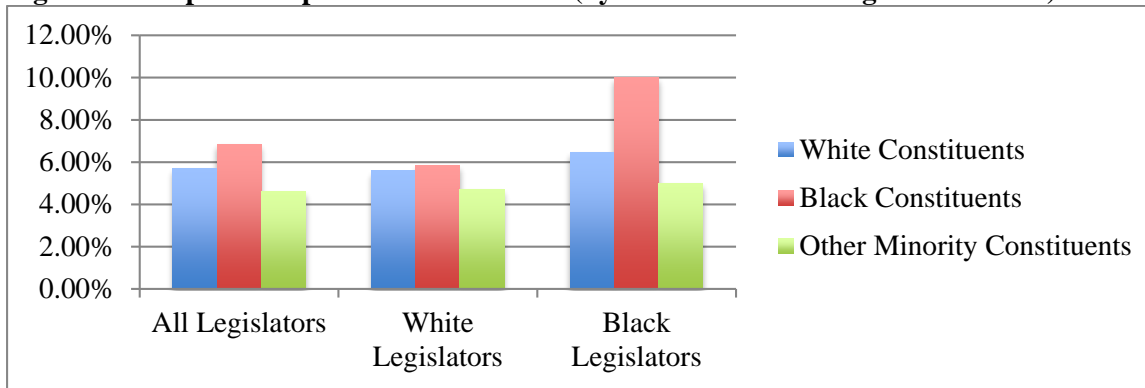
most appropriate model to use would be a crossed random effects logit model, where local legislators and constituents are both treated as random effects.

Summary of Findings

Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Individuals

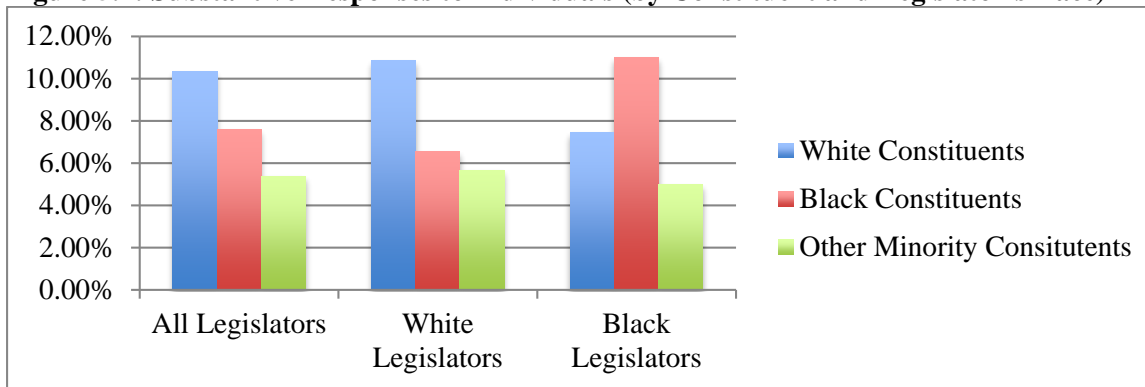
Presenting the data in the most basic, preliminary form can reveal whether or not there are differences between the rates at which council members respond to various racial groups.⁵²

Figure 5.1: Explicit Responses to Individuals (by Constituent and Legislator’s Race)



Pearson χ^2 : all legislators (1.127, Pr = 0.569); White legislators (0.194, Pr = 0.908); Black legislators (1.557, Pr = 0.459)

Figure 5.2: Substantive Responses to Individuals (by Constituent and Legislator’s Race)



Pearson χ^2 : all legislators (5.701, Pr = 0.058); White legislators (7.421, Pr = 0.024); Black legislators (1.555, Pr = 0.460)

⁵² Appendix K contains tables with the total number of responses (along with the corresponding percentages), separated by race of the constituent and legislator.

Figure 5.1 reports the total number of *explicit* responses that individuals receive from council members (also evaluated separately by race). Unexpectedly, by raw percentages alone, Black constituents appear to be more advantaged than their White counterparts in eliciting explicit responses from legislators, even from White legislators (although this difference is small). Moreover, they appear to reap a larger advantage when speaking to Black council members. However, none of these differences are statistically significant. On the other hand, when looking at *substantive* responses (both explicit and indirect responses), legislators (in the aggregate) appear more likely to respond to, address, or reiterate the concerns of White constituents compared to constituents who are racial minorities. Furthermore, Figure 5.2 also shows (by raw percentages alone) that legislators are more likely to be responsive (in the substantive sense) to constituents who share their identities than to those who do not. However, the only statistically significant difference is associated with White legislators.

Crossed Random Effects Models for Legislative Responses to Individuals

While initially informative, the proportion of responses and the reported significance levels associated with these comparisons neither account for the absence of other covariates nor for the non-independence of observations. Thus, the crossed random effects logistic regression can better determine whether or not these differences are statistically significant. Furthermore, if they are indeed significant, the logistic regression will also be able to demonstrate the magnitude of the variation in responses when a constituent belongs to one racial group as opposed to another. Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 contain various models that show how racial identities impact members' responses to constituents speaking at public meetings. Table 5.3 reports the results associated with the explicit responses of all legislators (not separated by race). Table 5.5 reports the results associated with the substantive responses of all legislators. Table 5.4 reports

the results associated with the effect of shared racial identity and the conditional effects of race on explicit responses. Table 5.6 reports these effects for substantive responses.

The models in Tables 5.4 and 5.6 do not include observations associated with the only Asian legislator because these models determine the effect of shared racial identity and the conditions under which shared racial identity influences legislative responsiveness, and there is an insufficient number of Asian constituents to draw any meaningful conclusions for Asian legislators. Furthermore, in Models 5 of Tables 5.4 and 5.6, which determines whether or not shared racial identity affects responsiveness to concerns about legislative matters, I exclude non-Black minorities from the analyses and thus reduce the analyses to a comparison between Whites and Blacks (legislators and constituents). Excluding non-Black constituents from part of the investigation does not affect the results I largely find. For the most part, the coefficients associated with non-Black minority constituent variables are not statistically significant.

Table 5.3: The Effect of Race on Council Member *Explicit* Responses (All Members)

	(1) The Effect of Race	(2) The Effect of Race	(3) Speak about Legislation
Black Constituent	-0.316 (0.397)	-0.222 (0.410)	0.793 (0.530)
Other Minority Constituent	-0.291 (0.622)	0.064 (0.616)	1.142 (0.863)
Male Constituent	-----	0.094 (0.283)	0.084 (0.285)
Black Legislator	-----	0.201 (0.401)	0.201 (0.405)
Asian Legislator	-----	0.668 (0.891)	0.669 (0.897)
Male Legislator	-----	0.622* (0.325)	0.620* (0.328)
Speak on Legislation	-----	0.024 (0.295)	0.382 (0.247)
Black Constituent × Speak on Legislation	-----	-----	-1.975*** (0.716)
Other Minority Const. × Speak on Legislation	-----	-----	-1.910 (1.181)
Speak on Race	-----	-0.586 (0.465)	-0.413 (0.471)
Speak on Class	-----	-0.207 (0.443)	-0.295 (0.447)
Dominant Topic	-----	0.714** (0.299)	0.739** (0.302)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	-----	-1.044*** (0.268)	-0.926*** (0.271)

Continued on next page

Table 5.3 Continued

	(1) The Effect of Race	(2) The Effect of Race	(3) Speak about Legislation
City A	-----	-0.459 (0.442)	-0.528 (0.441)
City C	-----	-0.236 (0.501)	-0.206 (0.506)
Constant	-3.498*** (0.226)	-3.261*** (0.513)	-3.546*** (0.533)
Log likelihood	-518.699	-503.804	-498.824
χ^2 Wald	0.790	28.650	35.440
Prob> χ^2	0.673	0.007	0.002
# of Observations	2538	2538	2538

Notes: The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator issues an explicit response. Entries are coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. Reference categories are White constituent, White legislator, and City B. The first two models test the hypothesis that, overall, minority constituents are less likely to elicit a response than their White counterparts. The first column contains the basic model, in which race of the constituent is the only independent variable. The second column includes the relevant control variables. Model 3 tests whether or not legislators are less likely to respond to non-White constituents than to White constituents when constituents speak about legislative matters. *p<0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

Table 5.4: The Effect of Race on Council Member *Explicit* Responses (Shared Racial Identity and Conditional Effects)

	(1) Shared Racial Identity	(2) Shared Racial Identity	(3) Speaking on Race	(4) Speaking on Race	(5) Speaking on Legislation
Black Constituent	-0.549 (0.438)	-0.477 (0.455)	-0.211 (0.414)	-0.073 (0.494)	0.550 (0.572)
Other Minority Constituent	-0.289 (0.667)	0.039 (0.664)	0.016 (0.620)	0.054 (0.689)	-----
Male Constituent	-----	0.142 (0.286)	0.136 (0.287)	0.127 (0.288)	0.138 (0.294)
Black Legislator	0.090 (0.423)	-0.009 (0.439)	-0.062 (0.432)	-0.331 (0.478)	0.026 (0.619)
Male Legislator	-----	0.654** (0.332)	0.664** (0.339)	0.691** (0.344)	0.717** (0.324)
Speak on Legislation	-----	0.016 (0.298)	-0.001 (0.300)	0.004 (0.302)	0.426 (0.355)
Speak on Race	-----	-0.575 (0.478)	-1.344** (0.587)	-0.754 (0.692)	-0.556 (0.493)
Speak on Class	-----	-0.137 (0.444)	0.170 (0.446)	-0.213 (0.446)	-0.029 (0.451)
Dominant Topic	-----	0.722** (0.302)	0.732** (0.304)	0.727** (0.309)	0.781** (0.310)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	-----	-1.029*** (0.270)	-1.037*** (0.271)	-0.990*** (0.271)	-0.861*** (0.273)
City A	-----	-0.492 (0.449)	-0.455 (0.459)	-0.429 (0.467)	-0.641 (0.439)
City C	-----	-0.206 (0.508)	-0.155 (0.518)	-0.103 (0.526)	-0.204 (0.500)
Black Constituent × Black Legislator	0.800 (0.578)	0.837 (0.577)	-----	1.135* (0.635)	0.827 (0.818)
Other Minority Const. × Black Legislator	0.164 (1.296)	0.310 (1.274)	-----	-12.588 (574.253)	-----
Black Legislator × Speak on Race	-----	-----	2.171*** (0.717)	2.557*** (0.875)	-----
Black Constituent × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	-1.733 (1.333)	-----
Other Minority Const. × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	-10.339 (318.911)	-----
Black Constituent × Black Legislator × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	-1.596 (1.750)	-----
Other Minority Const. × Black Legislator × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	22.987 (615.141)	-----

Continued on next page

Table 5.4 Continued

	(1) Shared Racial Identity	(2) Shared Racial Identity	(3) Speaking on Race	(4) Speaking on Race	(5) Speaking on Legislation
Black Legislator × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	-0.086 (0.635)
Black Constituent × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	-2.052** (0.820)
Other Minority Const. × Speak on Legis.	----	----	----	----	----
Black Constituent × Black Legislator × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	0.161 (1.201)
Other Minority Const. × Black Legislator × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	----
Constant	-3.5088*** (0.239)	-3.279*** (0.519)	-3.301*** (0.527)	-3.358*** (0.537)	-3.604*** (0.534)
Log Likelihood	-506.126	-491.839	-488.247	-482.862	-466.338
χ Wald ²	3.020	29.370	34.570	40.080	35.260
Prob> χ^2	0.697	0.009	0.001	0.003	0.002
N	2473	2473	2473	2473	2347

Notes: The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator issues an *explicit* response. Entries are coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. The main reference categories are White constituent, White legislator, and City B. The purpose of Model 1 is to provide a basic test on whether or not White and Black legislators are more likely to respond to individuals who share their racial identity than to those who racially identify otherwise. Model 2 tests this hypothesis with the control variables. Model 3 tests the hypothesis that White legislators are less likely to respond to constituents who speak about race than to those who speak about matters unrelated to race. While Model 3 tests the effect of race-related speech on Black legislators' responsiveness, it also tests its effect on the responsiveness of White legislators since the *Speak on Race* variable in this model reflects the condition under which the legislator is not Black. Model 4 tests the conditional hypothesis that White legislators are less likely to respond *to minority constituents when they speak about race-related issues than when they speak about non-racialized matters*. Model 5 examines the condition that White and Black legislators are more likely to respond to constituents who share their racial identity than to those who belong to another racial group *when constituents address council members on legislative matters*. Also, Model 5 excludes observations associated with non-Black minority constituents, and thus, the analysis is a comparison between only Black and White legislators/constituents. *p<0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

Table 5.5: The Effect of Race on Council Member *Substantive* Responses (All Members)

	(1) The Effect of Race	(2) The Effect of Race	(3) Speak about Legislation
Black Constituent	-0.713* (0.421)	-0.383 (0.423)	0.931* (0.555)
Other Minority Constituent	-0.702 (0.651)	-0.252 (0.623)	0.970 (0.916)
Male Constituent	-----	0.196 (0.278)	0.179 (0.279)
Black Legislator	-----	-0.016 (0.401)	-0.016 (0.404)
Asian Legislator	-----	0.236 (0.811)	0.237 (0.816)
Male Legislator	-----	0.326 (0.301)	0.322 (0.304)
Speak on Legislation	-----	0.708** (0.283)	1.128*** (0.321)
Black Constituent × Speak on Legislation	-----	-----	-2.326*** (0.709)
Other Minority Const. × Speak on Legislation	-----	-----	-1.960* (1.165)
Speak on Race	-----	-0.495 (0.443)	-0.327 (0.449)
Speak on Class	-----	-0.288 (0.437)	-0.378 (0.440)
Dominant Topic	-----	0.735*** (0.254)	0.734*** (0.258)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	-----	-1.229*** (0.245)	-1.100*** (0.249)
City A	-----	0.119 (0.446)	0.047 (0.447)
City C	-----	-0.294 (0.508)	-0.265 (0.511)
Constant	-3.048*** (0.217)	-3.286*** (0.512)	-3.620*** (0.532)
Log likelihood	-707.807	-684.032	-677.399
χ Wald ²	3.760	47.200	56.180
Prob> χ^2	0.153	0.000	0.000
# of Observations	2538	2538	2538

Notes: The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator substantively responds to a constituent. Entries are coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. The reference categories are White constituent, White legislator, and City B. *p<0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

Table 5.6: The Effect of Race on Council Member *Substantive* Responses (Shared Racial Identity and Conditional Effects)

	(1) Shared Racial Identity	(2) Shared Racial Identity	(3) Speaking on Race	(4) Speaking on Race	(5) Speaking on Legislation
Black Constituent	-0.930** (0.448)	-0.616 (0.454)	-0.361 (0.423)	-0.027 (0.498)	0.740 (0.589)
Other Minority Constituent	-0.697 (0.679)	-0.257 (0.654)	-0.287 (0.622)	-0.206 (0.684)	-----
Male Constituent	-----	0.228 (0.276)	0.221 (0.278)	0.215 (0.277)	0.188 (0.283)
Black Legislator	-0.276 (0.406)	-0.216 (0.430)	-0.297 (0.425)	-0.495 (0.460)	0.104 (0.634)
Male Legislator	-----	0.340 (0.304)	0.350 (0.308)	0.362 (0.310)	0.322 (0.296)
Speak on Legislation	-----	0.703** (0.284)	0.692** (0.286)	0.699** (0.286)	1.234*** (0.339)
Speak on Race	-----	-0.482 (0.441)	-1.105** (0.510)	-0.362 (0.599)	-0.409 (0.462)
Speak on Class	-----	-0.265 (0.436)	-0.298 (0.438)	-0.346 (0.436)	-0.174 (0.443)
Dominant Topic	-----	0.730*** (0.255)	0.725*** (0.256)	0.712*** (0.259)	0.718*** (0.261)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	-----	-1.224*** (0.245)	-1.229*** (0.246)	-1.182*** (0.245)	-1.053*** (0.249)
City A	-----	0.096 (0.447)	0.147 (0.454)	0.210 (0.459)	-0.006 (0.439)
City C	-----	-0.272 (0.509)	-0.208 (0.516)	-0.157 (0.520)	-0.370 (0.505)
Black Constituent × Black Legislator	0.897* (0.847)	0.851 (0.545)	-----	0.937 (0.610)	0.670 (0.828)
Other Minority Const. × Black Legislator	0.148 (1.290)	0.214 (1.268)	-----	-13.562 (597.733)	-----
Black Legislator × Speak on Race	-----	-----	2.033*** (0.631)	2.059*** (0.768)	-----
Black Constituent × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	-2.557** (1.302)	-----
Other Minority Const. × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	-73.103 (883.969)	-----
Black Constituent × Black Legislator × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	-0.099 (1.552)	-----
Other Minority Const. × Black Legislator × Speak on Race	-----	-----	-----	86.897 (972.948)	-----

Continued on next page

Table 5.6 Continued

	(1) Shared Racial Identity	(2) Shared Racial Identity	(3) Speaking on Race	(4) Speaking on Race	(5) Speaking on Legislation
Black Legislator × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	-0.406 (0.626)
Black Constituent × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	-2.372*** (0.779)
Other Minority Const. × Speak on Legis.	----	----	----	----	----
Black Constituent × Black Legislator × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	0.287 (1.135)
Other Minority Const. × Black Legislator × Speak on Legislation	----	----	----	----	----
Constant	-2.985*** (0.227)	-3.265*** (0.513)	-3.294*** (0.519)	-3.373*** (0.526)	-3.621*** (0.537)
Log Likelihood	-692.559	-669.146	-665.216	-659.441	-639.948
χ^2 Wald ²	6.180	48.680	55.020	57.640	55.760
Prob> χ^2	0.289	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
# of Observations	2473	2473	2473	2473	2347

Notes: The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator issues an *substantive* response. Entries are coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. The main reference categories are White constituent, White legislator, and City B. *p<0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

Results from the Crossed Random Effects Logit Models

In general, some of the results produced by the statistical models are not surprising. Constituents who express messages similar to others or who speak as part of a group (“*Same Opinion*”) are less likely than constituents expressing a unique position to be singled out by council members. Furthermore, legislators are more likely to respond (in the explicit and substantive sense) to individuals who speak on matters involving significant council debate or citizen opposition than to individuals speaking on less controversial issues. Also, while I generally find statistically insignificant effects for the constituent’s gender across the models, I find that male legislators are more responsive than female legislators, but only when responding explicitly.

On the other hand, and surprisingly, the coefficients associated with the variable of interest (race) are statistically insignificant for the most part. First, I find that White constituents hold no statistically significant advantage over Black and minority constituents in eliciting responses from local legislators, as evidenced by the race coefficients in Model 2 of Tables 5.3 and 5.5. Furthermore, since the coefficients associated with the race variables and the interaction terms (e.g. *Black Constituent* × *Black Legislator*) in Model 2 of Tables 5.4 and 5.6 are statistically insignificant, I do not find confirmation for Hypothesis 5 – that there is a relationship between shared racial identity and council member responsiveness.

While I cannot reject the possibility that there are no independent race effects, I find that the influence of race does appear in other ways. Not surprisingly, Black legislators are more likely to respond (explicitly and substantively) to constituents who speak about race than to those who speak about other topics, as evidenced by the positive and statistically significant interaction

effect (*Black Legislator* × *Speak on Race*) in Model 3 of Tables 5.4 and 5.6.⁵³ On the other hand, constituents who speak about race-related matters are less likely than those who speak about race-neutral matters to elicit an explicit or substantive response from White legislators (as shown in Model 3). Specifically, the coefficient associated with the “*Speak on Race*” variable is negative and significant. Since this coefficient is part of an interaction model, it reflects the effect of White legislators being confronted with constituents speaking about race. Furthermore, White legislators’ reduced responsiveness to race-related statements is mostly driven by their behavior toward Black constituents speaking about race-related matters. Specifically, White legislators are less likely to respond (both in the explicit and substantive sense) to *Black constituents*, when they speak about race-related issues than when otherwise.⁵⁴ Meanwhile the effect of race-related speech by non-Black minorities on White legislators is not statistically significant. Since coefficients of logistic regressions are hard to interpret, the predicted probabilities of response under the conditions of interest are calculated, with the control variables set at theoretically meaningful values.

⁵³ To compare Black legislators’ responses to race-related speech with their responses to non-racialized speech, I look at the combined effect of *Black Legislator* × *Speak on Race* and *Speak on Race*. While the effect of the latter variable is negative, the positive effect of the interaction variable exceeds the negative effect, thus resulting in an overall positive effect.

⁵⁴ Model 4 is a three-way interaction model, and thus, the interaction term (Black Constituent x Speak on Race) actually reflects the condition in which White legislators are confronted with Black constituents speaking about race-related matters. While the coefficient associated with this interaction does not appear to be statistically significant in Table 5.4, the average marginal effects do show that there is a statistically significant difference between White legislators’ responses to Blacks who speak about race and their responses to those who speak about issues orthogonal to race. Furthermore, when I run the model specifying different reference categories, the coefficients associated with the interaction of White legislators and Black constituents speaking about race are significant.

Figure 5.3: Predicted Probabilities of Explicit Response to Constituent Speech on Race (Black Constituents Only)

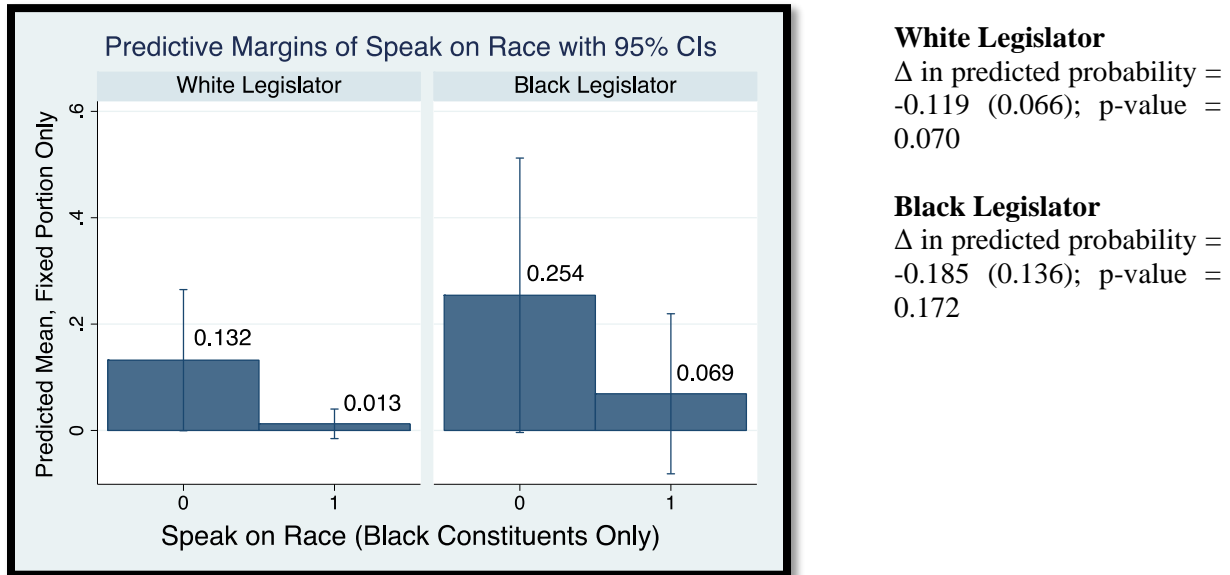


Figure 5.3 above depicts the difference in predicted probabilities between a White (or Black) legislator’s *explicit* response to race-related comments spoken by Black constituents in City B and her response to non-racialized comments in the same city.⁵⁵ When setting the control variables at theoretically meaningful values,⁵⁶ the predicted probability of a White member’s *explicit* response to Black constituents speaking about race is 0.013 and increases to 0.132 when they speak on matters not pertaining to race. This difference is significant at the 0.070 level. This result suggests that when Black constituents speak about race-related issues, White legislators are highly unlikely to issue an individual explicit response. On the other hand, while Figure 5.3 shows that Black legislators are also less likely to respond to Black constituents who

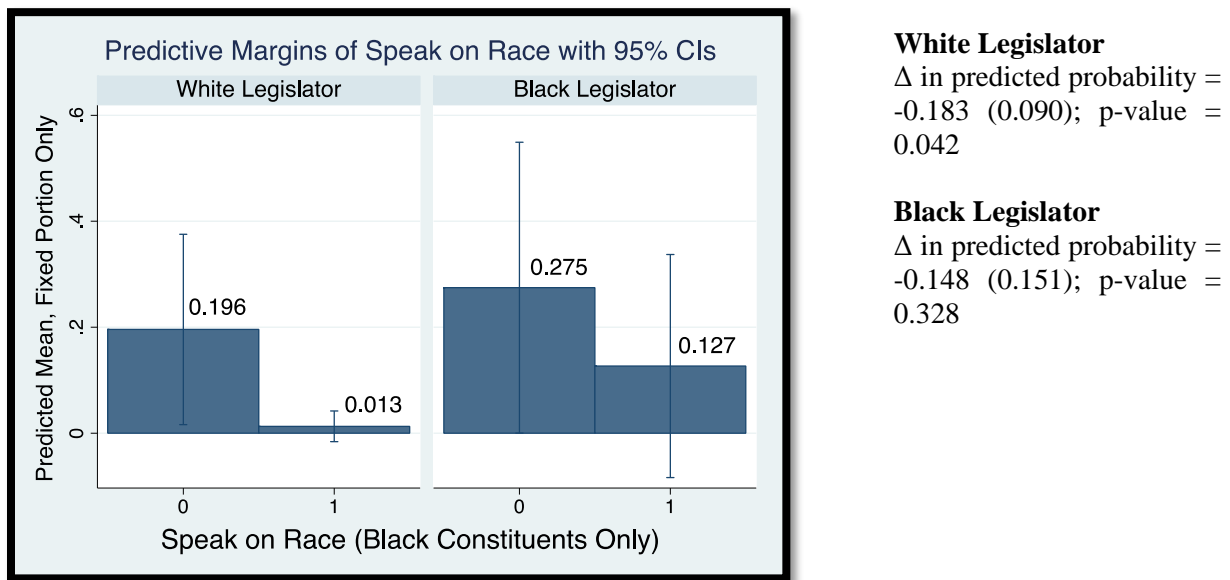
⁵⁵ Predicted probabilities associated with responses in Cities A and C are shown in Appendix L.

⁵⁶ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Black constituent=1, speak on legislation=1, male constituent=1, male legislator=1, speak on class=0, dominant topic=1, same opinion=0, City B=1

speak about race than to those who comment on other topics unrelated to race, the difference in predicted probabilities is not statistically significant.

Similarly, Figure 5.4 depicts a decrease in the predicted probability of a White legislator’s *substantive* response to Black constituents when they are confronted with race-related comments relative to non-racialized comments.

Figure 5.4: Predicted Probabilities of Substantive Response to Constituent Speech on Race (Black Constituents Only)



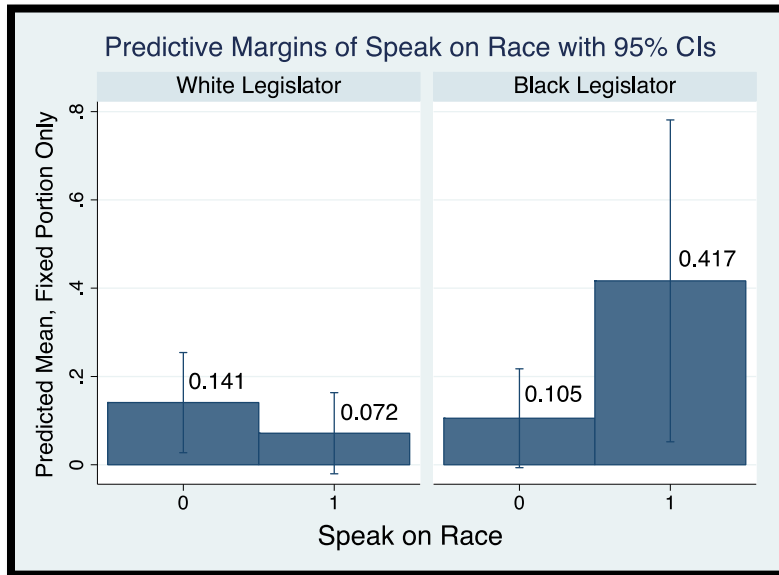
This difference in predicted probabilities for substantive responses exceeds the difference for explicit responses alone. When holding the control variables at the same theoretically meaningful values as those held in Figure 5.3,⁵⁷ the predicted probability of White legislators responding in the substantive sense to minority constituents who speak about race-related topics in City B remains at 0.013. On the other hand, the predicted probability of a White legislator

⁵⁷ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Black constituent=1, speak on legislation=1, male constituent=1, male legislator=1, speak on class=0, dominant topic=1, same opinion=0, City B=1

responding when minority constituents speak about non-racialized issues increases to 0.196. The difference is statistically significant at 0.042.

Meanwhile, Figure 5.5 below depicts the change in response to race-related comments when the constituent is White. There is no statistically significant difference between White members' responses to White constituents who speak about race and their responses to Whites who speak about non-racialized matters. On the other hand, Black legislators are considerably more likely to respond to White constituents who speak about race-related issues than to their counterparts who speak about race-neutral matters. In fact, the predicted probability of a Black member's *explicit* response to a White constituent speaking about race is about 0.417 but is reduced to 0.105 when the White constituent speaks about topics unrelated to race. This difference is significant at the 0.10 level. For *substantive* responses among Black legislators, the difference in predicted probabilities between race-related statements (spoken by Whites) and statements unrelated to race is also approximately 0.30 and significant at the 0.10 level.

Figure 5.5: Predicted Probabilities of Explicit Response to Constituent Speech on Race (White Constituents Only)⁵⁸



White Legislator

Δ in predicted probability = -0.069 (0.060); p-value = 0.245

Black Legislator

Δ in predicted probability = 0.311 (0.175); p-value = 0.075

While it may seem perplexing that Black council members increase their responsiveness when White constituents speak about race-related matters but do not respond more when Black constituents speak similarly, there is an explanation for this inconsistency. In the instances in which Black council members were confronted with constituents speaking about race-related matters, Whites were speaking in opposition to policies that were intended to help the African American community or to views that were sympathetic to the plight of racial minorities. For example, during City B’s discussion on an ordinance that would signal to the state that City B stood in opposition to the state’s version of Stand Your Ground laws, several White constituents appealed to racially coded language to urge the council members to vote against the ordinance. The Black council members responded to these constituents, reiterating their reasons for supporting this ordinance and conveying their own experiences with racism. Thus, it may not be surprising that Black members may feel more compelled to respond disproportionately to those

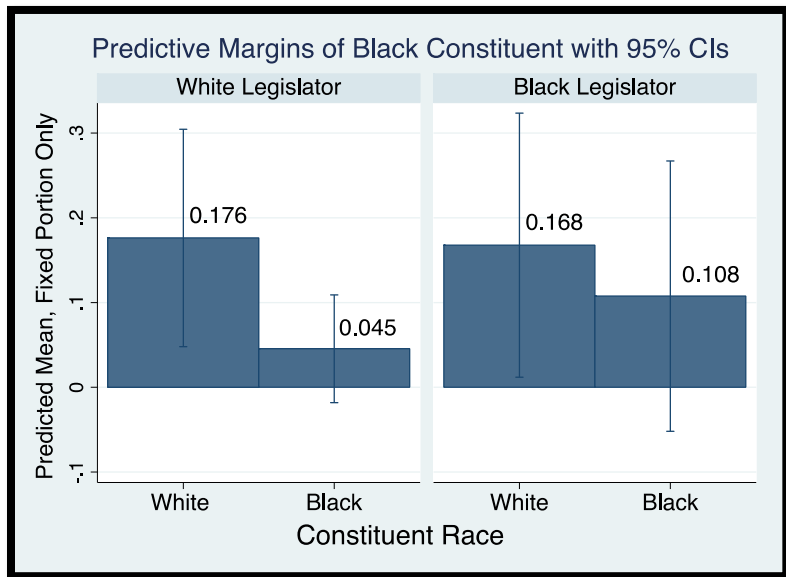
⁵⁸ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Black Constituents=0, speak on legislation=1, male constituent=1 same opinion=0, male legislator=1, speak on class=0, dominant topic=1, City B=1

expressing a view that is perceived as being indifferent or even hostile to the problems faced by racial minorities and less compelled when Black constituents assert race-related views that are similar to those already held by Black legislators.

Speech on Legislative Matters

Earlier in the chapter, I posed a question concerning the condition under which constituents speak on legislative matters: are legislators more likely to respond to constituents who share their race than to those who racially identify otherwise? I find that when constituents speak about legislative issues, White legislators are more likely to respond explicitly and substantively to constituents who share their race than to Black constituents. On the other hand, I find no statistically significant difference in Black members' responses to different groups speaking about local legislation. Figure 5.6 below depicts the predicted probabilities of White and Black legislators' *explicit* responses to constituents speaking on legislative issues.

Figure 5.6: Predicted Probabilities of Explicit Response to Speech on Legislation⁵⁹



White Legislator

Δ in predicted probability = -0.131 (0.058); p-value = 0.023

Black Legislator

Δ in predicted probability = -0.060 (0.085); p-value = 0.481

The probability of a White legislator’s response to a White constituent who speaks about a legislative topic in City B is 0.176 when holding control variables at certain theoretically meaningful values.⁶⁰ However, the predicted probability of a response to a Black constituent decreases to 0.045. The difference between the predicted probabilities is statistically significant at 0.023. For Black legislators, however, there is no statistically significant difference in their responses to different groups of constituents who speak about local legislation, as evidenced by the largely overlapping confidence intervals associated with the predicted probabilities for responses to Black and White constituents.

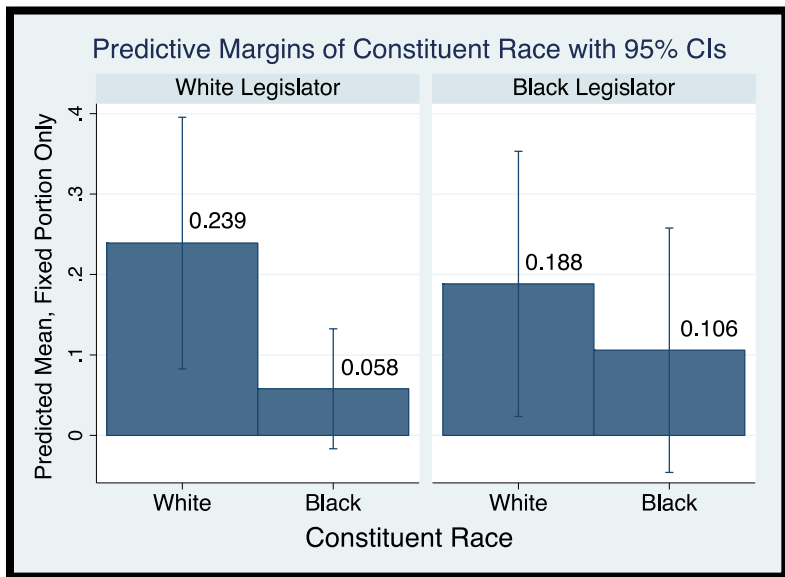
On the other hand, when looking at substantive responses and holding the other variables at values identical to those in Figure 5.6, the change in the predicted probabilities of receiving a

⁵⁹ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: speak on legislation=1, male constituent=1, male legislator=1, speak on race=0, speak on class=0, dominant topic=1, same opinion=0, City B=1

⁶⁰ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: speak on legislation=1, male constituent=1, male legislator =1, speak on class=0, speak on race=0, dominant topic=1, same opinion=0; Predicted probabilities associated with responses in Cities A and C are shown in Appendix L.

response is 0.181 when the constituent speaking on legislation goes from being Black to White. In Figure 5.7 below, the predicted probability of eliciting a substantive response to speech on legislation from White council members in City B increases from 0.058 to 0.239 when the constituent goes from being Black to White. The difference in the predicted probabilities is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. However, again, the race-related difference between Black legislators' responses to White and non-White constituents who speak about legislative concerns is not statistically significant.

Figure 5.7: Predicted Probabilities of Substantive Response to Speech on Legislation



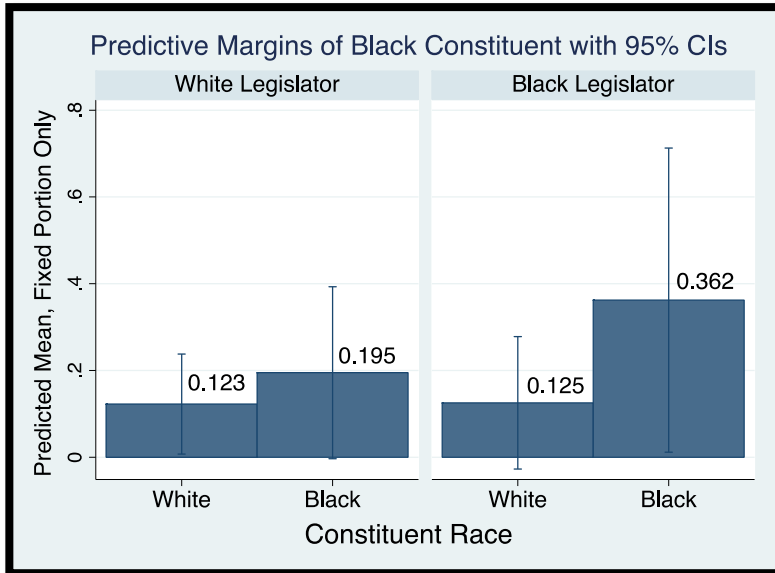
White Legislator
 Δ in predicted probability = -0.181 (0.069); p-value = 0.009

Black Legislator
 Δ in predicted probability = -0.082 (0.084); p-value = 0.328

While there are race-related differences (for White legislators) in responses to constituents speaking about legislative issues, such differences may also exist for responses to comments on *non-legislative issues*. Figure 5.8 below shows the predicted probabilities of members' explicit responses to constituents speaking about non-legislative issues. Unlike the previous findings, however, the predicted probabilities show that when constituents speak about non-legislative issues, legislators are more likely to respond to Blacks than to Whites. However,

the difference in responses (among both Black and White legislators) is not statistically significant. While Figure 5.8 depicts the probabilities associated with *explicit* responses, there are no statistically significant differences associated with substantive responses as well.

Figure 5.8: Predicted Probabilities of Explicit Response to Speech on *Non-Legislative Issues*



White Legislator

Δ in predicted probability = 0.072 (0.085); p-value = 0.393

Black Legislator

Δ in predicted probability = 0.237 (0.163); p-value = 0.146

In summary, I initially hypothesized that shared racial identity would have an effect on local legislators' predisposition to respond to constituent comments during city council meetings, but I do not find confirmation for this hypothesis (Hypothesis 5). I also do not find support for the hypothesis that there is a relationship between White racial identity and increased responsiveness (Hypothesis 6). I do find, however, that race effects emerge in other ways. While I find no confirming evidence that legislators, in general, are less responsive to constituents who speak about race or to *minority* constituents who speak about race (Hypotheses 6A and 6B), I do find that constituent comments on race or racialized issues do have independent negative effects on both explicit and substantive responses from White legislators (Hypothesis

5A). This finding is mostly driven by White legislators' reduced responsiveness to Black constituents who speak about race-related topics compared to Black constituents who express a viewpoint unrelated to race (Hypothesis 5B). Also, the magnitude of the effect associated with the variable on race-related comments seems larger when assessing substantive responses than when assessing explicit responses. On the other hand, Black legislators are more likely to respond to statements about race than to comments that have no bearing on racial issues, especially when the assertions are made by White constituents opposed to racially sympathetic policies or views.

Additionally, while race moderates responsiveness when racialized statements are invoked by constituents, race effects emerge when constituents express their opinions on legislative issues. Specifically, shared White identity has a positive effect on the explicit and substantive responsiveness of White council members confronted with individuals speaking on a legislative topic being debated during the meeting. Again, race-related differences in White legislators' responses to constituents who express legislative-related concerns increase quite significantly under a broader definition of response than under the application of a stringent definition – when only explicit responses are considered. On the other hand, I cannot reject the null hypothesis that for Black legislators, there is no relationship between shared Black identity and responsiveness to constituents speaking about local legislation.

Discussion of Results

How do we interpret the results that were delineated, especially the null findings associated with the independent effect of race on council member responsiveness? These results suggest that while under certain conditions, White legislators are more likely to respond to White constituents than to Black constituents, under other conditions (such as when constituents speak

about *non-legislative issues*), they may be equally responsive to individuals regardless of race, or they may be more likely to respond to Black constituents than to White constituents. Why might this be the case?

As mentioned previously, Democrats occupy the overwhelming majority of seats in the councils under consideration. Perhaps these three cities are liberal municipalities that do strongly adhere to the norms of equality and are particularly sensitive to the plight of minorities.⁶¹ It is possible that these distinct kind of liberal legislators are “under-sampled” in studies such as those of Butler and Broockman, who do control for partisanship but still find that White Democrat legislators discriminate on the basis of race in their responses to constituents. In other words, the more moderate, middle-of-the-road liberals could comprise much of the Democrats in their sample. However, if these councils are positioned more ideologically left to many other Democrat councils, this distinct liberal orientation does not seem to harmonize with certain results from the analyses.

For example, the conjecture that the councils I assess are distinctly liberal does not fit with the finding that these council members, particularly the White council members, are less likely to respond to, acknowledge, or reiterate the concerns of Black constituents who speak on legislative matters than White constituents who do the same. Furthermore, liberal legislators who are especially sensitive to and conscious about racial issues would be unlikely to respond less to speech about racialized issues than to those about non-racialized topics. The point is not to establish how a distinct group of left-leaning politicians would behave in regards to race-related issues, but merely to point out that the Democrats in my study may not be so different from Democrats in other studies.

⁶¹ In the wake of the Trayvon Martin verdict, City A and City B passed symbolic resolutions urging the state legislature to repeal a Stand Your Ground provision in the state’s self-defense laws.

Instead, the immediate transparency and accountability in public meetings, along with the element of direct interaction, might explain why I cannot reject the possibility that the constituent or legislator's race has no independent effect on legislative responses. However, this is not to insinuate that legislators are only behaving strategically in these meetings. It may be the case that liberal White legislators do make a conscious effort to respond to Black constituents and therefore adhere to the norm of equality, and these attempts may be heightened in situations of direct interaction with constituents and when their behavior is on public display. Furthermore, in these meetings, their adherence to the norm of equality or their sensitivity to the concerns of racial minorities may be especially salient in situations that are less likely to invite controversy, such as when Blacks ask for assistance on a personal matter or for clarification on a city policy. However, race-related preferences in responding may be triggered under other conditions, such as during discussions on legislative matters – when issues are potentially polarizing and when much can be at stake. Furthermore, while legislators may find it questionable and problematic to treat Black constituents differently from their White counterparts in these meetings, they may not find it objectionable to be less responsive to or even ignore statements about race – statements that may invoke discomfort for White legislators.

Why do race-related differences occur for responses to speech on legislative issues? The most pessimistic explanation is that while White legislators do not devalue non-White constituents' requests for assistance on a personal issue, White legislators may think that Black constituents have little to contribute toward discussions about policies since presumably more is at stake as policies affect more than just one person. White legislators may perceive Black constituents as lacking the knowledge to make informed comments on the issue. An arguably less pessimistic but still disconcerting explanation may be attributed to the cognitive biases that

emerge in the presence of “information overload” for the legislator. Oftentimes, in discussions about legislative issues, more than one constituent speaks about the issue, and in discussions about particularly heated or controversial legislation, many constituents speak on the topic and express variations of the same opinion. Given the potentially overwhelming amount of information provided by constituents, legislators may resort to information shortcuts to determine which constituent statements to remember and hence respond to. Unfortunately, the racial identity of the constituent may constitute one of these shortcuts, where legislators, particularly White legislators, may be more inclined to remember and respond to those who seem most familiar to them. There is evidence to suggest that when individuals are situated in an information-abundant environment or confronted with circumstances of complexity, they tend to resort to decisions premised on racial stereotypes (Bodenhausen and Lichtenstein, 1987). This line of inquiry would certainly benefit from investigating further the factors that trigger race-related differences in responses to speech on policy matters.

Future Directions and Other Considerations

To answer the questions of this study, it was necessary to trade breadth for depth. I collected highly granular data on legislators and constituents from three city councils. All of the cities were in Michigan, all were dominated by Democrats, and the samples were not diverse along other dimensions, such as language and ethnicity. However, although my data was collected from three councils dominated by Democrats, with one particular council that can be characterized as more liberal than most Democrat councils, I still find that race influences the behavior of public officials (even if conditionally). While I find race effects in places where it would be most difficult to do so, investigation of additional municipalities would contribute to the breadth and nuance of this research.

Furthermore, I pose hypotheses in which race is conceptualized broadly. In other words, in my analyses thus far, I do not account for the potential influence of intersectional identities, which scholars argue have ramifications for leadership decisions, advocacy work, and political representation (Cohen 1999; Dovi 2002; Strolovitch 2007). Could it be possible that while I find statistically insignificant effects associated with race and shared racial identity, the sharing of subgroup identity between a legislator and constituent might affect responsiveness? For example, do White male legislators respond more to White male constituents than to constituents not claiming both these identities? I do not find a statistically significant effect for shared subgroup identity on legislative responsiveness (as shown in Appendix M). However, the subject of intersectionality is important to consider for future research.

Finally, this chapter investigates the responses that legislators issue to individuals rather than to groups of constituents. Before making definitive conclusive remarks about the effects of racial identity on legislative responses, it would be useful to examine whether similar patterns emerge when legislators respond to a collective of constituents who express similar opinions on a particular matter. This inquiry is taken up in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

THE CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF RACE ON LEGISLATIVE RESPONSES (GROUPS OF CONSTITUENTS)

Overview

Thus far, the set of dependent variables discussed in the previous chapter only captures local legislators singling out a particular individual and replying to him or her (“individual” response variable). On the other hand, members can issue a response to a collective or group of individuals. For example, constituents may come as part of a group to voice a common position or attend the meeting individually but express opinions or positions that are similar to those of other constituents. Hence, a councilmember may not single out any particular individual in her response but instead respond to the “collective”⁶² of individuals expressing similar sentiments. For example, a councilmember might openly state that she will vote for the proposed ordinance due to the reasons advanced by constituents who expressed support of it during the public comment period. Therefore to encapsulate members’ responses to groups, another dataset was assembled.

⁶² By “collective,” I am referring to constituents who speak as members of a formal, organized group or constituents who speak as individuals but express opinions similar to those of at least one other person during that meeting.

Hypotheses

The justifications for the set of hypotheses from the previous chapter are also applicable to legislative responses to groups. Just as I hypothesized that legislators exhibit preferences for constituents who share their racial identity or that legislators show preferences for White constituents, I make similar conjectures here. The only difference is that the racial composition of the group is at the core of what I am proposing. Therefore, I present the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 7: Despite the transparency of public forums, a legislator is more likely to respond to a group when all or most members of the group share her racial identity than when a few or no members of the group racially identify with the legislator.

Hypothesis 7A: White legislators are less likely to respond to a group when a group speaks about race-related matters than when a group speaks about non-racialized matters.

Hypothesis 7B: White legislators are less likely to respond to a group composed entirely or mostly of non-White constituents when the group addresses the Council on race-related matters than when the group comments on issues unrelated to race.

Question 7: When groups speak about legislative matters, are legislators more likely to respond to a group in which most or all members share the legislator's racial identity than to one in which a few or no members racially identify with the legislator?

Brief Overview of the Data

The unit of analysis here is the dyadic relationship between each “collective” or group composed of constituents expressing a similar viewpoint and each member present at the meeting. Overall, this dataset (which I will refer to as Dataset IV) contains 385 observations from an analysis of 26 different council meetings occurring between 2012 – 2014 in City A, City B, and City C. The 385 observations come from the pairings of 46 constituent groups and the same 32 public officials that were in the dataset used to analyze responses to individuals (dataset

in the previous chapter, which I will refer to as Dataset III)⁶³. Dataset IV in this chapter is a subset of Dataset III in Chapter 5, which means that all constituents and members in dataset IV are also in dataset III. More specifically, the group (the unit of analysis) in Dataset IV would be, in Dataset III, individuals comprising that group. However, although observations associated with non-Black minority individuals in Dataset III were excluded from some of the analyses in the previous chapter, non-Black minority constituents are accounted for here in the group analyses since non-Black minorities do attend meetings to speak as part of a group and therefore affect the racial composition of the group.⁶⁴ Omitting non-Black minorities from the data analyzed would lead to misleading results. While I include non-Black minority constituents when investigating legislative responses to groups, I again exclude from the analyses observations associated with the one Asian legislator since there are only 12 of them, which are not sufficient to draw any meaningful conclusions about the behavior of Asian legislators.⁶⁵

As with the observations in the previous chapter, the observations here are not independent. However, the groups are neither nested within legislators nor the legislators nested within groups. Instead, similar to the relationship between individuals and legislators in the previous chapter, groups and legislators are crossed with one another, and therefore, the most appropriate statistical model to use is a random effects logistic regression with crossed data, where the legislators and groups are both treated as random effects. Most of the control variables of the models in the previous chapter also serve as control variables in this chapter. The justifications for the inclusion of and use of these variables are similar to those in the

⁶³ Dataset I and II are the sets of data referenced in Chapter 3 and 4 respectively.

⁶⁴ Black constituents still constitute most of the non-White constituents in the dataset for this chapter. Furthermore, Black constituents comprise most of the non-White members in groups speaking to Black legislators.

⁶⁵ I did conduct separate analyses where I included the observations of the Asian legislator when I examined the behavior of legislators in the aggregate, and I found that the results of this chapter remain unchanged.

previous chapter. In the next section, I provide a more detailed discussion of the independent and dependent variables.

Methods

Dependent Variables

The set of dependent variables for Dataset IV is similar in structure to the set of dependent variables in Dataset III, with “0” reflecting either no response or a non-meaningful response to the group and “1” reflecting a meaningful response to the group. However, in order for a response to be coded as meaningful, the member must respond to or address the concerns of more than one member of the group (this could be a statement that reflects a response to or acknowledgement of the concerns of a few members of the group, a majority of the group, or all members of the group). If a legislator singles out or appears to single out a particular constituent, even if the constituent expresses a view as part of a group or one that is similar to others, the response is coded as an “individual” response rather than a “group” response, and thus, that response will already be accounted for in Dataset III. Furthermore, just as members issue explicit and substantive responses to individuals, they follow the same practice for groups.⁶⁶ Therefore, there are also two sets of dependent variables for Dataset IV, one representing a restrictive definition of responses (explicit responses) and the other representing a broader meaning of responses (substantive responses, which include both explicit and indirect

⁶⁶ As discussed in the previous chapter, an explicit response involves the legislator explicitly mentioning the constituent when responding to him. Furthermore, there are instances in which the context provides sufficient evidence to suggest that a legislator is explicitly responding to a constituent or has heard his opinion even when she does not mention his name. On the other hand, substantive responses include both explicit responses and those in which the character of the responses is more vague. For example, the legislator does not explicitly mention the constituent when reiterating an opinion similar to his and does not provide enough context to allow observers to ascertain whether she is making a comment in reaction to what the constituent had said or she is merely expressing her own opinion, which happens to coincide with his.

responses). Overall, council members issued 66 explicit responses, which constitute 17.69% of the observations, and 121 substantive responses, which constitute 32.44% of the observations.

When compared to the percentages of individual responses in the previous chapter, council members appear far more likely to offer a meaningful response when groups, rather than individuals, are at the receiving end of the legislators' attention.⁶⁷ Therefore, it appears that being part of a collective or group increases the likelihood of a response, but only as a member of a group rather than as an individual. However, in both cases (speaking as an individual or as part of a group), local legislators are far more likely to forgo a response or offer a non-meaningful one than to respond meaningfully.

Independent Variables

While the key independent variable in the previous chapter is the race of the constituent, the primary independent variable here is a 4-level variable encapsulating the racial composition of the "group": from groups with no White members to those with all White members. Groups coded as "0" are composed entirely of racial minorities. There are 20 observations associated with all-minority groups. Collectives whose racial composition ranges from 1% to 49% White (majority-minority groups) are coded as "1." There are 44 observations for majority-minority groups. Those with a composition that ranges from 50% to 99% White are coded as "2," and finally, groups comprised entirely of White constituents are coded as "3." There are 101 and 208 observations associated with majority-White and all-White groups, respectively. The base category for the racial composition variable is 0 – groups composed entirely of racial minorities. Another set of relevant independent variables is the racial identity of the council members. Here,

⁶⁷ The percentages corresponding to explicit and substantive responses to individuals are 5.83% and 9.65%, respectively.

as in the previous chapter, the variable of the legislator's race is a dummy variable – whether the legislator is White or Black. Overall, there are 320 observations for White legislators and 53 observations for Black legislators.

I also control for factors that may impact the members' responses to groups. Unlike the models in the previous chapter that control for the individual's gender, I use a 4-level variable to control for the gender composition of the group. This variable follows the same structure as that of the racial composition variable (with "0" capturing a group that is exclusively female to "3" capturing a group that is exclusively male). Additionally, the gender of the council member is included in the analyses. I also control for the number of people within a group or collective (*Group Size*); this control variable is a continuous variable. I conjecture that council member responses will be positively correlated with the number of people issuing the same or a concurrent opinion. Some of the other variables that are relevant in the previous chapters are included here: whether the group comments on a legislative matter (*Speak on Legislation*), whether the issue spoken about is a dominant topic of discussion that night (*Dominant Topic*), and whether the group speaks on race-related (*Speak on Race*) or class-related topics (*Speak on Class*). Additionally, city effects are captured as dummy variables.

Descriptive Statistics: Responses to Groups of Constituents

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 below provide additional information on the distribution of responses.⁶⁸ As previously mentioned, there are 20 observations associated with all-minority groups, 44 observations associated majority-minority groups, 101 observations associated with majority-White groups, and 208 observations associated with all-White groups. The figures display member responses to groups, disaggregated by the explicit or substantive character of the

⁶⁸ Appendix N presents additional information in table form.

responses, and also parsed out by the racial composition of the group and the race of the legislator.

Figure 6.1: Explicit Responses to Groups (By Group and Legislator’s Race)

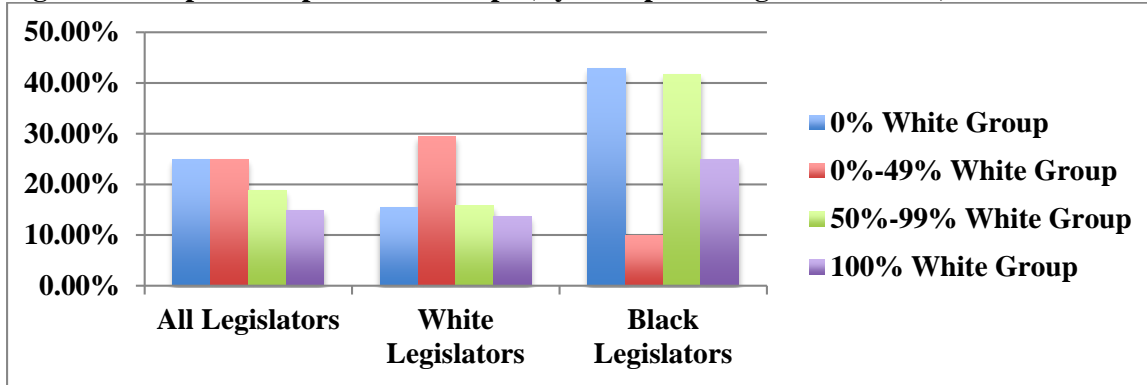
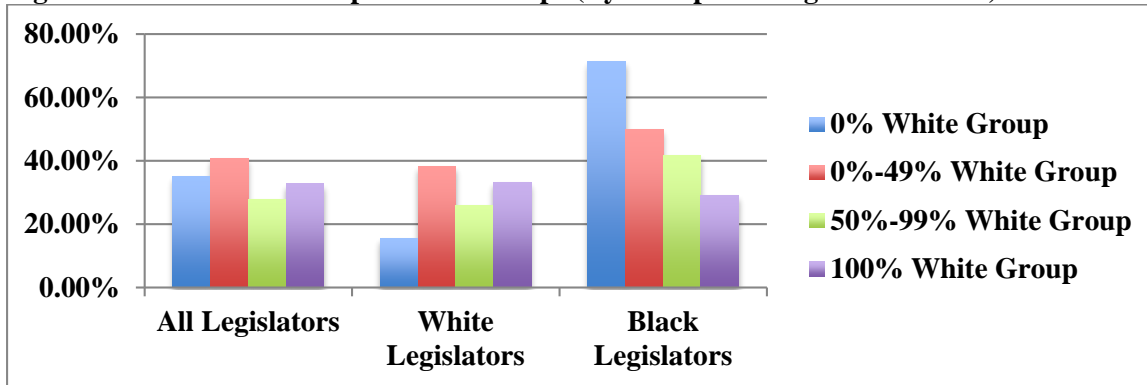


Figure 6.2: Substantive Responses to Groups (By Group and Legislator’s Race)



A quick glance at the figures might suggest something unexpected: that local legislators appear to favor groups composed mostly or entirely of racial minorities. When looking at explicit responses alone, either all-minority groups or majority-minority groups appear to draw the most responses from local legislators. For example, White council members respond more to majority-minority groups than to any other group, and Black members respond more to all-minority groups than to any other group although the rate of response barely exceeds the rate to

majority-White groups. On the other hand, when looking at a substantive conception of responses relative to explicit responses alone, Black members' responses to all-minority groups exceed responses to other groups by a much wider margin. Meanwhile, White legislators still respond most to majority-minority groups although this rate of response exceeds the rate of response to all-White groups by a small margin.

Results from the Crossed Random Effects Logit Model

While somewhat informative, these descriptive statistics alone cannot reveal the significance of the differences in responses to groups as they relate to differences in the groups' racial composition. Thus, the crossed random effects logistic regression can better determine whether or not these differences are statistically significant. The results associated with explicit and substantive responses are provided in the tables below. The regression analyses in Table 6.1 determine the independent and conditional impacts of shared racial identity on legislative responsiveness. Table 6.2 reports the results associated with the moderating impact of speaking about legislative issues on the relationship between race/shared racial identity and council member responsiveness. I incorporate a two-way interaction term (Legislator's Race \times Racial Group Composition) to determine the effects of shared racial identity on legislative responsiveness. In testing the conditional hypotheses (e.g. the effect of shared racial identity on responses to constituents who speak about legislative issues), a three-way interaction variable is included (in Table 6.2).

Table 6.1: The Effect of Shared Racial Identity on Explicit and Substantive Responses to Groups

	Explicit Responses (1-2)		Substantive Responses (3-5)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1-49% White Group	0.362 (0.821)	0.881 (1.010)	-0.597 (1.238)	0.934 (1.473)	-3.597 (2.557)
50-99% White Group	0.285 (0.874)	0.918 (1.066)	1.182 (1.267)	0.410 (1.509)	-2.363 (2.137)
100% White Group	-0.080 (0.861)	0.595 (1.062)	0.938 (1.252)	0.709 (1.507)	-2.655 (2.207)
Black Legislator	2.024 (1.275)	2.483* (1.343)	0.854* (0.489)	4.715** (0.183)	-----
Black Legislator × 1-49% White Group	-----	-4.273** (1.769)	-----	-4.216** (2.023)	-----
Black Legislator × 50-99% White Group	-----	-1.451 (1.532)	-----	-4.203** (0.2016)	-----
Black Legislator × 100% White Group	-----	-1.559 (1.419)	-----	-4.293** (1.888)	-----
1-49% Male Group	0.199 (0.836)	0.100 (0.811)	0.741 (1.258)	0.799 (1.260)	1.419 (1.337)
50-99% Male Group	-0.602 (0.664)	-0.687 (0.648)	0.485 (0.964)	0.454 (0.966)	0.547 (1.008)
100% Male Group	-0.933 (0.756)	-1.025 (0.738)	0.309 (1.065)	0.339 (1.067)	-0.096 (1.120)
Speak on Legislation	-0.505 (0.612)	-0.464 (0.598)	2.136** (0.866)	2.049** (0.867)	2.290** (0.930)
Group Size	0.137 (0.112)	0.166 (0.113)	0.236 (0.164)	0.304* (0.173)	0.217 (0.197)
Speak on Class	-0.452 (0.580)	-0.500 (0.575)	-0.578 (0.863)	-0.9318 (0.906)	-1.517 (1.026)
Speak on Race	-0.153 (0.610)	-0.310 (0.614)	-0.368 (0.811)	-0.519 (0.830)	-4.912* (2.867)
Speak on Race × 1-49% White Group	-----	-----	-----	-----	6.284* (3.267)

Continued on next page

Table 6.1 Continued

	Explicit Responses		Substantive Responses		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Speak on Race × 1-49% White Group	-----	-----	-----	-----	1.551 (3.319)
Speak on Race × 1-49% White Group	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.776 (3.208)
Dominant Topic	1.133** (0.476)	1.180** (0.467)	-0.060 (0.652)	-0.065 (0.652)	-0.039 (0.727)
Male Legislator	0.628* (0.379)	0.637* (0.388)	0.145 (0.356)	0.164 (0.364)	0.266 (0.465)
City A	-0.950* (0.520)	-0.937* (0.519)	0.729 (0.682)	0.535 (0.689)	0.875 (0.849)
City C	-0.087 (0.602)	-0.196 (0.601)	-0.988 (0.804)	-1.202 (0.833)	-0.778 (1.033)
Constant	-1.659 (1.130)	-2.412* (1.278)	-3.192** (1.644)	-4.726** (1.852)	-1.625 (2.287)
Log likelihood	-156.117	-151.884	-191.309	-187.464	-152.212
χ^2 Wald ²	24.270	31.080	22.540	24.940	24.570
Prob> χ^2	0.061	0.028	0.094	0.127	10.490
# of Observations	373	373	373	373	320

Notes: Entries are coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator issues an explicit or substantive response to groups. Across all models, the base categories for constituents are groups that are 0% White and groups that are 0% male. Across models 1-4, the reference category for the legislator variable is a White legislator. Models 1 and 3 provide a test of whether or not White groups or majority-White groups, in general, have an advantage over minority groups in eliciting responses (explicit and substantive, respectively) from legislators. Models 2 and 4 test the hypothesis that legislators are more likely to respond (in the explicit and substantive sense, respectively) to groups in which all or most of the members racially identify with the legislator than to groups composed of a majority of individuals who do not share the legislator's race. Model 5 tests the hypothesis that White legislators are less likely to respond when all-minority or majority-minority groups speak about race-related topics than when they speak about non-racialized topics. Model 5 is an analysis of White legislators only. Due to the data's limited size, I could not include a three-way interaction term to model the conditional effect of the group's racial composition on the relationship between race-related speech and White legislators' responses. Also, one might notice that for explicit responses, I do not model White legislators' responses to different groups (based on racial composition) when these groups express race-related speech. Again, this is due to the limited number of observations in the data, which contributed to the inability of the model's likelihood maximization algorithm to converge. However, when substantive response is modeled as the dependent variable, the logistic regression is able to yield results. *p<0.10. **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

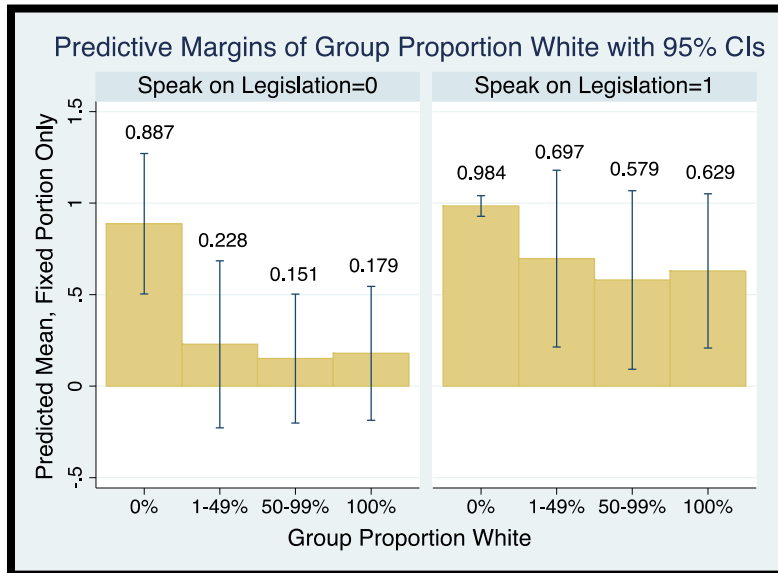
The Independent Effect of Race or Shared Racial Identity?

As previously mentioned, the main independent variable of interest is the racial composition of the group. This variable has four categories: groups composed entirely of racial minorities constitute the base category; groups whose racial composition ranges from 1% - 49% White (majority-minority groups) belong to level 1; groups constituted mostly by White individuals (50% - 99%) belong to level 2; and those comprised exclusively of White constituents belong to level 3. For the most part, none of the coefficients associated with the racial group composition variable is statistically significant. However, shared racial identity does appear to have an effect for Black legislators,⁶⁹ as evidenced by the significant coefficients associated with the interaction terms in Model 4 of Table 6.1. Specifically, Black legislators are more likely to respond (in the substantive sense) to all-minority groups than to any other group. Furthermore, the effect of the group's racial composition on Black legislators' responses are especially remarkable when groups speak about non-legislative matters. On the other hand, when groups speak about legislative matters, differences in Black legislators' responses to groups remain statistically significant (at the 0.10 level) but are less extreme than under the condition in which constituents speak about non-legislative issues. Holding the control variables at certain theoretically meaningful values,⁷⁰ Figure 6.3 below compares each group's predicted probability of eliciting a response from Black legislators under instances in which the group addresses the council on legislative matters and in which the group talks about matters that have no bearing on local legislation being debated that evening.

⁶⁹ Again, most of the non-White members in groups are Black constituents. However, it would probably be more accurate to describe the situation for Black legislators as "shared minority status" than as "shared racial identity."

⁷⁰ Variables held at the following values: group proportion male=2 (50-99% male); Black legislator=1; male legislator=1; group size=5; speak on class=0; speak on race=0; dominant topic=1; City A=0; City C=0. For probabilities associated with City A and City C, please see Appendix P.

Figure 6.3: Predicted Probabilities of Black Legislators' Substantive Responses to Groups⁷¹



When Speak on Legislation=0

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 1-49% = -0.659 (0.237); p-value = 0.005
2. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 50-99% = -0.737 (0.208); p-value = 0.000
3. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = -0.708 (0.196); p-value = 0.000

When Speak on Legislation=1

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 1-49% = -0.287 (0.240); p-value = 0.232
2. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 50-99% = -0.404 (0.245); p-value = 0.099
3. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = -0.355 (0.208); p-value = 0.087

The predicted probabilities show that Black legislators almost always respond (in the substantive sense) to all-minority groups whether or not these groups comment on pending local legislation. On the other hand, compared to all-minority groups, groups that are majority-minority, majority-White, or all-White encounter a sharp decline in responses, especially when addressing the Council on non-legislative issues. A slightly different picture emerges when groups speak about legislative matters. As shown in Figure 6.3, some of the differences between all-minority groups and the other groups remain, but they are less extreme. For example, when comparing all-minority and majority-minority groups, the difference in predicted probabilities of receiving a response between these two groups becomes statistically insignificant. However, Black legislators are still more likely to respond to all-minority groups (98.4% response rate) than to majority-White groups (57.9% response rate) and to all-White groups (62.9% response

⁷¹ *ibid.*

rate), but the magnitude of these differences is not as enormous (and only statistically significant at the 0.10 level).⁷²

In general, I find partial support for the hypothesis that legislators are more likely to respond to groups where all or most of its members share the legislator's racial identity than in instances where all or most group members racially identify otherwise (Hypothesis 7). However, while I find race effects for Black legislators, I cannot reject the null hypothesis that there is no independent relationship between racial group composition and responsiveness among White legislators. Also, given the results discussed above, groups constituted entirely or mostly by White individuals do not reap a statistically significant advantage in legislative responsiveness over majority-minority or all-minority groups.

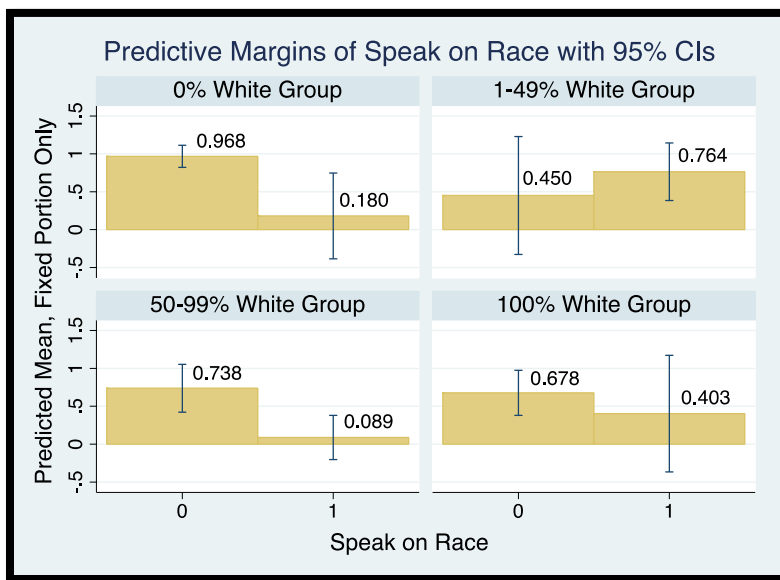
Speech on Race-Related Matters

One of my hypotheses posits that White legislators generally respond less to group statements about race-related issues than to those about non-racialized issues (Hypothesis 7A). I also hypothesized that White council members respond less *to all-minority or majority-minority groups* when these groups talk about racialized issues than when they talk about race-neutral matters (Hypothesis 7B). I find that this hypothesis is somewhat supported. White council members respond strikingly less to all-minority groups when they speak about race-related matters. Figure 6.4 compares the changes in predicted probabilities associated with each of the four groups when each group goes from speaking about non-racialized matters to speaking about

⁷² Also, for Black legislators' responses to comments on legislation, the difference in predicted probabilities between all-minority groups and White groups occurs only when the issue is a dominant topic of discussion. If the issue spoken about is not particularly heated, contentious, or discussed at length by council members, the statistical significance of the difference diminishes.

race-related issues (holding the control variables at theoretically meaningful values).⁷³ White legislators are highly likely (with a probability of more than 0.90) to issue a substantive response to all-minority groups when these groups speak about matters orthogonal to race, but they are drastically less likely to issue a response to all-minority groups speaking about race-related matters.

Figure 6.4: Predicted Probabilities of White Legislators' Responses to Speech about Race⁷⁴



Constituent Comments from Race-Neutral to Race-Related Topics

1. Δ in predicted mean for 0% = -0.788 (0.288); p-value = 0.006
2. Δ in predicted mean for 1-49% = 0.314 (0.399); p-value = 0.432
3. Δ in predicted mean for 50-99% = 0.649 (0.207); p-value = 0.002
4. Δ in predicted mean for 100% = 0.275 (0.369); p-value = 0.456

Surprisingly, the predicted probabilities show that White legislators are more likely to respond to majority-minority groups when they speak about race-related matters than when they speak about non-racialized matters although the difference in predicted probabilities is not statistically significant. Additionally, and interestingly, White council members are more likely to respond to majority-minority groups discussing racial issues than to all-minority groups *and* majority-White groups that do the same. Like all-minority groups, majority-White groups

⁷³ Variables held at the following values: Group Proportion Male=2 (50-99% male); Male Legislator=1; Group Size=5; Speak on Legislation=1; Speak on Class=0; Dominant Topic=1; City A=1; City C=0

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

experience a sharp decline in the receipt of responses when talking about race-related matters than when speaking about other topics. On the other hand, all-White groups, like majority-minority groups, do not encounter statistically significant lower levels of legislative responses when addressing the Council on issues of or related to race. While it appears odd that members do not reduce their responses to all White groups when they speak about racial issues but do so for majority-White groups, there is an explanation for this peculiarity. There is one majority-White group that speaks about racial issues and this group constitutes all of the data for majority-White groups speaking about racial issues. Some members of this group come to council often and make controversial statements and requests, such as repeatedly asking the council to boycott the state of Israel for what they perceive to be the nation's racist policies. Members of this group almost always draw little to no responses from council members when they speak. Thus, it is difficult to make inferences about how council members would respond to majority-White groups speaking about racial issues based on the interactions this particular group has with city council members. In general, I do not find support for Hypothesis 7A – that White legislators respond less to groups speaking on race-related topics than to those speaking on other matters. Rather the disparity in responses depends on the group's racial composition, and I do find limited support for Hypothesis 7B – that White legislators respond less to *minority* groups when these groups comment on racialized topics than when commenting on other topics. However, this decline in responsiveness occurs for all-minority groups, not majority-minority groups.

Speech on Legislative Matters

In the previous chapter, I find that White individuals are advantaged over those who are racial minorities when addressing the city council on issues related to legislation. Do legislators behave similarly when encountering a collective of individuals expressing a common position?

Specifically, do majority-White and all-White groups possess a unique advantage over the other groups in eliciting council member responses when speaking about local legislation? When looking at *individual-level responses*, I find that **White** legislators are more likely to respond in the explicit and substantive sense to **White** constituents than to their non-White counterparts when both comment on legislative issues. Are White legislators less likely to respond to speech on legislative matters when expressed by all-minority or majority-minority groups than by majority-White or all-White groups? Table 6.2 below provides the analyses that address these questions. As previously mentioned, I include a three-way interaction term to determine whether the relationship between speech about legislative matters and council member responsiveness is affected by shared racial identity.

Table 6.2: The Moderating Effect of Speech about Legislative Issues on the Relationship between Responsiveness and Shared Racial Identity

	Explicit Responses (6)		Substantive Responses (7)	
	Coefficients	S.E.	Coefficients	S.E.
<i>Variables in 3-way Interaction</i>				
1-49% White Group	2.068	2.003	-2.662	2.776
50-99% White Group	-0.326	1.398	-2.082	1.900
100% White Group	-2.429	1.792	-5.615**	2.389
Speak on Legislation	-4.348**	2.054	-4.774*	2.758
1-49% White Group × Speak on Legislation	-0.567	2.360	4.899	3.260
50-99% White Group × Speak on Legislation	3.187	2.052	4.051	2.672
100% White Group × Speak on Legislation	5.297**	2.230	8.732***	2.954
Black Legislator	18.682	980.199	18.398	919.021
1-49% White Group × Black Legislator	-3.000	2.219	-6.018**	2.916
50-99% White Group × Black Legislator	-34.654	604.347	-35.978	829.949
100% White Group × Black Legislator	-30.593	1030.688	-30.448	832.736
Speak on Legislation × Black Legislator	-16.989	980.199	-11.768	919.022
1-49% White Group × Speak on Legis. × Black Legislator	Omitted		Omitted	
50-99% White Group × Speak on Legis. × Black Legislator	34.569	604.347	30.602	829.948
100% White Group × Speak on Legis. × Black Legislator	29.683	1030.688	24.059	832.737

Continued

Table 6.2 Continued

	Explicit Responses		Substantive Responses	
	Coefficients	S.E.	Coefficients	S.E.
<i>Legislator, Constituent and City Variables</i>				
Male Legislator	0.709*	0.418	0.165	0.369
1-49% Male Group	-0.793	0.858	0.570	1.177
50-99% Male Group	-1.722**	0.771	-0.019	0.947
100% Male Group	-2.919***	1.027	-0.444	1.109
Group Size	0.271**	0.134	0.338*	0.181
Speak on Class	-1.278	0.798	-2.807**	1.137
Speak on Race	0.073	0.701	0.081	0.815
Dominant Topic	1.636***	0.508	0.173	0.593
City A	-1.464**	0.630	0.897	0.742
City C	-0.056	0.700	-0.651	0.853
Constant	0.109	1.687	0.063	2.220
Log likelihood	-136.875		-177.665	
χ Wald ²	39.670		31.430	
Prob> χ^2	0.023		0.142	
# of Observations	373		373	

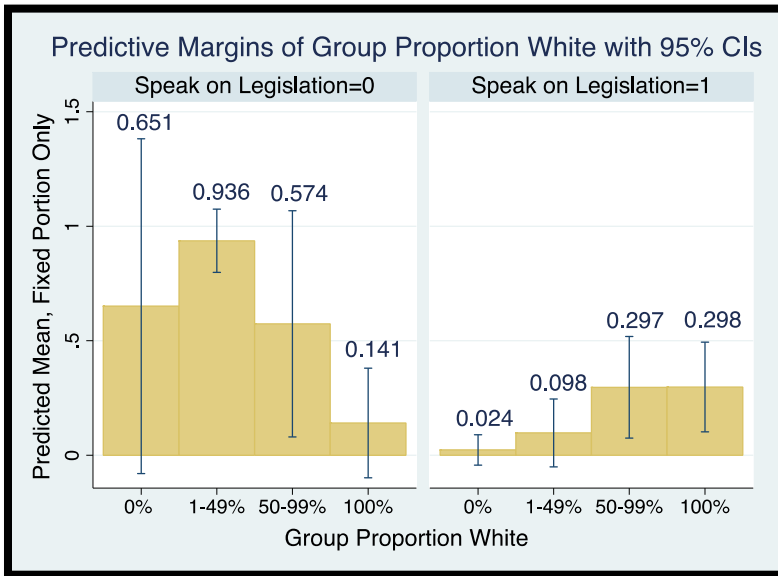
Notes: The format for this table is different from that of the other table due to the large number of variables. Entries are the coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator issues an explicit or substantive response. The purpose of these models is to determine whether or not legislators respond more to groups whose racial composition most closely aligns with their own racial identity when these groups speak about legislative matters. Again, these models only compare White legislators to Black legislators, since Asian legislators (12 observations) were dropped from the sample. The reference category for legislators is White. The reference categories for constituent groups are all-minority groups and all-female groups. Also, for both models in this table (6 and 7), issues arise because of the small sample size for Black legislators. Specifically, one of the conditions, a majority-minority group that addresses Black legislators on non-legislative matters, does not exist in this sample. This leads to the models' omission of an interaction term, "49% White \times Speak on Legislation," due to the issue of collinearity. However, I find that this omission does not prohibit me from answering the inquiries I am mostly interested in.

The coefficients associated with the three-way interaction terms for both the explicit and substantive response models are statistically insignificant, which means that I cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of shared racial identity on responses from *Black* legislators is conditional upon constituents speaking about legislative matters.⁷⁵ On the other hand, the coefficients associated with some of the other interaction terms demonstrate that White legislators exhibit differences in responding (explicitly and substantively) to certain groups. According to Models 6 and 7, White legislators are more likely to respond (in the explicit and substantive sense) to all-White groups than to all-minority groups when groups comment on legislation. The calculation of marginal effects provides more thorough information for the differences between groups. Holding the control variables at theoretically meaningful values,⁷⁶ Figures 6.5 and 6.6 below show for each group the predicted probabilities of eliciting explicit and substantive responses when these groups address the council on issues related to legislation compared to when they speak about non-legislative issues.

⁷⁵ This null result appears inconsistent with what I find earlier (on page 170) - that Black legislators are more likely to respond to all-minority groups than to predominantly White groups even in instances when groups speak about legislation. However, in that finding, the difference in predicted probabilities is significant at 0.10 and only emerges when the legislation is a dominant topic of discussion during that meeting. Furthermore, that particular finding comes from an analysis that *does not consider the moderating effect of speech about legislative issues on the relationship between shared racial identity and the responsiveness of Black legislators*. In the analysis here, I consider this three-way relationship.

⁷⁶ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Group Proportion Male = 2 (50%-99% male), Group Size = 5, Male Legislator =1, Black legislator = 0, Speak on class=0, Speak on Race=0, Dominant Topic=1, City A=1, City C = 0

Figure 6.5: Predicted Probabilities of Explicit Response to Speech about Legislation (White Legislators)⁷⁷



White Legislators Only

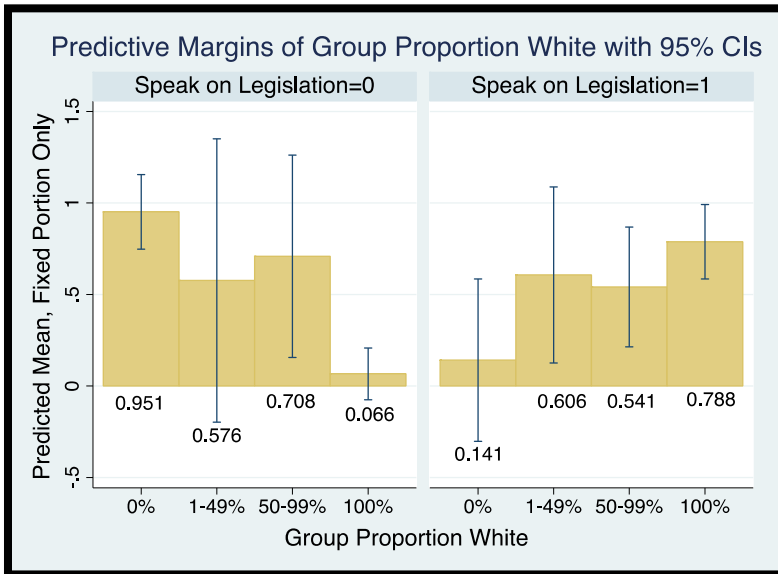
When Speak on Legislation=0

1. Δ in predicted mean from 1-49% to 100% = -0.795 (0.128); p-value = 0.000
2. Δ in predicted mean from 50-99% to 100% = -0.433 (0.235); p-value = 0.065

When Speak on Legislation = 1

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 50-99% = 0.275 (0.115); p-value = 0.017
2. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = 0.273 (0.098); p-value = 0.005
3. Δ in predicted mean from 1-49% to 50-99% = 0.199 (0.118); p-value = 0.091
4. Δ in predicted mean from 1-49% to 100% = 0.200 (0.090); p-value = 0.027

Figure 6.6: Predicted Probabilities of Substantive Response to Speech about Legislation (White Legislators)⁷⁸



White Legislators Only

When Speak on Legislation=0

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = -0.885 (0.119); p-value = 0.000
2. Δ in predicted mean from 50-99% to 100% = -0.642 (0.271); p-value = 0.018

When Speak on Legislation = 1

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 1-49% = 0.465 (0.265); p-value = 0.079
2. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = 0.647 (0.240); p-value = 0.007
3. Δ in predicted mean from 50-99% to 100% = 0.247 (0.147); p-value = 0.093

⁷⁷ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Group Proportion Male = 2 (50%-99% male), Group Size = 5, Male Legislator = 1, Black legislator = 0, Speak on class=0, Speak on Race=0, Dominant Topic=1, City A=1, City C = 0

⁷⁸ *ibid.* For the predicted probabilities of City A and City, please see Appendix P.

When looking at responsiveness in the explicit sense, White legislators are more likely to respond to majority-White and all-White groups who speak about legislative matters than to majority-minority and all-minority groups that do the same. Specifically, the predicted probability of response to all-White or majority-White groups is approximately 0.30 but reduces significantly to 0.024 and 0.098 for all-minority and majority-minority groups. On the other hand, when groups comment on non-legislative issues, the reverse situation seems to be the case. All-White groups are the most disadvantaged, eliciting responses at a rate of merely 0.141 while the other groups receive responses at a much higher rate. However, the difference in predicted probabilities between all-White groups and all-minority groups are not statistically significant. Rather, majority-minority groups and majority-White groups are more advantaged than all-White groups in eliciting explicit responses from White legislators.

When responses are conceptualized in a substantive sense, all-minority groups still experience similar patterns of responsiveness as those under explicit responses. For example, when commenting on legislative matters, they are still significantly less likely than all-White groups to elicit a response from White legislators (0.141 vs. 0.788). However, when commenting on non-legislative issues, they are much more likely to receive a response than are all-White groups. In fact, the results show that White legislators almost always respond to all-minority groups (0.951) while they rarely respond to all-White groups (0.066).

Other Interesting Results

While race and shared racial identity constitute the major focus of this chapter, I find interesting results that warrant further investigation in the future. These results emerge specifically when considering the interaction effects of group speech on legislative issues and group racial composition. Legislators respond less (in the substantive sense) to groups speaking

about class issues than to those speaking about issues unrelated to class. Because class issues, such as welfare and poverty, often get conflated with race-related issues, it may not come as a surprise that legislators reduce their responses to these statements. However, approximately 80% of the class-related statements in the data come from groups composed mostly or entirely of White individuals (who may not be speaking about these issues in racialized ways). On the other hand, even if these statements about class are not perceived by legislators to be intertwined with issues of race, this result does seem consistent with studies concluding that elites are more likely to be responsive to and favor the preferences of those belonging to the upper socio-economic echelons (Bartels 2009; Gilens 2012; Schlozman 2012).

Additionally, legislators respond less to male groups than to female groups (although only when responses are conceptualized as explicit). However, this surprising effect only emerges when considering the interaction effect of shared racial identity and speech about legislative matters. Furthermore, female groups comprise approximately 20% of the data. Could council members be reacting to the “rarity” of female presence among the vocally active constituents? If so, why does this behavioral tendency not manifest itself with racial minorities, whose active presence in city councils is also quite limited? These questions deserve future consideration.

Summary of Results

I hypothesized that a council member is more likely to respond to a group when most or all of its individuals racially identify with the council member than to a group where most individuals racially identify otherwise. In general, I find limited support for the hypothesis on shared racial identity. Specifically, I find that Black members are more likely to respond to all-

minority and majority-minority groups than to all-White or majority-White groups, but only when response is conceptualized more broadly (in the substantive rather than the explicit sense).

Furthermore, race effects also emerge conditionally in members' responses to groups. I hypothesized that White legislators will respond less when groups speak about race-related issues than when they speak about non-racialized issues. I also hypothesized that White legislators respond less when *minority* groups highlight issues related to race than when they speak about other topics. In general, I find no confirmation for the hypothesis that White legislators generally respond less to groups speaking about race-related matters. However, I do find that White legislators discriminate against race-related statements depending on the racial composition of the group that makes these statements. Specifically, all-minority groups experience the greatest disadvantage when switching from speaking about non-racialized issues to those that involve race. Majority-White groups also face a decline in responses, but as I mentioned earlier, this result may embody a peculiarity of a particularly unpopular group in City A. Surprisingly, I find that majority-minority groups experience an increase in responses from White legislators, but this increase is not statistically significant. In general, I find limited support for the hypothesis that White legislators are less likely to respond when minority groups speak about race-related issues than when they speak about other topics. This is only the case for all-minority groups.

Additionally, other race effects emerge conditionally - when groups speak about legislative matters. White legislators are more likely to respond (explicitly or substantively) to all-White groups than to all-minority groups when these groups comment on legislative matters. On the other hand, when groups comment on non-legislative issues, the reverse seems to be the case - minority groups benefit from a remarkable level of responsiveness. Specifically, White

legislators are far more likely to respond to minority groups than to all-White groups when groups speak about issues that have no bearing on legislative matters being discussed at the public meeting.

Discussion of Results

What do we make of these results especially in light of how these patterns compare to those associated with legislative responses to individual constituents? In general, council members are more likely to respond to formal and informal groups of constituents than to individuals. This should not be surprising since multiple individuals expressing a particular position, sentiment, or viewpoint signal to members the intensity of that opinion as opposed to just one individual asserting the view. One can even argue that perhaps from a normative standpoint, it is more undesirable for legislators not to respond when groups speak than when individuals speak. Furthermore, one can even say that when multiple constituents assert the same opinion or viewpoint, legislators “kill two birds with one stone” by responding to the group instead of singling out at different moments particular individuals in that group. Therefore, from the legislator’s standpoint, responding to groups is “easier” and more efficient than responding to individuals. However, it becomes problematic when legislators automatically resort to group responses rather than to individual responses even when individuals attend meetings to express a common opinion. While constituents may attend meetings to express similar opinions or may offer similar reasons to support or oppose a local resolution, variations may still exist among the statements. When a legislator repeatedly issues group responses and significantly less individual responses, it may reflect the legislator’s propensity to listen to individuals merely as members of the group. While this is not necessarily problematic, especially when constituents do indeed express a common opinion, legislators may miss nuances in the opinion or narrative offered by a

particular individual if they automatically presume the individual is going to express the same opinion as others and hence deduce they do not need to listen as carefully.

Therefore, it would be worrisome if the balance of group responses to individual responses were skewed for one racial group and not for another. However, the results do not show that in every circumstance, minority groups are particularly disadvantaged compared to their White counterparts when speaking to local legislators. All-minority groups benefit most when they address Black legislators, and minority groups reap a similarly huge advantage when they speak about non-legislative matters. Furthermore, White legislators do not necessarily reduce their responses to race-related statements when spoken by minority groups, especially when spoken by majority-minority groups.

While the results in this chapter show that legislators certainly do not brush aside minority groups, the results still reflect some disconcerting patterns: that legislators respond most to minority groups when they speak about non-race related or non-legislative matters, and they respond least to all-White groups who speak about non-legislative matters. For statements about race, White council members may not feel comfortable responding when groups composed entirely of racial minorities speak about racialized issues. However, they may feel more inclined to do so when groups constituted by at least some White constituents (or even one) speak about race. This might explain why the response rate for all-minority groups is reduced by such a wide margin when they switch from speaking about topics orthogonal to race to speaking about race-related issues and why majority-minority groups do not experience a similar effect. Perhaps, in the legislator's mind, the presence of even a few White individuals might provide more "credence" to race-related statements because they appear less "biased" than if expressed by a

group composed entirely of racial minorities. Exploring this speculation is certainly worthwhile but, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this project.

While the odds of a response may be highly favorable to minority groups that speak about non-racialized or non-legislative topics, these findings suggest that White legislators seem to be “overcompensating” for their relative lack of responsiveness to minority groups, especially to all-minority groups, when these groups speak about legislative issues. On the other hand, and perhaps to appear less biased, White legislators “undercompensate” in their responses to all-White groups who speak about non-legislative issues. Why might White legislators behave this way? Perhaps White legislators, or legislators in general, perceive comments on non-legislative matters (especially constituent requests for personal or community assistance, expressions of gratitude for the council’s efforts, suggestions for improving the city, and so on) as potentially less polarizing than comments about race or legislative issues, and therefore they may feel comfortable responding as frequently as possible when minorities speak about these issues. However, this plausible narrative (along with my findings) consequently implies that minority groups may be better off speaking about topics that are “palatable” and steering clear of subjects that potentially invite discomfort or involve policy-related discussions. On the other hand, White groups, especially all-White groups, are better off not addressing council members on issues that have no bearing on legislation being considered. Certainly, this implication is not consistent with the notion of what it means to have an “equal voice.”

While I speculate in the previous chapter that the potentially controversial and polarizing character of legislative discussions might induce council members to respond less to individuals belonging to certain groups, there may be additional reasons why legislators, especially White legislators, respond less to minority individuals and minority groups when these individuals or

groups speak about legislation, including legislative matters that may not be polarizing at all. Again, might it be attributed to the unconscious bias possessed by White legislators that predisposes them to assume that the opinions of minority groups and individuals are not sufficiently informed or “expertise” to publicly acknowledge? Also, when confronted with minority groups speaking about legislative issues that are contentious, especially along racial lines, might the reduced responsiveness among White legislators reflect a conscious monitoring of potential reactions from White constituents?

Limitations and Future Directions in Research

Although these questions are worth exploring, unfortunately, they cannot be answered given the limitations of this research methodology and the data at hand. Furthermore, as one may notice, the magnitude associated with some of the findings is quite enormous. These large effects can be attributed to not only the small size of the data but also to the limited number of certain groups, especially the minority groups. Given that the observations are not independent and that all-minority groups, for example, only constitute 5% of the data (20 observations), it may not have been surprising to find that under certain conditions, legislators responded to most of the minority groups.

Therefore, the analyses of a larger sample, beyond the present dataset of 385 observations, coming from only 46 groups, may potentially yield more modest estimates. Furthermore, the analyses would substantially benefit from the inclusion of more minority groups and Black legislators, which would require additional observations or studies of municipalities beyond the three I have selected here. The inclusion of more minority constituents/groups and more minority legislators in the data would allow the researcher to draw

more specific conclusions about the differences between how Black and White legislators publicly relate to constituents who share or diverge from their own racial identities.

Concluding Remarks

While the results in this chapter certainly has its limitations in terms of what inferences can be drawn, some of the findings do make sense in light of the conclusions other scholars have come to about the legislative representation of or responsiveness to the concerns of minority constituents (Canon 1999; Butler and Broockman 2011; Tate 2005; Preuhs 2006, 2007). Like Butler and Broockman's study, this study suggests that shared racial identity has a role in legislative responsiveness (although this chapter takes groups to be the core of its analysis). However, this study finds that the independent effect of shared racial identity only occurs for Black legislators, which some might argue can be normatively justifiable in the sense that perhaps Black legislators make an effort to be especially aware of the expressed concerns of minority groups, who have traditionally faced serious obstacles in navigating the political system. However, others might argue that this heightened awareness to concerns of minority groups, particularly all-minority groups, should not come at a cost to the other groups. On the other hand, while I find that I cannot reject the possibility that shared racial identity has no independent effect on the responsiveness of White legislators, the effect of race emerges under specific conditions for White legislators. As I had alluded to in the previous chapter, how would race affect responsiveness if the legislators were conservative and Republican? Although I cannot answer this inquiry at the present moment, it does deserve attention in future research studies.

However, depending on what researchers find, the results could potentially be a cause for concern. If additional studies were to conclude that legislators are more likely to respond to

White constituents than to racial minorities in public meetings, this would have troubling implications for a society that idealizes the “equality of voices” no matter where they are expressed. Furthermore, even if additional studies were to find that the effects of race are mostly conditional, as my study suggests, it would not make the implications any less worrisome.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

"Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd rather have been talking."
– Aristotle

Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that legislators too can gain more wisdom if they take time to listen to their constituents in the figurative and literal sense. We, as political scientists, have looked at, and fortunately, even value the former. However, we have, for too long, neglected the latter. Listening in the literal sense is equally as essential as a foundational component of political representation as is figurative listening. Even with the dominance of the internet and online and mass communication, face-to-face communications still do matter. Face-to-face communications are largely about making the kind of connection with a person that is missing in the correspondence that happens over email and other written forms of communication. This is especially true for the constituents who attend public meetings to express in person their messages to their legislators. Their decisions to attend the public meeting are partly motivated by the idea that saying something directly to someone carries a different kind of weight than actually sending an email or even calling. For many, the attendance at a public meeting to voice an opinion on an issue, whether it is in support of or opposition to the issue, reflects the intensity of one's preferences. For many others, attendance at a meeting is

also a costly effort, especially for those with limited income and who work irregular hours, those with children, compounded by the limited access to childcare (recall that women participate at a lower rate than men), and or even those who do not feel comfortable speaking at a public meeting but do so anyway. These constituents expect at the very least that their voices will be acknowledged even if, realistically, not all will have their requests granted or their policy preferences enacted.

Listening (and listening well) is not only a precondition to an appropriate legislative response to constituent views conveyed at these meetings, whether they are requests for assistance, opinions on policy items, questions on city regulations, and so on, but listening, as alluded to in the Aristotle quote at the start of this chapter, is an opportunity for the legislator to acquire more knowledge on a variety of matters. Even if a legislator is unable to do what a certain segment of her constituency prefers, hearing them out may provide new information previously unavailable to the legislator, which may be useful in future debates about a similar policy matter.

On a more basic level, listening reinforces an individual's sense of belonging in a political community. Listening confers respect to that individual. From the constituent's viewpoint, to be ignored (and especially blatantly dismissed) demonstrates the legislator's lack of respect for the individual and his efforts to be an engaged citizen in the community. For example, individuals in Chapter 3 publicly rebuked their elected officials for not paying attention to them. While the legislator's apparent disregard for these constituents' concerns probably didn't dampen their willingness to continue their active efforts at participation, for others, this may not be the case. A handful of constituents, like the ones mentioned above, are council "regulars" who come frequently to comment on municipal related matters. However, there are

many more who attend council meetings infrequently and for whom legislative indifference to or disregard for their concerns may induce them to stay at home rather than return to the meetings.

While it is troubling when legislators do not listen, it is more disconcerting when legislators listen to some and not to others. Unfortunately, legislators do racially discriminate when listening in the figurative sense. Furthermore, as my study shows, legislators are not immune to race-related discrimination when listening in the literal sense. I find that depending on the component of listening that is assessed, legislators, particularly White legislators, are more likely to listen to those who share their racial identity than to those who racially identify otherwise. When responding, the race effects are conditional in that White legislators are more likely to respond to White constituents and to all-White or majority-White groups (than to their Black or minority counterparts) when constituents/groups speak about legislative matters. Additionally, they are less likely to respond to racial minorities (and groups composed entirely of racial minorities) when these constituents speak about race than when they speak about matters unrelated to race. On the other hand, White legislators are more likely to respond to minority groups than to White groups when these groups speak about non-legislative matters. As I discussed earlier, what these results suggest then is that White legislators respond to Blacks and other racial minorities more when the stakes of a reply appear “low” and reduce their responsiveness when the stakes appear “high,” when the issues involve legislative or race-related matters. Black legislators are also not immune to engaging in racially discriminating behavior when it comes to responding. In general, Black legislators are more likely to respond to minority groups than to White groups.

White legislators also exhibit race-related differences in their propensity to pay attention to constituents in the first place. Specifically, White legislators spend a greater proportion of

time being distracted by other activities when the constituent speaking is White than when the constituent is Black. On the other hand, I do not find support for the expectation that Black legislators are less distracted when Black constituents speak than when White constituents do the same.

Finally, the results associated with the study on message comprehension stands in contrast to the previous two sets of findings. Specifically, I find no confirmation for the hypothesis that for White legislators, race affects their abilities to recall and understand what constituents say. On the other hand, I find that Black legislators are more likely to forget or only minimally recall a constituent's message than are White legislators. Additionally, I find that shared identification as a person of color, not shared racial identity, positively affects a Black legislator's comprehension of constituent messages.

How do we make sense of these results? What these results suggest is that when it comes to more "active" forms of listening and when listening is on public display, the behavior of White legislators tends to advantage White constituents over non-Whites (although in some instances, the advantages are conditional). This active form of listening is heightened for White constituents and White groups when the issue is potentially "high" stakes and intensified for minority groups when the issue is potentially "low" stakes. In other words, it is highly possible that White legislators want to demonstrate to White constituents that they hear their concerns about legislative matters, but at the same time, they do not want to alienate minority groups at the meetings, so they respond disproportionately to these groups' concerns about non-legislative matters. The obvious question that follows from this conjecture is: why not respond to both groups equally when it comes to issues related to legislation? As I speculated earlier, it may be that for policy related matters, where the knowledge required to speak about them becomes

arguably more complex, White legislators may underestimate the quality of input from minority constituents (this is the pessimistic view). Alternatively, a less negative, but still troubling, view is that the potential information overload generated by discussions of policy-related matters, especially those that are more contentious, induces legislators to resort to information shortcuts, one of which is race. In general, a legislator's response conveys a signal that there was something compelling in the constituent or group's statement to prompt a response in the first place, and for minority constituents, their viewpoint may be insufficiently compelling or unrelatable to the legislator (again, the pessimistic explanation) or may be adequately reasonable and convincing but may be lost in the information-abundant environment that constrains legislators to resort to informational shortcuts.

Furthermore, on a more basic level, when the legislator responds or refrains from engaging in other activities, the constituent speaking and others in the audience have some form of assurance that the legislator is listening. Thus, a constituent has no way of knowing whether or not his legislator listened to (and understood) him if his legislator doesn't offer a response or spends part of his speaking time being distracted by something else. This is true even if the legislator is assessed as having moderately or highly understood the constituent's message. Thus, what my results suggest is that Black constituents encounter this disadvantage. Critics might counter that a legislator's accurate comprehension of messages is more important than her appearance of listening. Again, I argue against this viewpoint, for the perception of legislative listening not only affects the constituent's sense of being respected as a member of a political community, but it has potential implications for his perceptions of political efficacy as well. Thus, it is problematic that relative to their minority counterparts, White constituents reap the advantages of the more active and public forms of legislative listening. On the other hand, I find

that Black legislators understand better the views of minority constituents than the views of White constituents, which confers minority constituents the advantage in this instance. However, this finding does not alleviate the concerns one presumably has when a group gains an advantage or benefits at the expense of another.

While this work directs attention to a largely neglected phenomenon in politics and highlights another area where we should be concerned about race-related differences, there are limitations to this study. Although I do find statistically significant race-related differences in liberal municipalities where it would be difficult to do so, the study would benefit from the inclusion of additional cities, especially those with more partisan and ideological variations. Furthermore, the inability to find few or no race effects associated with Black legislators may be attributed to the relatively fewer number of Black legislators in the sample. On the other hand, the fewer number of Black legislators in the study of message recall and comprehension may be artificially generating the statistically significant effect of race, especially if the results are driven by only one or two Black legislators.

Another limitation to this study is that I am unable to study the listening process in its entirety. Instead, I studied listening in its various stages, especially when I investigated separately the attentive component (non-verbal behaviors) and the response component of listening. Studying the entire process of listening would have required, for each constituent, collection of information on the council member's non-verbal behavior, recall, comprehension, and responsiveness associated with his message. Given that I was unable to record every council member during the meetings in some of the cities and given that not every legislator agreed to speak with me, this task would have been impossible. However, given more time and resources, a study like this could be undertaken in the future.

Finally, I find that other social identities have effects on listening as well. Specifically, I find that male local legislators are more likely than their female counterparts to offer responses in public meetings, but I also find that they generally understand constituent messages less than female legislators do. While I do not find support for the expectation that shared intersectional identities (involving gender) are positively associated with the legislator's listening behavior, I do find that female legislators are less distracted when female constituents speak than when male constituents do so. Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that this effect is being driven by White female legislators' receptivity to the concerns of White female constituents. Although this study centers on the role of racial identity in the listening process, further studies should investigate the effect of other relevant social identities, such as gender and class.

In summary, this study is the first of its kind to take seriously political listening as an object of empirical inquiry. I have not only directed attention to an activity of political representation where race-related differences exist, but I have highlighted various areas that would benefit from additional research. Only when political scientists take seriously the practice of listening as integral to the healthy functioning of a democracy can they turn their attention to investigating ways to create optimal conditions and institutional structures that are conducive to fostering respectful and fruitful exchanges (that involve both speaking and listening) between political actors, whether in the form of communications between citizens, between elites, or between both elites and citizens.

Appendix A: Generalized Linear Model (Logit-Binomial) with Legislator Fixed Effects (Chapter 3)

As previously mentioned, since the dependent variable is a proportion, a mixed effects (ordinary) linear regression model is not an appropriate model to use because it may predict values below 0 or over 1. Baum suggests that one way to have predicted values fall between 0 and 1 is to use a generalized linear model (GLM) with a link logit and binomial family but to also incorporate robust standard errors in case the distribution is misspecified (2008). However, in order to account for the non-independence of observations for both legislators and constituents, a multilevel model must also be utilized, but a mixed effects GLM with the link logit and binomial family is incompatible with the inclusion of robust standard errors since a mixed effects model violates the assumption that the residuals are not correlated with one another. Therefore, I include here another model that is NOT a mixed effects model but a model that still accounts for the non-independence of observations among legislators and constituents but will allow for the inclusion of robust (clustered) standard errors. Here, I use a generalized linear model (link logit and binomial family) that makes use of legislator dummy variables (fixed effects) but also includes clustered standard errors (clustered around constituents).

However, there are drawbacks that accompany the use of this model. First, groups of observations with no variation with respect to the dependent variable are automatically omitted from the analyses. Additionally, time-invariant variables associated with the legislator are

excluded from the analysis due to perfect collinearity with the legislator dummy variables. Therefore, the analysis will not be able to yield results that show, for example, whether or not male legislators are more distracted than female legislators. However, I am still able to test my hypotheses concerning the effects of race and/or shared racial identity, especially when I subset the sample by the legislator's race.

As shown in Table A1, the significance level of the coefficient associated with the variable of interest, race of the constituent, remain more or less the same when compared to the significance level reported in the multilevel analysis. However, the effect size of the race variable is less than in the previous analysis. Here, White legislators, on average, increase their distraction by 8.7 percent (instead of 14.2 percent) of the constituent's speaking time when the constituent goes from being White to Black. Furthermore, unlike the results from the multilevel analysis, there is also an increase in White legislators' levels of distraction when non-Black minorities speak. However, this increase is statistically significant only at the 0.10 level. On the other hand, similar to the results associated with the multilevel model, Black legislators do not show any statistically significant race-related differences when engaging in activities of distraction.

Table A1: The Effect of Shared Racial Identity on Distraction (Legislator Fixed Effects)

	Coefficients		Average Marginal Effects	
	White Legislators Only	Black Legislators Only	White Legislators	Black Legislators
Black Constituent	0.458** (0.223)	0.018 (0.224)	0.087** (0.042)	0.004 (0.045)
Other Minority Constituent	0.613* (0.318)	0.192 (0.405)	0.118* (0.062)	0.039 (0.084)
Black Member	-----	-----	-----	-----
Asian Member	-----	-----	-----	-----
Male Constituent	0.530** (0.222)	0.421** (0.201)	0.098** (0.041)	0.084** (0.041)
Male Member	-----	-----	-----	-----
Frequent Const.	0.939*** (0.246)	-0.186 (0.226)	0.174*** (0.045)	-0.037 (0.045)
Speech Time	0.201* (0.113)	0.066 (0.083)	0.037* (0.021)	0.013 (0.017)
Speak on Legislation	0.133 (0.270)	-0.091 (0.252)	0.025 (0.050)	-0.018 (0.050)
Speak on Dominant Topic	-0.126 (0.238)	-0.378* (0.222)	-0.023 (0.044)	-0.075* (0.045)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	0.231 (0.191)	0.210 (0.276)	0.043 (0.035)	0.042 (0.056)
Speak on Class	0.433 (0.360)	0.506 (0.337)	0.080 (0.067)	0.101 (0.068)
Legislator Dummy Variables	Included	Included	Included	Included
Log pseudolikelihood	-206.317	-183.280	-----	-----
AIC	0.995	1.037	-----	-----
BIC	-2534.250	-2063.789	-----	-----
Observations	471	394	471	394

Notes: Entries in the first two columns are the coefficients and their standard errors from a generalized linear model that specifies a link-logit function and binomial distribution. Clustered standard errors (constituents), instead of robust standard errors, are also specified. This is NOT a multilevel model. The coefficients in Column 1 are from a regression on White legislators only, while the coefficients in column 2 are from a model for Black legislators only. The 3rd and 4th columns are the average marginal effects and their standard errors associated with the coefficients in columns 1 and 2.

Appendix B: Complete Absence of Distraction (Chapter 3)

Legislators, on average, engage in higher levels of distraction toward Black constituents than toward White constituents. However, this race-based difference seems largely driven by White legislators, who demonstrate considerable race differences in their level of distraction. Interestingly, this independent race effect is also attributable to the distribution of the dependent variable, where, as previously shown in Figure 3.1, approximately 17% of the observations capture legislators completely abstaining from participating in distracting activities. Furthermore, for White legislators, White constituents capture a disproportionate share of legislative non-distraction, as shown in the table below. Table B1 also reports the percentage of constituents (by race) speaking to White legislators who are distracted only 5% or 10% of the total time the constituent is speaking.

Table B1: Levels of Distraction - White Legislators Only

Percent Distraction	White Constituents	Black Constituents	Other Minority Constituents	Pearson χ^2
0%	85 (20.99%)	1 (2.38%)	4 (16.67%)	8.62 Pr = 0.013
5%	123 (33.37%)	4 (9.52%)	7 (29.17%)	8.13 Pr = 0.017
10%	148 (36.54%)	6 (14.29%)	9 (37.50%)	8.42 Pr = 0.015

Specifically, about 21% of the observations associated with White constituents elicit no distractions from White council members. Because one can argue that there is an insignificant difference between the complete absence of distraction and being distracted only 2% of the time the constituent speaks, I construct additional cut-off points at 5% and 10%. However, even at these varying cut points (which are still at the low end), White constituents are still much more likely than their Black counterparts to be the recipients of legislative attention that reflects an absence of or only minimal distractions. On the other hand, when speaking to White council members, non-Black minorities experience rates of non-distraction or minimal distraction similar to those of Whites. While a simple statistical test reports that the differences between Black and White constituents are statistically significant, this test neither accounts for the inter-dependence of the observations nor the possible spurious correlations resulting from the absence of other control variables. Therefore, a crossed random effects logistic regression is used to control for intra-class correlations and other possible effects. Table B2, which includes only Black and White constituents and legislators in the analysis, reports a condensed version of the results.

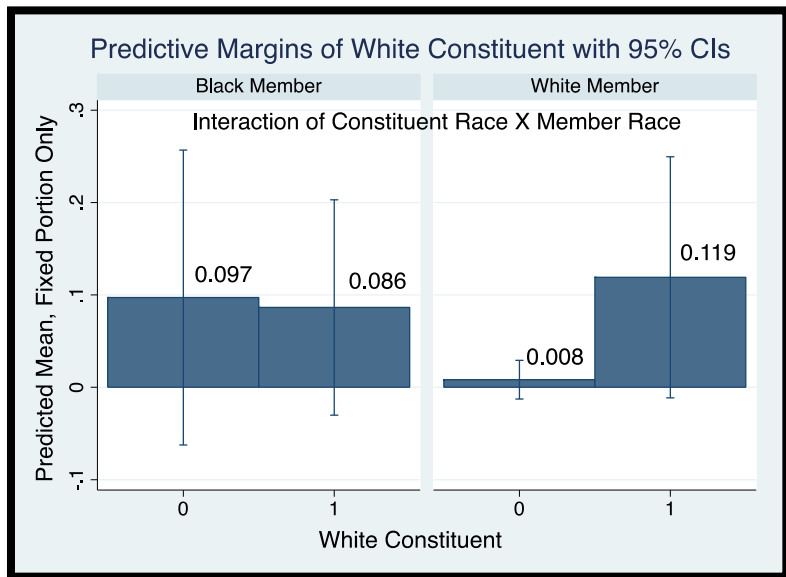
Table B2: The Effect of Race on Legislative Abstention from Distraction

	0%	5%	10%
White Constituent	-0.129 (0.595)	-0.456 (0.548)	-0.266 (0.522)
White Member	-2.557 (1.448)	-1.825 (1.167)	-1.629 (0.987)
White Const. × White Member	2.914** (1.270)	1.988** (0.820)	1.742** (0.714)
Log Likelihood	-297.234	-402.227	-450.461
Wald χ^2	55.450	41.420	42.130
Probability > χ^2	0.000	0.000	0.000
Observations	829	829	829

Entries are coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. Distraction as the dependent variable is a dummy variable. Control variables include the constituent and legislator's gender, frequency of speaking, speech characteristics, and city of the meeting. This sample excludes non-Black minorities and legislators, and therefore is composed of only Black and White constituents and legislators. *p<0.10 **p<0,05 ***p<0.01

There are three dummy variables in this analysis: 1) no distraction vs. distraction greater than 0%; 2) distraction less than or equal to 5% versus distraction greater than 5%; 3) distraction less than or equal to 10% vs. distraction greater than 10%. Depending on the model, anything taking on the value of 0%, 5% or less, and 10% or less is coded as a success or “1,” and anything exceeding these thresholds is coded as “0.” The positive and statistically significant coefficient indicates that White legislators are more likely to completely refrain from any distractions or engage in them only minimally when confronted with constituents who are White than those who are Black. Figures B1, B2, and B3 show the predicted probabilities (and racial differences) of constituent encounters with legislators who show complete or maximum restraint from distractions.⁷⁹

Figure B1: Predicted Probabilities of Distraction at 0%

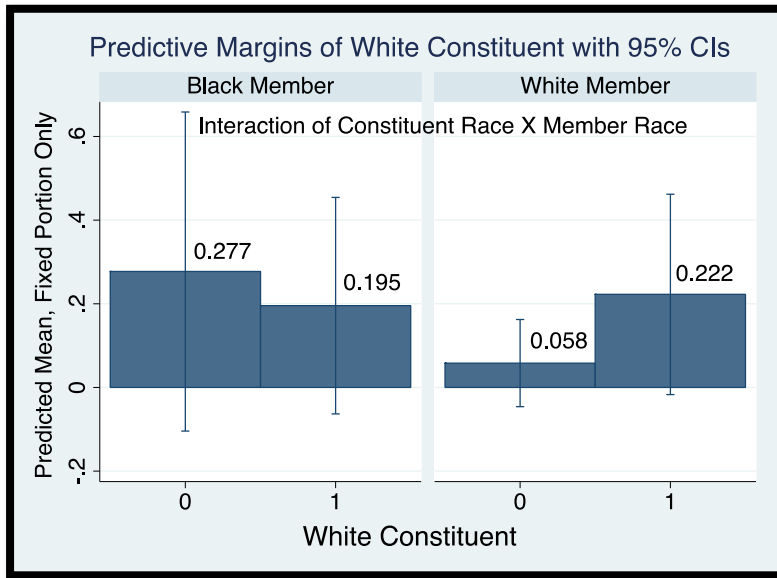


White Member: Δ in predicted probability = 0.111 (0.062); p-value = 0.074

Black Member: Δ in predicted probability = -0.011 (0.052); p-value = 0.837

⁷⁹ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: male constituent=1, male legislator=0, frequent constituent=0, speech time=2, speak on legislation=1, dominant topic=0, same opinion=0, content class=0, City C=1. The sample is composed exclusively of Black or White constituents and legislators.

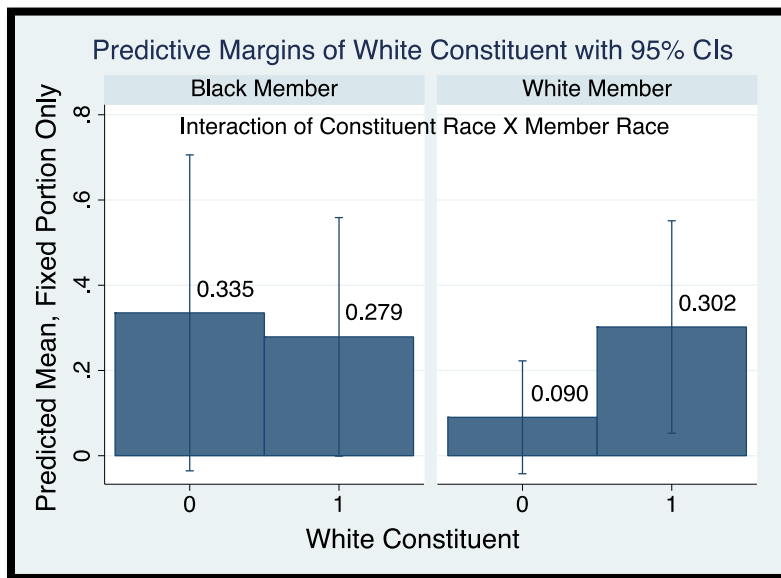
Figure B2: Predicted Probabilities of Distraction at 5% or Less



White Member: Δ in predicted probability = 0.164 (0.092); p-value = 0.076

Black Member: Δ in predicted probability = -0.082 (0.113); p-value = 0.472

Figure B3: Predicted Probabilities Distraction at 10% or Less



White Member: Δ in predicted probability = 0.212 (0.093); p-value = 0.023

Black Member: Δ in predicted probability = -0.056 (0.116); p-value = 0.627

Figure B1 shows that when control variables are held at certain theoretically meaningful values, the probability of a constituent in City C being confronted with a White legislator who completely refrains from distraction is 0.119. This probability reduces to 0 when the constituent is Black. Similarly, Figure B2 shows that when control variables are held at the same values, the

probability of a constituent speaking to a White Council member who is distracted 5% of his speaking time (or less) is 0.222 for White constituents and 0.058 for Black constituents. However, the probability for Black constituents is not statistically distinguishable from 0. Additionally, as Figure B3 demonstrates, the probability of receiving attention from White legislators, who are distracted 10% of the constituent's speaking time (or less), is 0.302 for White constituents and 0.090 for Black constituents. Again, for Black constituents, this probability is not statistically distinct from 0. While I find that White legislators' propensity to abstain from diversions or engage in them at a minimum is affected by the constituent's race, I find that race does not have this statistically significant effect on the behavior of Black legislators. For White legislators, the race difference not only remains statistically significant but also increases as the various thresholds rise, but for Black legislators, the race difference is not only small but remains statistically indistinguishable from 0 across all cut-points.

Appendix C: Gender And Legislative Distraction (Chapter 3)

Table C1: The Effect of Shared Gender Identity on Legislative Distraction

	Coefficients	Average Marginal Effects	
		Male Legislators	Female Legislators
Black Constituent	0.754 (0.489)	0.076 (0.051)	0.056* (0.033)
Other Minority Constituent	0.299 (0.725)	0.034 (0.066)	0.026 (0.050)
Black Member	0.195 (0.757)	0.020 (0.077)	0.017 (0.063)
Asian Member	-0.144 (1.524)	-----	-0.014 (0.149)
Male Constituent × Male Member	-0.907** (0.459)	-----	-----
Male Constituent	1.062*** (0.318)	0.015 (0.035)	0.104** (0.041)
Male Member	1.096 (0.697)	0.068 (0.077)	0.041 (0.045)
Frequent Const.	0.688** (0.317)	0.068** (0.034)	0.060** (0.031)
Speech Time	0.706*** (0.137)	0.070*** (0.019)	0.062*** (0.018)
Speak on Legislation	0.224 (0.300)	0.022 (0.030)	0.020 (0.027)
Speak on Dominant Topic	0.315 (0.344)	0.031 (0.035)	0.028 (0.031)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	0.013 (0.265)	0.001 (0.026)	0.001 (0.023)
Speak on Class	0.451 (0.411)	0.045 (0.041)	0.040 (0.037)
Log Likelihood	-318.218	-----	-----
Wald χ^2	59.050	-----	-----
Probability > χ^2	0.000	-----	-----
Observations	887	887	887

Notes: Entries in column 1 are the coefficients and their standard errors from a generalized linear model (binomial-logit); Entries in columns 2 and 3 are the average marginal effects and their standard errors from a generalized linear model. Percent of time distracted is the dependent variable. City variables are included in the analysis, but the coefficients are not reported here. *p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01

Table C2: The Effect of Shared Gender Identity on Legislative Distraction (Average Marginal Effects by Legislator's Race)

	White Male ¹ Legislator	White Female ¹ Legislators	Black Male ² Legislator	Black Female ² Legislator
Black Constituent	0.081* (0.059)	0.058* (0.035)	0.072 (0.051)	0.052 (0.035)
Other Minority Constituent	0.036 (0.071)	0.026 (0.051)	0.033 (0.064)	0.023 (0.046)
Black Member	0.024 (0.095)	0.018 (0.067)	0.016 (0.062)	0.011 (0.042)
Asian Member	-0.019 (0.211)	-0.014 (0.157)	-0.013 (0.143)	-0.009 (0.101)
Male Constituent × Male Member	-----	-----	-----	-----
Male Constituent	0.020 (0.046)	0.114** (0.046)	0.012 (0.027)	0.064 (0.041)
Male Member	0.088 (0.093)	0.044 (0.049)	0.058 (0.065)	0.024 (0.030)
Frequent Const.	0.089* (0.050)	0.066* (0.035)	0.052* (0.030)	0.036 (0.025)
Speech Time	0.092*** (0.032)	0.067*** (0.022)	0.053* (0.022)	0.037* (0.021)
Speak on Legislation	0.029 (0.040)	0.021 (0.029)	0.017 (0.023)	0.012 (0.017)
Speak on Dominant Topic	0.041 (0.045)	0.030 (0.033)	0.024 (0.028)	0.017 (0.021)
Same Opinion as Another Constituent	0.002 (0.034)	0.001 (0.025)	0.001 (0.020)	0.001 (0.014)
Speak on Class	0.059 (0.056)	0.043 (0.041)	0.034 (0.034)	0.024 (0.026)
Log Likelihood	-----	-----	-----	-----
Wald χ^2	-----	-----	-----	-----
Probability > χ^2	-----	-----	-----	-----
Observations	887	887	887	887

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects and their standard errors from the generalized linear model (binomial-logit) in Table C1; Percent of time distracted is the dependent variable; City variables are included in the analysis, but the average marginal effects are not reported here; 1. Average marginal effects when legislators and constituents are White 2. Average marginal effects when legislators and constituents are Black. *p<0.10. **p<0.05. ***p<0.01

Appendix D: Dates of Meetings Coded (Chapter 3)

Table D1: Dates of Meetings Coded⁸⁰

City A	City B	City C	City D
April 2014 (2 dates)	April 2014 (1 date)	-----	-----
May 2014 (1 date)	May 2014 (1 date)	-----	-----
-----	-----	September 2014 (1 date)	-----
-----	-----	October 2014 (2 dates)	October 2014 (1 date)
-----	-----	November 2014 (1 date)	November 2014 (1 date)
-----	-----	December 2014 (1 date)	December 2014 (2 dates)
-----	-----	January 2015 (1 date)	January 2015 (1 date)

⁸⁰ Specific dates are not listed to retain the anonymity of the city councils.

Appendix E: Interview Questionnaire for Legislators (Chapter 4)

Script: I would like to get your opinion on citizen participation in public meetings.

- I. **Recall** (*Go down the list of constituent's who spoke*)
Do you remember what Constituent X said during the public comment period?
- II. **Content** (*For the statements that are remembered*) *prompt each elite if they forget*
 - a. What was the main point or problem the citizen spoke about?
 - b. What was Citizen X asking the Council to do?
- III. **Reasonable Messages and Unreasonable Messages**
 - a. Do you find Constituent X's message reasonable (even if you don't agree with it) or unreasonable?
 - b. Why do you find Constituent X's message reasonable or unreasonable?
(*Some Potential Responses for Unreasonable Messages*)
 - i. *The information in the message appears to be misrepresented.*
 - ii. *The constituent or information in the message appears biased.*
 - iii. *The constituent appears uninformed about the matter.*
 - iv. *The constituent relies too heavily on emotions.*
 - c. Do you happen to know if Citizen X was from your ward?
- IV. **Perceptions of Public Participation and Public Opinion**
 - a. What do you see as the purpose of public comment period during the public meetings, such as those of city council, local commissions, school boards, and so on?
 - b. What sources of information do you mostly rely on to get your constituents' opinions on issues?
 - c. Have there been times where public comments affected what you did on council?
- V. **Additional Information**
Please use this opportunity to add any information that you think I would find helpful or to clarify any of your responses.

Appendix F: Amazon Mechanical Turk Sample Exercise (Chapter 4)

Which state do you currently live in?

Michigan

Ohio

Illinois

Other State

(If Michigan is selected, the respondent is taken to the end of the survey.)

Page Break

Constituent X said that he wanted Council to propose and pass a resolution that would persuade the state of Florida to dismantle the Stand Your Ground Law. He claims that such laws affect different racial groups disproportionately, violate standards of common law, and increase, rather than decrease, the level of violence in society.

Which of the following is one reason the constituent opposes Stand Your Ground Laws?

The Law affects men more than it affects women.

The Law violates standards of tort law.

The Law affects all racial groups equally.

The Law increases, rather than decreases, violence.

(If the last option is NOT selected, the respondent is taken to the end of the survey.)

Page Break

Directions: In the questions that follow, you will be reading two texts taken from a town meeting. One will be the original language spoken by a citizen, and the other will be the citizen's language, as interpreted by a legislator. You will be asked to rate how well the legislator interprets the citizen's message. Here is a short example of what you will see:

Example:

Citizen says: Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. I like to eat turkey and mashed potatoes.

Legislator says: I think the citizen was talking about holidays, though I'm not sure which one. He also talked about food.

Description/directions:

In this case, the legislator vaguely remembers the theme of the citizen's comment. However, he also omitted some key details like the specific holiday and the types of food that the citizen likes to eat.

There are no right or wrong answers - just rate how well you think the legislator recalled and understood the citizen's message. Note: understanding doesn't necessarily mean agreeing.

Also, although the legislator may provide information irrelevant to what the constituent had said, just focus on the legislator's recall and interpretation of the constituent's message.

Page Break

Constituent said:

"Good evening. I'm a former member of city council and former long time member of the DDA. I'm also gonna speak against the funding for S Company and hope that you will either deny it or table it. But I must admit at the outset that while I was on the DDA, I reluctantly voted for money for S Company and at that time, I hoped to see good documentation of the value of S Company and I worked with S Company people, but I was very disappointed with what they came up with. But as I go along to get along with my good friend, the Mayor, and my good friend, B.G. I voted for the funding."

"I've since come to further question the value of their work and the value of their documentation. I'm here to ask you to vote "no." We have many needs for that kind of money - for example, human service agencies, where \$75,000 dollars can go a long way. And

just by way of contrast, I would ask you to look at the sophisticated documentation you require of every human service agency that you contract with - the budgetary background, the contract information, the documentation of the services they provide, and compare that with what you get from S Company. If you would only ask of S Company what you ask of the human services agencies, I think it would create a real sense for you of what they are failing to give you. I would just urge you to table this, get true documentation. If we could only reallocate this money, I think it would do a lot more for the community, reallocated to human service agencies."

Q1A

Legislator 1 is asked what he/she thinks the Constituent above had said. Legislator 1 responds:

"He's not happy with having a contract with S Company. He had supported it in the past. He isn't happy with it now. He told the council that he doesn't think they have benefited the community sufficiently and we could use that money for other things. He also thinks that city's economic situation is healthy enough that it will continue to be healthy, and we should be focusing on spending \$75,000 for affordable housing, or human services, or any of a number of things that benefit the people who live in a community."

How well do you think the legislator remembered and understood the comment made by the constituent? Did he or she recall and understand it extremely well, very well, moderately well, not very well, not at all? If, in your opinion, the official did not remember what the constituent had said, please select the "Not Applicable" option for level of understanding.

	Not At All	Not Very Well	Moderately Well	Very Well	Extremely Well	Not Applicable
Recall of Message						
Understanding of Message						

Q1B

Legislator 2 is asked what he/she thinks the Constituent above had said. Legislator 2 responds:

"This speaker also wanted us to vote against it, but he came from a very different background. He was saying we need to dedicate more money to social services like warming centers, helping poor people, and he made a very good argument that stuck to my head, (which) is (when) social services organization non-profits come and ask for money, we make them jump through hoops - so many forms, this form, that form, who got them. Give me a tax return and we expect so much out of them for giving (them) \$10,000 here, \$50,000. And then S Company comes and takes millions, and they won't give this, so I thought that's what stuck from his argument. He basically asked them for the same just standards, so that stuck (with) me. That's what I like about public hearing - people from different angles really bring different perspective to us. Do you know what I mean?"

How well do you think the legislator remembered and understood the comment made by the constituent? Did he or she recall and understand it extremely well, very well, moderately well, not very well, not at all? If, in your opinion, the official did not remember what the constituent had said, please select the "Not Applicable" option for level of understanding.

	Not At All	Not Very Well	Moderately Well	Very Well	Extremely Well	Not Applicable
Recall of Message						
Understanding of Message						

Page Break

How would you classify yourself by racial category? You may select two or more racial categories if you are biracial or multiracial.

- White
- Black
- Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other

How would you identify yourself by gender?

Male

Female

Transgender

I neither identify as male nor female.

I prefer not to answer the question.

What is the highest educational degree you attained?

Did Not Finish High School

High School Diploma

A.A. (Associates Degree)

B.A. or B.S.

M.A. or M.S.

Ph.D. or Professional Degree (J.D., M.D., etc)

What is your age group?

18 to 29

30 to 39

40 to 49

50 to 59

60 and above

Appendix G: Email Request to Council Members for Interviews (Chapter 4)

Subject Line: UM Grad Student Requesting Assistance with Research

Bai Linh Hoang <blhoan@umich.edu>

To: CouncilMember@email.address

Dear Council Member X,

I am a PhD candidate in the University of Michigan's Program in Political Science. As you may or may not have noticed, I am the female student who usually sits in the back taking notes during the city council meetings. I am researching citizen participation in municipal politics, particularly citizen efforts to influence local policymaking. I have been observing various local meetings to learn more about local politics due to my previous lack of knowledge in this area. However, sometime during the summer or early next fall, I would also like to conduct interviews with city officials.

I would like to conduct three short interviews with you about your insights and thoughts on citizen participation in local politics. Each interview will last from 30 to 45 minutes, and your responses to my questions will remain anonymous. Therefore, I will NOT use information that can specifically identify you in my future work.

Please contact me if you would be willing to participate in the interviews or have any questions. I can be reached by email at blhoan@umich.edu or by phone at (XXX-XXX-XXXX). Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best,

Bai ("Bai-Linh") Hoang

PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science

University of Michigan

Appendix H: Demographic Questionnaire for Legislators (Chapter 4)

Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview with me. Before we do the interview, I would like to have some demographic information about you. Can you also provide a brief general background on your career in public office?

I. Current Political Information

- a. How long have you been in this position?
- b. Is this a part-time or full-time career for you?
 - i. [If part-time:] Where else are you currently employed?
 - ii. [If full-time:] What was your most recent employment experience?
- c. Would you describe your political views as liberal, conservative, or moderate?
 - i. If so, which one?
- d. How would you describe your partisanship?
 - i. _____ Republican
 - ii. _____ Democrat
 - iii. _____ Independent
 - iv. _____ Other: Please Specify

II. Other Public Duties

What other public offices do you hold (service on commissions and other organizations)?

III. Demographic Information

- a. Age:
- b. How would you classify yourself by racial category:
 - i. White
 - ii. Black
 - iii. Latino
 - iv. Asian
 - v. Native American
 - vi. Other
- c. Marital Status:
- d. Children: _____ Yes _____ No
- e. Highest Education Level Completed:

- f. How would you describe your class background growing up:
 - i. _____ Poor
 - ii. _____ Working Class
 - iii. _____ Lower middle class
 - iv. _____ Middle Class
 - v. _____ Upper Middle Class
 - vi. _____ Affluent
- g. Did your father graduate from a four-year college or earn a bachelor's degree?
- h. I wonder you might categorize your current household income using the following list:
 - i. _____ Under \$50,000
 - ii. _____ \$50,000 - \$100,000
 - iii. _____ Over \$100,000

Appendix I: Consent Form for Research Participants (Chapter 4)

Title of Research: Citizen Participation in the Local Policymaking Process⁸¹

Investigator: Bai Linh Hoang, PhD Candidate, University of Michigan

Before agreeing to participate, it is important that you read the following explanation. This statement describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, and discomforts associated with this research study. Also described is your right to withdraw at any time. No guarantees can be made as to the results of the study.

Explanation of Procedures

You are being asked to participate in a study investigating citizen participation in the local political processes. In this interview, you will be asked about **[your perceptions of constituent messages in public meetings and what makes constituents particularly successful in influencing policy-making]**.

I will conduct a face-to-face interview with you about the aforementioned topics. This interview should last approximately 30-45 minutes. I will only interview you **[once, twice or three times]** and may need to follow-up if necessary.

Risks and Discomforts

You will not be at physical or psychological risk and should experience no discomfort resulting from participating in this interview.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this project. However, this research is expected to expand knowledge on citizen participation in the local political processes.

Confidentiality

Your identity as a participant will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to any unauthorized persons. Only myself, my dissertation committee, and the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board (the committee that approved this project) will have access to the research materials.

⁸¹ Previous title of the project

You will be audio recorded for purposes of accuracy. Only the aforementioned parties will have access to this recording. Any references to your identity that would compromise your anonymity will be removed or appropriately disguised prior to the preparation of the research reports and publications.

Withdrawal Without Prejudice

Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time.

Payments to Subject for Participation in Research

There will be no costs for participating in the research. You will also not be paid to participate in this research project. However, refreshments will be available during face-to-face interviews.

Questions

If you have any questions concerning the research project, please call me at 608-658-5031. Questions regarding rights as a person in this research project should be directed to the Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board at 734-936-0933.

Agreement

This agreement states that you have received a copy of this informed consent. Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Subject Date

Subject name (printed)

Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix J: Dates of Meetings Coded (Chapter 5)

Table J1: Dates of Meetings Coded (Chapter 5)⁸²

City A	City B	City C
May 2012 (2 dates)	May 2012 (1 date)	June 2014 (1 date)
June 2012 (2 dates)	June 2012 (2 dates)	July 2014 (1 date)
July 2012 (1 date)	July 2012 (1 date)	September 2014 (2 dates)
August 2012 (1 date)	August 2012 (no dates coded)	October 2014 (2 dates)
September 2012 (1 date)	September 2012 (1 date)	November 2014 (1 date)
May 2013 (no dates coded)	May 2013 (1 date)	_____
June 2013 (2 dates)	June 2013 (2 dates)	_____
July 2013 (2 dates)	July 2013 (1 date)	_____
August 2013 (2 date)	August 2013 (1 date)	_____
September 2013 (1 date coded)	September 2013 (2 dates coded)	_____
November 2013 (no date coded)	November 2013 (1 date)	_____
January 2014 (1 date)	January 2014 (no date coded)	_____
April 2014 (no date coded)	April 2014 (1 date)	_____

⁸² Specific dates are not listed to retain the anonymity of the city councils.

Appendix K: Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Individuals (Chapter 5)

Table K1: Explicit Responses to Individuals (by Constituent and Legislator's Race)

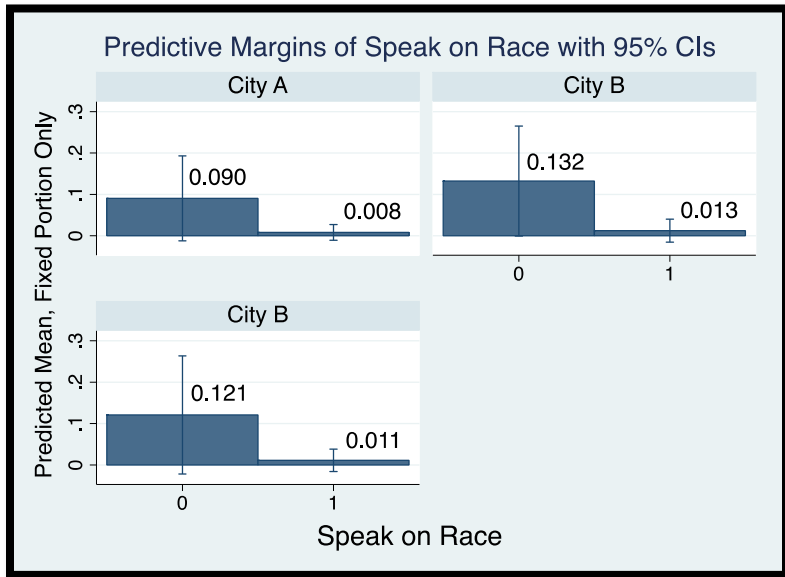
	All Legislators	White Legislators	Black Legislators
White Constituents	115 (5.71%)	92 (5.58%)	20 (6.47%)
Black Constituents	27 (6.84%)	17 (5.86%)	10 (10.00%)
Other Minority Constituents	6 (4.62%)	5 (4.72%)	1 (5.00%)
Pearson χ^2 (by Legislators)	1.127 (Pr = 0.569)	0.194 (Pr = 0.908)	1.557 (Pr = 0.459)

Table K2: Substantive Responses to Individuals (by Constituent and Legislator's Race)

	All Legislators	White Legislators	Black Legislators
White Constituents	208 (10.33%)	179 (10.86%)	23 (7.44%)
Black Constituents	30 (7.58%)	19 (6.55%)	11 (11.00%)
Other Minority Constituents	7 (5.38%)	6 (5.66%)	1 (5.00%)
Pearson χ^2 (by Legislators)	5.701 (Pr = 0.058)	7.421 (Pr = 0.024)	1.555 (Pr = 0.460)

Appendix L: Predicted Probabilities of Responses to Individuals – By Cities (Chapter 5)

Figure L1: Predicted Probabilities of Explicit Response to Speech on Race – by Cities (White Legislators Only)⁸³



White Legislators – Black Constituents

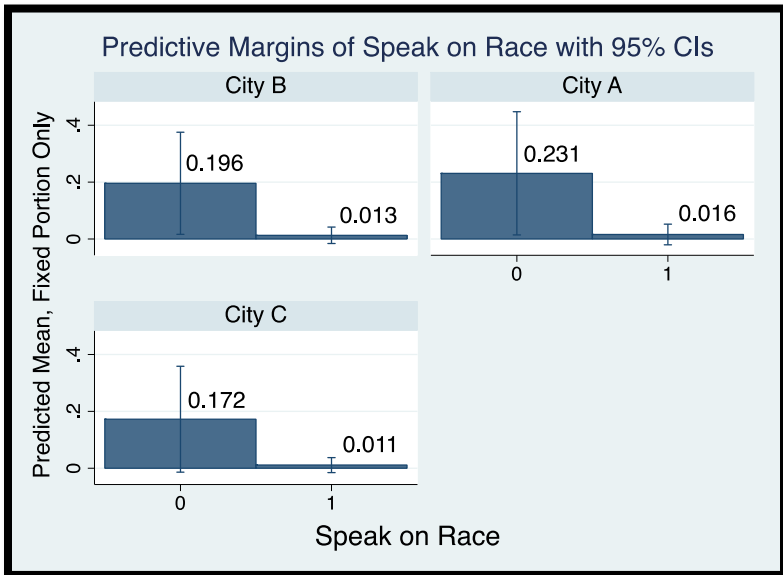
City A: Δ in predicted probability = -0.082 (0.050); p-value = 0.103

City B: Δ in predicted probability = -0.119 (0.066); p-value = 0.070

City C: Δ in predicted probability = -0.110 (0.069); p-value = 0.112

⁸³ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Black legislator=0, Black Constituent=1, speak on legislation=1, male constituent=1, male legislator=1, speak on class=0, same opinion=0, dominant topic=1

Figure L2: Predicted Probabilities of Substantive Response to Speech on Race – by Cities (White Legislators Only)⁸⁴



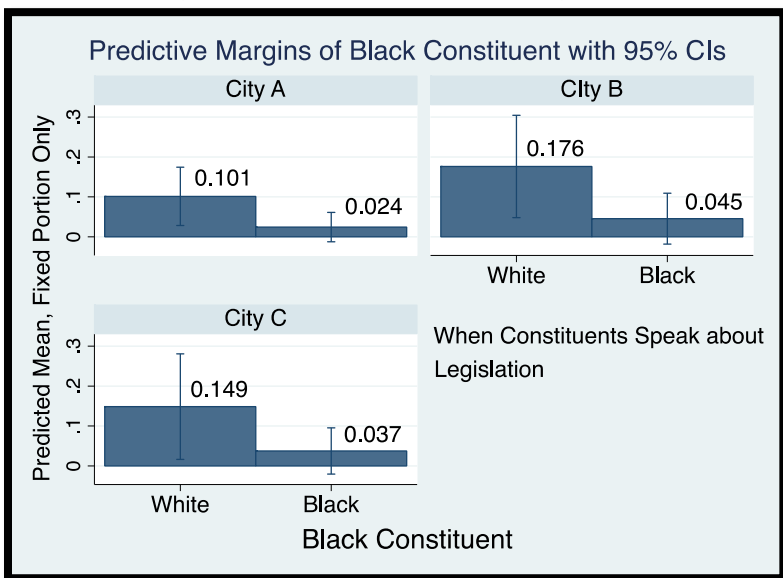
White Legislators – Black Constituents

City A: Δ in predicted probability = -0.215 (0.107); p-value = 0.045

City B: Δ in predicted probability = -0.183 (0.090); p-value = 0.042

City C: Δ in predicted probability = -0.161 (0.091); p-value = 0.078

Figure L3: Predicted Probabilities of Explicit Response to Speech on Legislation – by Cities (White Legislators Only)⁸⁵



White Legislators Only

City A: Δ in predicted probability = -0.077 (0.032); p-value = 0.015

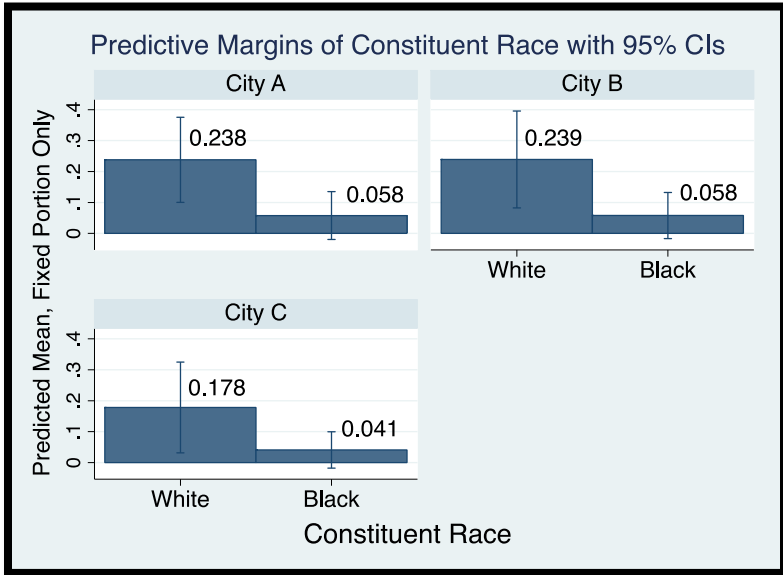
City B: Δ in predicted probability = -0.131 (0.058); p-value = 0.023

City C: Δ in predicted probability = -0.112 (0.055); p-value = 0.045

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Black legislator=0, speak on legislation=1, male constituent=1, male legislator=1, speak on class=0, speak on race=0, same opinion=0, dominant topic=1

Figure L4: Predicted Probabilities of Substantive Response to Speech on Legislation – by Cities (White Legislators Only)⁸⁶



White Legislators Only

City A: Δ in predicted probability = -0.180 (0.059); p-value = 0.002

City B: Δ in predicted probability = -0.181 (0.069); p-value = 0.009

City C: Δ in predicted probability = -0.137 (0.061); p-value = 0.025

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

**Appendix M: The Effect of Shared Subgroup Identity on Legislative Responses
(Chapter 5)**

Table M1: The Effect of Shared Subgroup Identity on Responses

Black Legislators	
Black Constituent	-15.505 (1276.390)
Male Constituent	0.391 (0.806)
Black Constituent × Male Constituent	14.827 (1276.391)
Male Member	-16.071 (1290.832)
Black Constituent × Male Member	15.381 (1832.853)
Male Constituent × Male Member	16.248 (1290.832)
Black Constituent × Male Constituent × Male Member	-14.224 (1832.853)
Same Opinion	-0.224 (0.552)
Speak on Legislation	-1.011 (0.629)
Speak on Class	1.037 (0.935)
Speak on Race	1.054 (0.802)
Dominant Topic	0.504 (0.666)

Table M2: The Effect of Shared Subgroup Identity on Responses

White Legislators	
White Constituent	-0.274 (1.005)
Male Constituent	-0.148 (1.160)
White Constituent × Male Constituent	-0.227 (1.258)
Male Member	0.139 (1.071)
White Constituent × Male Member	0.416 (1.113)
Male Constituent × Male Member	-0.083 (1.310)
White Constituent × Male Constituent × Male Member	0.551 (1.416)
Same Opinion	-1.207** (0.315)
Speak on Legislation	0.168 (0.348)
Speak on Class	-0.221 (0.506)
Speak on Race	-1.432** (0.619)
Dominant Topic	0.743** (0.348)

Continued on next page

TABLES M1 AND M2 CONTINUED

Table M1: The Effect of Shared Subgroup Identity on Responses to Individuals

Black Legislators	
City A	-----
City C	0.449 (0.781)
Constant	-3.314*** (1.062)
Log likelihood	-97.443
χ^2 Wald	6.970
Prob> χ^2	0.904
# of Obs.	429

Table M2: The Effect of Shared Subgroup Identity on Responses to Individuals

White Legislators	
City A	-0.523 (0.488)
City C	-0.395 (0.643)
Constant	-2.865*** (1.044)
Log likelihood	-383.112
χ^2 Wald	32.140
Prob> χ^2	0.004
# of Obs.	2044

Notes: The dependent variable is whether or not the legislator issues an explicit response. Entries are coefficients and their standard errors from a crossed random effects logistic regression. These analyses include non-Black minorities as well. Analyses limited to a Black-White comparison (not reported here) yield similar findings.
*p<0.10 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01

Appendix N: Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Groups (Chapter 6)

Table N1: Descriptive Statistics of Explicit Responses to Groups (By Legislator's Race)

	All Legislators	White Legislators	Black Legislators
0% White	5 (25.00%)	2 (15.38%)	3 (42.86%)
1% - 49% White	11 (25.00%)	10 (29.41%)	1 (10.00%)
50% - 99% White	19 (18.81%)	14 (15.73%)	5 (41.67%)
100% White	31 (14.90%)	25 (13.59%)	6 (25.00%)
Pearson χ^2	3.544; Pr=0.315	5.372; Pr=0.146	3.567; Pr=0.312

Table N2: Descriptive Statistics of Substantive Responses to Groups (By Legislator's Race)

	All Legislators	White Legislators	Black Legislators
0% White	7 (35%)	2 (15.38%)	5 (71.43%)
1% - 49% White	18 (42.22%)	13 (38.24%)	5 (50.00%)
50% - 99% White	28 (27.62%)	23 (25.84%)	7 (41.67%)
100% White	68 (33.02%)	61 (33.15%)	22 (29.17%)
Pearson χ^2	2.531; Pr=0.470	3.833; Pr=0.281	4.384; Pr=0.223

Appendix O: Dates of Meetings Coded (Chapter 6)

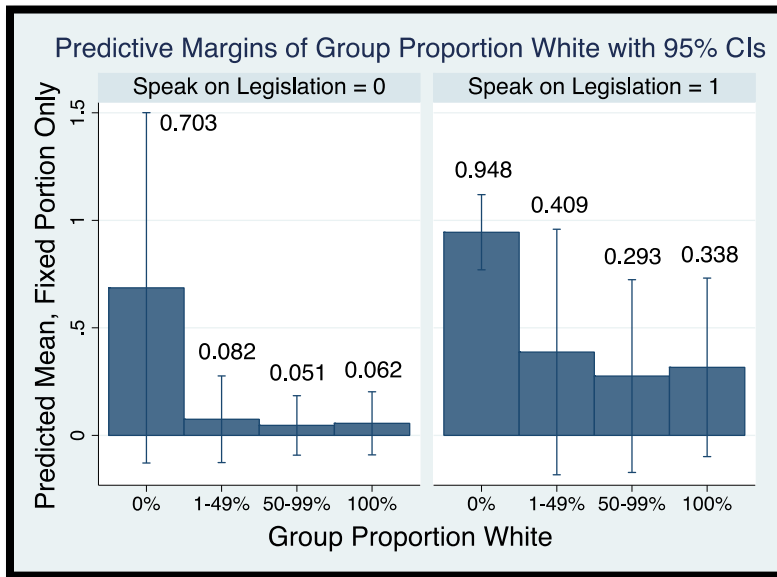
Table O1: Dates of Meetings Coded (Chapter 6)⁸⁷

City A	City B	City C
May 2012 (2 dates)	May 2012 (1 date)	June 2014 (1 date – no groups)
June 2012 (2 dates)	June 2012 (no groups)	July 2014 (1 date – no groups)
July 2012 (1 date)	July 2012 (1 date)	September 2014 (2 dates)
August 2012 (1 date - no groups)	August 2012 (no dates coded)	October 2014 (2 dates)
September 2012 (1 date)	September 2012 (1 date - no groups)	November 2014 (1 date)
May 2013 (no dates coded)	May 2013 (1 date)	_____
June 2013 (2 dates)	June 2013 (1 dates)	_____
July 2013 (2 dates)	July 2013 (1 date)	_____
August 2013 (1 date)	August 2013 (1 date)	_____
September 2013 (1 date)	September 2013 (1 date)	_____
November 2013 (1 date – no groups)	November 2013 (1 date – no groups)	_____
January 2014 (1 date)	January 2014 (no date coded)	_____
April 2014 (no date coded)	April 2014 (1 date)	_____

⁸⁷ Specific dates are not listed to retain the anonymity of the city councils.

Appendix P: Predicted Probabilities of Responses to Groups – Other Cities (Chapter 6)

Figure P1: Predicted Probabilities of Black Legislators' Substantive Response to Groups (City C)^{88 89}



When Speak on Legislation=0

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 1-49% = -0.621 (0.375); p-value = 0.097
2. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 50-99% = -0.652 (0.383); p-value = 0.089
3. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = -0.641 (0.376); p-value = 0.088

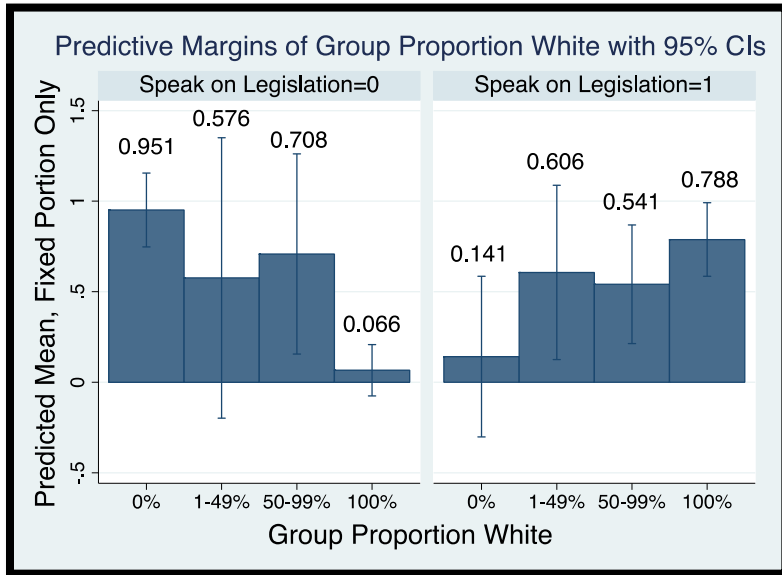
When Speak on Legislation=1

4. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 1-49% = -0.539 (0.293); p-value = 0.065
5. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 50-99% = -0.655 (0.242); p-value = 0.007
6. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = -0.610 (0.217); p-value = 0.005

⁸⁸ No Black council members are present in City A.

⁸⁹ Variables held at the following values: group proportion male=2 (50-99% male); Black legislator=1; male legislator=1; group size=5; speak on class=0; speak on race=0; dominant topic=1; City A=0; City C=1

Figure P2: Predicted Probabilities of Substantive Response To Groups Speaking on Legislation (White Legislators - City A)⁹⁰



When Speak on Legislation=0

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to %100 = -0.885 (0.119); p-value = 0.000

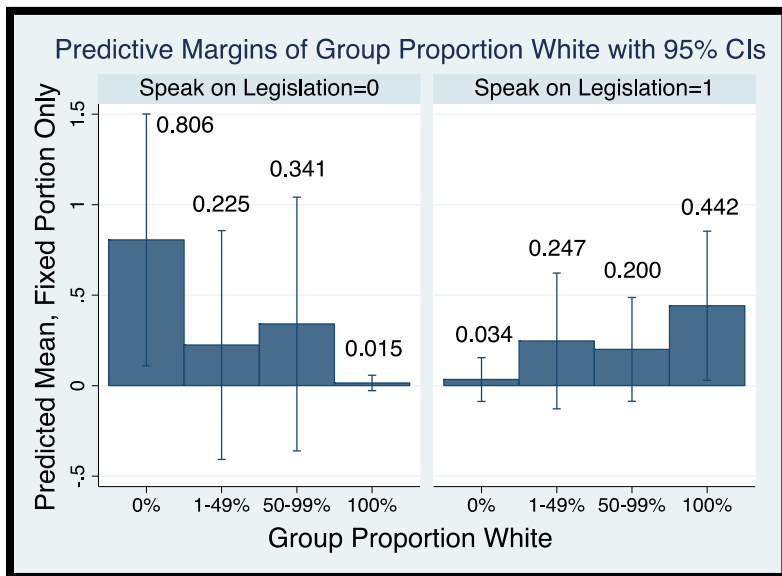
When Speak on Legislation=1

2. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 1-49% = 0.465 (0.265); p-value = 0.079

3. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = 0.647 (0.240); p-value = 0.007

Other differences are not significant.

Figure P3: Predicted Probabilities of Substantive Response To Groups Speaking on Legislation (White Legislators - City C)⁹¹



When Speak on Legislation=0

1. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to %100 = -0.791 (0.350); p-value = 0.024

When Speak on Legislation=1

2. Δ in predicted mean from 0% to 100% = 0.408 (0.207); p-value = 0.049

Other differences are not significant.

⁹⁰ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Group Proportion Male = 2 (50%-99% male), Group Size = 5, Male Legislator = 1, Black legislator = 0, Speak on class=0, Speak on Race=0, Dominant Topic=1, City A=1, City C = 0

⁹¹ Variables held at the following theoretically meaningful values: Group Proportion Male = 2 (50%-99% male), Group Size = 5, Male Legislator = 1, Black legislator = 0, Speak on class=0, Speak on Race=0, Dominant Topic=1, City A=0, City C = 1

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⁹² In order to preserve the anonymity of the councils observed, I have not included the exact dates of the meetings.

⁹³ The name of the interview subject is withheld to preserve her anonymity.

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