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Dyadic Representation

Stephen Ansolabehere and Philip Edward Jones

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Abstract and Keywords

Congressional representation occurs at two levels: local and national. Constituents select their representative and the country as a whole selects the entire Congress. The understanding of congressional elections and representation similarly operates on two levels: the relationship between the individual representative and his or her constituents; and the relationship between the national conditions and the politics of the legislature as a whole. This article focuses on the first level which defines the meaning of representation in the United States. It discusses dyadic representation, or the connection between the individual members of Congress and their constituents. For Americans, Congress refers to the concept of “my representative”, the individual who represents the district in which they live. Through the lens of public policy and legislative votes, dyadic representation has many forms and faces. Dyadic representation means how well the sitting legislator acts as an agent for the constituency on legislative decisions. For American politicians, representation also means taking the role of an advocate, ombudsman, fixer, local celebrity, and friend for their constituents. This article also discusses policy and non-policy forms of dyadic representation. It discusses the policy (dyadic) and party (collective) representation which characterizes representation in the United States. The individualistic and collective nature of American representation in the United States has great influence on the members of Congress. Within this context, the party affiliation, the policy preferences of the constituents, and the policy preferences of an individual legislator play in an interweaving manner in shaping the actions and preferences of the members of Congress. The remaining part of the article focuses on the strength of the dyadic relationship in the U.S., from macro-level election data, and the ways that it is manifested in micro-level survey data.

Keywords: Congressional representation, constituents, representative, representation, dyadic representation, policy representation

CONGRESSIONAL representation occurs on two levels—local and national. Constituents select their representatives to Congress; the country as a whole elects the entire Congress. Our understanding of congressional elections and representation similarly operates on two levels—the relationship between an individual representative and his or her constituents and the relationship between national conditions and the politics of the legislature as a whole. This chapter considers the first of these levels. This is what is most often meant by representation in the United States. The often personal relationship between the individual representative and his or her constituency is perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the U.S. Congress and other elective office in America. Dyadic Representation, a term dating back at least to Miller and Stokes's (1963) "Constituency influence in Congress," refers to the connection between individual Members of Congress and their constituents.[1] This rather abstract term refers to a very basic feature of American political vocabulary. When Americans talk of Congress, they often refer to "my representative," the individual who represents the district in which they live.

The nexus between the individual legislator and her or his constituency has, of course, many forms and facets. Miller and Stokes viewed the dyadic relationship through the lens of public policy and legislative votes. Indeed, the classical view of representation is how well the sitting legislator acts as an agent for the constituency on legislative decisions—dyadic policy representation, to use Miller and (p. 294) Stokes terminology. But representation involves much more. American politicians have taken on the roles of advocate, ombudsman, fixer, local celebrity, even friend for their constituents. Motivated by the need to win office on their own, as individuals, Members of Congress have developed innovative ways to appeal to their constituents, and, for their part, voters in the United States have come to evaluate their politicians not just on the basis of party, but also as individuals. That relationship, both personal and partisan, is what David Mayhew famously called "the electoral connection" and Richard Fenno described as the member's "homestyle."

The multiple inputs into that relationship have generated volumes of research. Mayhew discerned three inputs in developing a relationship between representative and constituents: policy agreement, casework, and advertising (campaigning). Extensive research on roll-call voting, on constituent relations, and on congressional campaigning has attempted to document the strategic behavior involved in each and the importance of each in congressional politics. Taken together, though, these all contribute to the connection between the individual legislator and her or his constituency. One of the central themes of this chapter is that the policy and non- policy forms of dyadic representation are difficult to disentangle. Below we introduce a simple analytical model to give guidance to empirical researchers about how these ideas operate at both the individual and aggregate level.

Dyadic representation is distinguished from *collective representation*. Collective representation occurs when a collective organization, rather than the individual legislator, is the basis for representation. Party government, in its purest form, is collective. Under this situation, politicians of a given party are entirely exchangeable.

Voters choose a Democrat or Republican, and it doesn't matter who. Legislators may promise many policies but they always answer to their party's call. Inside the legislature, roll-call votes become irrelevant, as all members of the same party vote alike. And the electoral fates of the parties in the constituencies depend only on the balance among the competing parties in each district and national tides that rise or lower all candidates running under the same banner.

Even though Miller and Stokes expressed the relationship between representative and constituency as dyadic, they ultimately concluded that representation in America follows the collective form. They point out that constituents do not appear to know enough about their legislators' behavior in Congress to hold them accountable (Converse 1964; Miller and Stokes 1963; Stokes and Miller 1962). They further found very weak correlations between constituents' preferences on major policy domains (in their study race, welfare, and foreign policy) and their legislators' preferences in those same domains. Instead, Miller and Stokes found that party identities correlated much more strongly with approval of the legislator. These results lined up with the general conclusions of the authors of *The American Voter* that party dominates public opinion about political institutions and electoral choices.

Importantly, party attachments in this account lack the sort of policy content that one might typically ascribe to the labels Democrat or Republican. Party identification is just that, an identity. Developed in childhood and handed down from parent **(p. 295)** to child, party identities in this account are stable and unconnected to short-term considerations of policy. Rather, they are a form of social and psychological identity that structures perceptions of political choices, more than is shaped by or a response to the options offered. This is more akin to rooting for a team than making a reasoned policy choice. Party voting, by this account, is thus not the sort of dyadic policy representation envisioned by the classical notions of representation critiqued by Miller and Stokes and others.

The insight of Mayhew, Fenno, and others was that legislators act as individuals to gain the approval of their constituents and try to distinguish themselves, sometimes in quite subtle ways, from their party. Legislators must win office in order to pursue any personal political or ideological goals. That fact has led political scientists to characterize the modern Member of Congress as single-mindedly in pursuit of reelection. Although surely an oversimplification, the electoral motivation appears to capture much of what drives Members of Congress today and has shaped the nature of representation in America. The personal pursuit of office has led American legislators to cultivate personal ties with voters and represent the wishes of their constituents, even at the expense of the success of their party or President. And it has led Members of Congress to organize their legislature and legislative activities to facilitate the pursuit of reelection and the representation of individual districts. Party is extremely important both in Congress and in the electorate, but American legislators also spend much of their time and effort to cultivate the support of the people back home.

Representation in the United States, then, is at once collective and individualistic. The empirical picture that emerges from four decades of research shows that both party (collective) and policy (dyadic) representation exert strong pressures on legislators when they decide how to vote in Congress, and that the electorate is very responsive to both party images and the individual legislators' policy choices. The lengthy literature on roll-call voting in Congress has repeatedly documented that legislator's voting records are correlated with the ideological and partisan leanings of their constituencies (Erikson and Wright 1980; Erikson, Wright, and Mciver 1993; Fiorina 1974; Jessee 2009). Analyses of roll-call voting have also shown that roll-call voting behavior is also influenced by party affiliation of the legislator as well as the constituents' policy preferences (see Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001a; Smith and Lawrence 2006) and also by the legislators' own personal policy preferences (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001b; Sullivan and Uslaner 1978). Analyses of electoral returns document that politicians who are responsive to their constituents' policy leanings do better in elections than those who are out of step with their district (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001a; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002). It is difficult to untangle the extent to which these patterns result from dyadic policy representation, from party or from some other source in aggregate election returns and roll-call voting scores. However, the importance of both party and the constituency's policy preferences in shaping what Members of Congress do are undeniable.

The strong tie between individual representatives and their constituents in the United States surely depends on the context, and, in particular, distinctive features (p. 296) of American political institutions. Two such conditions deserve emphasis—district- based elections and presidential-congressional government structure.

Single-member districts, one of the primitives of American legislatures, facilitate such a connection. The selection of legislators from districts grounds politics in local geography. Members of the U.S. Congress represent communities and places. That is, of course, still possible in proportional representation systems, but the incentives to cultivate a tie between a politician and local community are weaker when politicians run on a national list and win a seat if their party wins a sufficient share of the vote nationwide. In proportional representation systems, it usually makes no sense to talk of dyadic policy representation, and it is impossible to separate party voting from policy representation.

The presidential–congressional government structure also shapes the incentives facing individual politicians in the United States. The fate of the government and the timing of the next election in the United States do not hinge on whether the legislator supports his or her party. In parliamentary systems, such as that of the United Kingdom, the government rises or falls with the discipline of the members of the parties. When the prime minister can no longer secure the support of a majority, the government fails and new elections are held. That is a powerful incentive to maintain party discipline—to keep the current majority in power and to avoid having to run for reelection. In the United States, the fate of the party in government and the electoral fate of the Members of Congress are not so clearly linked. An individual Member of Congress can make

legislative decisions without risking the fate of his or her parties' presidential candidates or altering the date of the next election. Indeed, it is not uncommon for Members of the U.S. Congress to take a strong stand against their own party's president on critically important legislation in response to reactions to that legislation by constituents.

In most countries, dyadic representation takes the form solely of voting for the party; there is little room for a personal connection and little room for politicians to distinguish themselves ideologically from their parties' leadership in the parliament. Anthony King (1997) contrasts representatives in the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and Germany with those in the United States. He finds that representatives in most democracies place their fortunes and fates in the hands of their parties. In the United States, individual politicians have greater leeway within their parties. There is both the opportunity and expectation that Members of the United States Congress will represent their districts' interests and needs as well as, and often ahead of, their party. U.S. House Members, who by all appearances have much more secure jobs than their European counterparts, fret constantly about constituency service and their legislative record. American politicians must win in both the primary and general elections, and they run for reelection more often than their counterparts in Europe. They are, to use King's expression, constantly “running scared.”

The remainder of this chapter examines the strength of dyadic relationship in the U.S. from macro-level election data and the ways that it is manifest in micro-level survey data. The basic lesson from consideration of these data is that the fit of the representative with the district is partly a product of selection by the electorate of the (p. 297) best person and partly attributable to effort by the sitting Member of Congress to stay in office. Much more is known and understood about the effectiveness of legislators' efforts on the electorate than is understood about the type of person that voters select, and empirical studies of election data reveal that selection is of equal importance to effort.

Macro observations

How important is dyadic representation? One way to address that question is to examine the extent to which congressional elections can be understood as the product of collective representation, especially choice of a party, or dyadic representation, choice of an individual politician. In aggregate election outcomes it is exceedingly difficult to sort out how much of the vote should be attributed to policy representation *perse*. We can, however, offer concrete measures of the relative importance of party and candidate, which offer insights as to the potential bounds of policy and non-policy forms of dyadic representation.

Two facts about American elections highlight the growing importance of candidates, and especially incumbent legislators, in U.S. elections. The first is the rise of split ticket voting; the second is the Incumbency Advantage.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century U.S. elections exhibited an increasing tendency for voters to choose one party for president and another party for U.S. House or Senate. The adoption of the secret ballot and the office bloc ballot in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries afforded the opportunity for voters to break party ranks across offices—that is, to split their votes. Walter Dean Burnham (1965) estimated from aggregate data that split ticket voting in U.S. elections rose from just a few percent in 1900 to roughly 20 percent in the 1920s. In other words, nearly all voters cast straight party tickets in 1900, but just twenty years later one in five voters chose different parties for president and House. The cause of this change in voting behavior has been a central debate among political scientists since the 1960s. The fact, however, is not in dispute. Most American voters stick with their party, but, especially compared with other countries, a sizable proportion of the electorate, typically in the range of 20 percent, chooses politicians of different parties to represent them for president and House.[2]

Some time in the middle of the twentieth century arose a second, distinctive feature of U.S. elections: political scientists observed that House incumbents began to win reelection by increasingly larger vote margins. A House Member who won as an incumbent would receive a noticeably higher share of the vote compared with a House Member in a similar district who won in an open seat. A House Member who won by, say, 55 percent in an open seat race would win by 60 percent the following (p. 298) election (Erikson 1971). Over the first half of the twentieth century the incumbency effect appeared to be no more than 2 percentage points, and that a possible statistical artifact. By the 1960s, the incumbency effect had grown to 5 points or so, and in the 1980s it registered in excess of 10 percentage points and has remained at such a high level (Ansolabehere and Snyder 2002; Gelman and King 1990). As a result reelection rates of U.S. House Members, which have long exceeded 80 percent, inched up from the 1950s onward and reached an astounding 98 percent in the mid-1980s.

Although incumbency advantages often result in split tickets, the two phenomena are not equivalent. They have each followed different historical trajectories. Split-ticket voting emerged much earlier than the incumbency advantage. Studies of individual-level survey data reveal that someone who splits their ticket does not necessarily do so in favor of a congressional incumbent.[3] Incumbency effects surely explain some split-ticket voting, but not all. Instead, voters often deviate from the party line in order to pick a particularly qualified candidate in a particular office or to avoid someone they intensely dislike.

Nonetheless, ticket-splitting and incumbency point to one of the most salient features of U.S. elections: Americans vote for individual politicians as well as for parties. Such voting strategies create the conditions for the sort of dyadic representation exhibited in the U.S. Congress, and in many other elective offices in the United States. Because of the sort of ballots used in the United States and the multitude of offices up for election, American voters have the opportunity to vote for different parties for different offices. This creates an opportunity for individual politicians to pursue electoral strategies tailored to the

needs and wishes of constituents and to develop a relationship between representative and constituent that goes beyond mere partisanship.

How much of the vote can be attributed to the dyadic relationship between constituents and politicians, especially those in office? A straightforward decomposition of the variance in the vote is highly instructive about the approximate magnitude of party- and candidate-oriented voting, and further instructive about the importance of office-holding.

Donald Stokes (1966) proposed the decomposition of variance as a way of describing the relative importance of national and local factors, and a method of measuring the partisan and other factors in election results. He took the sum of squared deviations of election returns in House contests from the overall mean and separated that total variation into (1) national variation over time (changes in the mean from year to year), (2) regional variation (largely the South versus the other regions), (3) state variation, and (4) district level variation, which he took to be the party normal vote in the district.

Ansolabehere and Snyder (2002) adapted that methodology to parse the variance in the vote in state and federal elections into the component accounted for by the district or state normal vote (party), national variation over time (the national party tide), the (p. 299) incumbency effect, and the race specific (unexplained) component. In the 1940s and 1950s, party was by far the largest component of the vote. Since then, the two party components (district or state effects and national tides) have explained progressively smaller percentages of the overall variation in the vote across races and over time. The percentage of the vote accounted for by the presence of an incumbent running or not has grown and is now as important as party was sixty years ago. Specifically, the incumbency effect for nearly all offices during the 1940s and 1950s was in the range of 2 to 4 percentage points. By the 1980s it had grown to roughly 10 points for House, Senate, Governor and many other state offices. Interestingly, the idiosyncratic variation in the vote—which is specific to the match-up between two individual candidates—has also grown, and is now quite large. Both incumbency effects and split-ticket voting for other reasons can be accommodated in this decomposition, and each of these is found to be quite large.

This suggests that the dyadic relationship between representatives and constituents emerges for two reasons—selection of the “right type” of politician and reward to officeholders for the effort they exert. We will call these the “selection” effect and the “officeholder” effect.

Selection effects arise because voters attempt to choose the best candidate. In any contest, voters compare candidates not just on the basis of party, but also ideologies and values, social characteristics, and personalities. Jacobson (1978) introduced the argument that voters favor “high quality” candidates and demonstrated empirically that voters give more support to candidates with previous political experience and other advantageous characteristics. Candidates for the U.S. House who have held other offices, such as state legislative seats, are able to raise and spend more campaign money and win higher vote shares against incumbents compared with other sorts of challengers, and in open-seat

elections experienced candidates have the best chances of winning, holding party constant. Experience is thought to indicate general political competence, charisma, and ideological agreement with the local electorate. The rather substantial literature on congressional elections has repeatedly found that challenger political experience, personal wealth, and occupation affect the division of the vote significantly.[4] The unexplained local variation in the vote from year to year reflects, in large part, variation in candidate quality, and the value that voters in the U.S. place on the selection of the right person to represent them.

Voters also reward politicians for performance in office, including voting on roll- call votes, addressing constituents' problems, and advocating for local interests. In the next section we will consider the micro-level (survey) evidence concerning the awareness and reaction of voters to representatives efforts and actions. Here our interest is in understanding the total effect of such activities and their relative importance as compared with the selection of the type of politician.

The incumbency effect, we have noted, has hovered in the range of 10 percentage points since the 1980s for most offices. That effect reflects both representatives' efforts **(p. 300)** in office and the quality of the opposition they face in elections. How much does each contribute to the incumbency effect?

Two different estimation strategies reveal that the officeholder effect accounts for approximately half of the incumbency advantage. First, Levitt and Wolfram (1997) study repeat challenges. When the same two candidates face each other in repeated elections the qualities of the two candidates are held constant. Levitt and Wolfram consider all pairs of House elections in which the same two candidates faced each other and the first election was for an open seat and the second was incumbent contested. They measure the sophomore surge for each pair (the increase in vote share from the first to the second election in each pair). They estimate that sophomore surge for each pair is approximately half as large as the sophomore surge for all elections; hence, they conclude, candidate quality accounts for approximately half of the total incumbency advantage.

Second, Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2000) examine the voting behavior of “old” and “new” voters. Specifically, they consider the rearrangement of areas that occurs with each decennial districting. Incumbents have some areas that they represented before redistricting—the old voters—and some areas that they did not represent—the new voters. In the first election after redistricting, the incumbent runs for reelection in two different types of constituencies—those the incumbent has represented and those that the incumbent has not represented. Importantly, the candidates running in these two types of constituencies are the same, and the difference between the incumbents' vote share among old voters and among new voters provides an estimate of the officeholder effect. Interestingly enough, the estimates of the officeholder effect from the contrast of old voters and new voters is almost exactly the same as the estimates of the officeholder effect from the repeat candidate method. Approximately half of the overall incumbency

advantage can be attributed to the effort and activities of the officeholder, and half appears to be due to the quality of the challenger.

These estimates suggest that selection may be much more important than officeholder activities. Challenger quality appears to account for half of the incumbency effect, while officeholder effort and benefits account for the other half. In addition, idiosyncratic variation, usually attributed to unique characteristics of individual candidates, contributes a component of the variance of the vote as large as incumbency. We will return to this observation toward the end of the chapter.

One caution is in order. The relative importance of the electoral selection mechanism does not mean that what representatives do in office is relatively unimportant. On the contrary, elections select types of politicians who will do the voters' bidding. Elections select politicians in whom voters place a great deal of trust, and people with whom most voters already agree ideologically, and will thus vote the right way once in office. Expectations about such factors are already included in the votes received for winning politicians in open seat elections. When politicians do not fit their districts or when they do not provide sufficient constituent service, they run into electoral trouble (à la Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan).

(p. 301) It may of course be the case that voters do not even care so much about what voters do, but instead pick the most attractive politician or the candidate with the right social profile. How much do legislators' actions affect their levels of public approval and electoral support?

Micro connection

Study of individual constituents reveals further the extent to which people examine the policy preferences, personal characteristics, and constituency service of their representatives.

How is the relationship between representatives and constituents structured? We highlight three of the dimensions of representation—personal characteristics, personal connections, and policy congruence. In considering each dimension, a more nuanced picture of voters' relationship with their representative emerges.

In thinking about how individuals view their representatives the simple spatial model with a valence term provides useful guidance. In this model a voter's preferences over policy are described by the distance of any policy, X, from the voter's ideal policy, w, along a single dimension. Suppose that the legislator takes policy position x; then voter w's spatial utility is $-(x\text{-}w)$.[2] So, the utility function is $u(x,v;w) = v - (x\text{-}w)^2$.[5] The valence term, v, allows the model to take into account features of the legislator that are unrelated to policy positions—such as personal characteristics, intelligence, charisma, competence,

and so on. Valence terms may also take the form of economic evaluations or coattails, as in Alesina, Londregan, and Rosenthal (1993).

This formulation helps to clarify exactly what is meant by “policy congruence” or agreement and representation, how that relates to other forms of dyadic representation, and how it relates to voting. A constituent is congruent with or close to the representative if the ideological or policy distance (however that is measured) is small. If a legislator is somewhat liberal, conservative voters will say they disagree with their member or see a significant policy difference, so too might extremely liberal constituents. How close the constituent must feel in order to say they are “congruent” is a subjective matter. Furthermore, congruence is distinct from liking or approving, as non-policy considerations also matter. It is possible that a survey respondent says that he or she is represented well by the legislator, but for reasons unrelated to policy agreement. And many people may say that they are not well represented by their Members of Congress even though they are in complete agreement on policy matters.

The formulation is also helpful in sorting out different ways of measuring congruence. Two common approaches to measuring congruence are (1) ideological perceptions and (2) agreement on specific decisions. We consider each in turn.

(p. 302) First, researchers may measure ideological congruence as the difference between the constituent's (or survey respondent's) own policy position or ideology and the constituent's perception of the representative's policy position or ideology. Surveys such as the American National Election Study and the Cooperative Congressional Study commonly ask respondents to place themselves on a Liberal–Conservative scale and also to place the candidates for office and their sitting representatives on that same scale. Surveys also include a wealth of questions about individual's positions on issues such as abortion, civil rights, military policy, and social spending. Unfortunately, few surveys include measures of what they think the legislators' position is on those items, or survey legislators. Exceptions include the 1958 ANES study and the Project Vote Smart candidate surveys. Assuming such measures exist one may calculate the difference between the constituent's self-placement on the scale and the constituent's placement of their representatives, along the lines of the formulation above.

Second, one may measure ideological or policy congruence by considering specific legislative decisions, or roll-call votes. Voters knows they would have voted on a piece of legislation if the proposed legislation is an improvement over the status quo. Assuming that voters learn how the legislator voted across a number of bills, they can assess the degree to which the voter and the legislator agree with each other. That is, on every bill voters observe whether they are closer to the bill or status quo and whether their Member of Congress is closer to the bill or status quo. That allows the voter to draw inferences about the degree of policy agreement and ideological proximity between the voter and the legislator. With functional form assumptions one may extract estimated

ideal points for both the legislator and the constituent using this method and calculate the degree of agreement directly.

Such measures of ideological or policy distance are, in turn, used to measure the importance of policy congruence or representation. Specifically, one may perform a regression analysis in which the dependent variable is the constituent's approval of the legislator and the independent variables are policy or ideological agreement, party identification, and other factors that may take the form of the valence term, such as racial identity, constituency service, and candidate traits.

Whether the voter approves of the job the legislator is doing depends additionally on the valence term. Aggregate indicators of approval and aggregate election statistics, while indirectly informative, may, thus, be somewhat misleading about the origins of the incumbency advantage or the extent of policy agreement between legislator and constituents.

The model may be further extended to vote choice. A constituent chooses one candidate over the other on the basis of the utility differential between two candidates. Suppose the candidates' policy positions are x and y and the net valence advantage of candidate x is v. That is, v is the difference between the valence advantage of x and the valence advantage of y. Then the utility differential is: $u(x,v;w) - u(y,v;w) = v - (x - w)^2 + (y-w)^2$. The voter chooses candidate x if the differential is positive and candidate y if the differential is negative.

(p. 303) A few insights follow about approval and vote choice in the presence of policy and non-policy dyadic representation. First, approval and vote choice are quite distinct. A constituent who is very liberal may not approve of his or her representative because the representative does not reflect that person's policy preference very closely. Second, non-policy considerations can magnify or shrink the importance of policy considerations. If the valence difference between candidates is large, the relative weight of policy will be small. Third, valence advantages can create behavior that resembles directional voting, that is, moving “right” or “left.” Suppose the left party is in office and the economy posts unusually strong performance. Voters will appear to vote “left,” because all voters favor the left party somewhat more as a result of good economic voting. This would appear to be ideologically motivated directional voting, even though the source is a valence advantage. Finally, phenomenon such as the incumbency advantage can reflect policy and non-policy factors which cannot be distinguished in aggregate data. An incumbent might win because he or she is closer to the median than the challenger, or because he or she has done a lot of casework or some other form of non-dyadic representation, or both.

The quest to measure policy and non-policy components of constituent's evaluations of their representatives led congressional scholars to design the American National Election Study's 1978 Congressional Survey, which fostered careful study of the sources of the incumbency advantage and serves the foundation for more recent survey research efforts

that target this subject. Most notably, the Cooperative Congressional Election Study, which began with the 2006 election, is designed around improving ways to measure policy representation.

Policy congruence

The classical notion of representation holds that voters judge their representatives on the basis of the legislative actions and decisions they have made. Voters choose to re- elect legislators with whom they generally agree on important issues—that is, with whom there is a high degree of policy congruence.

The critique of this model arose out of the Michigan School's research and centered around the American public's apparent lack of democratic competence. In particular, Americans did not appear to care enough, know enough, or engage enough to even describe their participation as part of a “relationship” with their representatives. Miller's and Stokes's (1963) pioneering study found that many people could not identify the orientation of their representatives on questions of social welfare, racial integration, and foreign policy. And the one way in which the public's political information was organized —identification with the political parties—seemed to explicitly rule out much of a *dyadic* relationship. Voters identified as a Democrat or a Republican, but failed to differentiate between the parties and their own representatives (Campbell, Converse, et al. 1960; Stokes and Miller 1963).

A long literature echoes these doubts. The American public reputedly lacks the knowledge, interest, or even capacity to hold their representatives accountable **(p. 304)** (Campbell, Converse, et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Delli-Carpini and Keeter 1996). Rather than choosing candidates on the basis of an informed view of the incumbents' voting record, voters, it is argued, rely primarily on the policy-free “symbols” of party identification (Stokes and Miller 1962). Politicians, it would seem, have little to fear from a public that knows little about what laws their representatives support or oppose in the legislature.

More recent research has, however, suggested that this null finding—that policy congruence matters little for constituents' assessments of their legislators—may have been due to the difficulties of measurement and the potential simultaneity between approval and perceptions of legislators' positions in surveys. Achen (1978), Erikson (1978), Weisberg (1979), and Stone (1979) point to significant measurement errors as the explanation for Miller's and Stokes's conclusions. The 1958 ANES asked legislators and constituents their attitudes on three broad issues but did not ask about specific roll-call voting behavior. It did not ask directly how people would have decided key questions before Congress; it did not ascertain how constituents thought their legislators had voted (Weissberg 1979). Goren (2004) and Ansolabehere, Rodden, and Snyder (2008) show, using repeated measures to reduce measurement error, that the American public indeed

has much more structure to their belief systems than emerges from considering the typical policy question in the ANES.

Voters harbor clear beliefs about how their Members of Congress voted on important questions of the day. Several researchers have used survey questions which asked respondents directly about the roll-call positions their legislators had staked out— see, for example, Hutchings (2003) on the Clarence Thomas confirmation vote in 1991, Alvarez and Gronke (1996) on the authorization of the Persian Gulf War in early 1991, Wilson and Gronke (2000) on the vote to enact the Omnibus Crime Bill in 1994, and Clinton and Tessin (2007) on the votes to normalize trade relations with China in 2000 and to impeach President Clinton in 1997.

Groups particularly affected by a decision are especially attentive to it. Hutchings (2001), analyzing survey data from the 1992 Senate Election Study, shows that the social groups individuals belong to, as well as the political environment they live in, influence the salience of policy congruence. The vote to confirm conservative African American Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court primed issues of race, gender, and ideology, leading members of groups who had a special interest in the nomination to perceive more accurately the votes their senators cast. These information effects were heightened by the electoral context voters were faced with. When a candidate for the Senate was female, voters were more likely to accurately perceive the votes their incumbents had cast.

A parallel set of studies find that the electoral context voters are situated in can heighten the salience of policy congruence for their decisions. Alvarez and Gronke (1996) show that in states with recent Senate elections, constituents were more likely to offer a guess as to their senators' voting records, and were more likely to be accurate in that guess. Hutchings (2001) likewise demonstrates that voters' level of information about the incumbent's policy record may be heightened by electoral factors.

(p. 305) This body of research has rehabilitated the idea that constituents harbor beliefs about the legislative behavior of their Members of Congress and that those beliefs have some basis in reality, and are not just party perceptions. Those with knowledge of policy are also knowledgeable about other features of their representatives, including recognition of the name, and they are most likely to vote for the incumbent (Box-Steffensmeier, Kimball, et al. 2003).

Curiously, though, none of this research has trained its sights on the big prize. *Policy* congruence never appears in the models of the vote or approval. Ansolabehere and Jones (2007, 2009) perform just such an analysis using the Cooperative Congressional Election Study. That analysis offers the first replication of the Miller and Stokes (1963) approach but using improved data and measures.

Previous studies of policy congruence have been stymied by the difficulty in measuring the degree of congruence between constituents and representatives. Matching voters' preferences with legislators' actions proved difficult since existing survey questions did

not ask constituents about the same issues Members of Congress discussed, and the Likert-scale responses to issue questions were not on the same scale as up- or-down votes in the Congress (Stone 1979). One solution is to ask Members of Congress the same questions as their constituents: Miller and Stokes' (1963) classic study did just that, but the cost and difficulty means it has not been replicated since. Instead, Ansolabehere and Jones (2009) asked constituents the same questions as their Members of Congress: specifically, whether they would vote for or against a bill that the legislature was debating. The new survey items, included on the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies (CCES), allowed researchers to match constituents' preferences on policy with their perceptions of their legislators' actions and the actual votes their representatives cast.

Using these new data, Ansolabehere and Jones show that the votes incumbents cast have direct and dramatic effects on how their constituents view them. Calculating policy congruence as a percentage of bills on which constituents believe their representative voted as they would have wanted, the multivariate regression shows that approval ratings and vote choice are strongly influenced by the record of the incumbent.

Policy congruence—which ranges from 0 to 1 as the percentage of policy issues on which survey respondents agree with their legislator's position—has a strong and direct effect on job approval (coded from −1 to 1). In the 2005 survey, the OLS coefficient is.38 (SE=. 01) while in the 2006 data, the coefficient was .53 (.04). The data suggest that this policy congruence is potentially as important as partisan identification. The coefficients for party congruence (coded from −1 for different parties to 1 for same party) are .29 (.03) in 2005 and .17 (.03) in 2006. These suggest that a significant part of the variance in voters' evaluations of their representatives is due to the policy representation they are afforded in Congress.

But these perceptions of where their legislator stands may be strongly influenced by constituents' prior predispositions. Party labels may interfere with constituents' perceptions of the incumbent's record: Arceneaux (2008) shows that citizens rely on partisan labels to infer their representatives' positions—inferences which may or **(p. 306)** may not be accurate (Lodge and Hamill 1986; Rahn 1993). Perhaps more significantly for studies that estimate the effect policy congruence has on voter evaluations of incumbents, those who view a member favorably are more likely to believe they have voted in congruent ways (Wilson and Gronke 2000).

To address this potential simultaneity, Ansolabehere and Jones (2009) adopt an instrumental variables approach. Using the Member of Congress' *actual* voting record as an instrument for *perceptions* of that record, the two-stage least squares regression coefficients paint a remarkably similar picture to the OLS results. Policy congruence once again has a strong and direct influence on job approval ratings (in 2005, .64 (.13); in 2006, .77 (.09)). Results of a similar magnitude are found when considering the vote choice that constituents make in addition to their assessment of the incumbent's job.

Party affiliation remains an important factor in structuring constituents' evaluations of their representative. However, it is both distinct from, and of a comparable size to the impact of policy congruence. From the constituents' point of view, the policy positions legislators cast appear equally as important as the party they stand for. Legislators who have taken positions congruent with the voter's own are evaluated more favorably; those who diverge from what the constituents' want, poorly.

Personal vote

A second aspect of dyadic representation concerns the personal connections that link constituents and Members of Congress. Representatives work hard to foster a sense of personal connection between themselves and their constituents (Fenno 1978).

Sheer familiarity with their representative underpins much of the decision to reelect the politician. A relatively low proportion of the public is able to recall the name of their representative. When given a list of potential names, however, a much larger majority can recognize who their representative is (Mann 1978). Incumbents are more recognized by their constituents than challengers—and better-liked, too (Jacobson 2004). Regression analyses predicting the Member's job approval as a function of party, issues, and other factors repeatedly find that name recognition is among the strongest predictors of support (Box-Steffensmeier, Kimball, et al. 2003; Jacobson 1978).

Although incumbents go to great lengths to cultivate a personal vote, hard evidence of the effectiveness of such activities remains elusive. Two puzzles stand out in this regard. First, Jacobson's (1980) study of money in congressional elections documented that incumbents spend substantially more, but variation in incumbent spending does not seem to matter for election outcomes. Challenger spending is negatively correlated with incumbent vote share, as one might expect, but incumbent spending is uncorrelated, or perhaps even negatively correlated, with the incumbent vote share. It has long been argued that the relationship between money and votes is simultaneous so the simple OLS regressions or correlations should not be taken at face value (Green and Krasno 1988). But attempts to solve the problem have generally failed (Jacobson 1990).

(p. 307) Second, survey research has been hard pressed to find large effects of casework and other constituent service activities on the vote. The 1978 American National Election Studies' Congressional Survey provides the most extensive resource for study of these questions. Analyses of that study have found weak effects of casework on approval of the Member of Congress or on electoral support (Johannes and McAdams 1985). Those findings, however, have been criticized for measurement errors and simultaneity problems. But even reevaluation of those data find mixed effects that are swamped by the effects of party and policy representation (see Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1988).

Frustrated with the weak findings in this particular domain, the American National Election Study eventually dropped its congressional component in the late 1990s and early 2000s. We suspect that important aspects of the personal vote were missed, but innovation in this area of survey research is needed in order to tease out the effects of casework. As matters stand today, policy representation appears to be a much more substantial component of the vote than casework.

Personal characteristics

Dyadic representation may extend beyond how politicians act once in office to personal characteristics of who they are. Voters may choose a person because they are of the same social group, such as a religious affiliation or ethnic group. Pitkin (1967) recognized this form of representation, terming it symbolic representation. Racial characteristics have become especially controversial in the continuing fight over the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act, which provides for institutions to facilitate black and hispanic representation. Some have speculated that symbolic representation actually weakens policy representation as it removes the incentives for those who are buoyed by gender, race, or other group affinities to perform well in office (Mansbridge 1999).

Symbolic representation, however, actually has considerable substance. Personal characteristics identify subconstituencies that shape the representative's policy activities in Congress. Female legislators are more likely to promote gender- or family- related issues than their male colleagues (Swers 2002; Thomas 1991); black representatives are more likely to prioritize civil rights issues than whites (Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran 1996; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Lublin 1997, 1999; Whitby 1997); and openly gay politicians are more likely to support domestic partnership policies than heterosexual or closeted officials (Haider-Markel, Joslyn, and Kniss 2000). For a more thorough overview, see Swers and Rouse (this volume).

The defense of this form of representation is that it fosters participation for groups who otherwise feel alienated from politics and who need representation to correct for social discrimination. A connection based on personal characteristics also has consequences for citizens' views of the political world. Being represented by someone of the same race or gender may increase attentiveness to, and engagement with, politics (Banducci, Donovan, and Carp 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Brunell, Anderson and Cremona 2008; Rosenthal 1995).

(p. 308) Several scholars investigate how the race of the representative can influence turnout levels. Barreto, Segura, and Woods (2004) show that Latinos who live in areas represented by multiple Latino officials (in the U.S. House, the California state assembly, and the state Senate) are more likely to show up at the polls than similar voters in other areas. Analyzing participation in municipal elections, Bobo and Gilliam (1990) show that black turnout is higher in cities with black mayors than in cities with white mayors. Gay (2001) finds a less consistent pattern amongst African Americans represented by blacks in the U.S. House. Although there is evidence that some blacks are more likely to vote when descriptively represented, the effect varies across districts, leading Gay to conclude that descriptive representation only occasionally increases black participation.

However, one fear is that a dyadic representation based on descriptive characteristics may lead constituents to overlook or ignore the ways in which they are being substantively misrepresented (Fenno 2003; Mansbridge 1999; Tate 2001). That is, the dyadic connection between representative and represented may be tempered by the

descriptive ties between them. By emphasizing the descriptive aspect of the dyadic relationship at the expense of the substantive, policy-oriented aspect, constituents may misperceive the extent to which their interests are being represented and fail to hold their members accountable.

Few studies have actually pitted these different facets of dyadic representation against one another to assess their relative importance to voters. Gay (2002) and Box-Steffensmeier, Kimber, et al. (2003) show that *non*-policy factors such as descriptive correspondence between constituent and representative and the member's legislative activity on behalf of his or her district influence various elements of the voter– legislator relationship. Constituents who share descriptive characteristics (such as race or gender) with their MC are more likely to know their representative's name, more likely to identify a reason they like the incumbent, and are ultimately more likely to vote for them. Likewise, MCs who prolifically sponsor bills and serve on committees with jurisdiction over relevant issues are more likely to be recognized and well-liked back home.

Individual-level survey results indicate that dyadic representation rests primarily on policy congruence. Policy agreement is much stronger (at least in recent years) than constituent service or personal characteristics, and it is of a comparable magnitude to party agreement. That conclusion points us back to the classical view of representation. Voters assess whether the sitting legislator has represented their interests, and if not they turn to another person to do their bidding.

Aggregation

Analysis of individual level data has helped to resurrect the textbook image of representation in the United States Congress. A large share of the electorate is attentive (p. 309) to significant legislation and holds their Representatives and Senators accountable for the votes they cast on such bills. Representation, however, is as much about aggregates as it is about individuals. Members of Congress represent entire constituencies, typically 700,000 people for the House and several million for the Senate. One cannot have a personal, unique relationship with each one, and often a vote or position on a bill will receive the support of some voters but alienate others. In this sense, representation is not properly speaking dyadic. Rather, it is the relationship of a collective, the constituency as a whole, to the representative.

How do the policy preferences of the hundreds of thousands of constituents in any congressional district or millions of voters in the typical state aggregate? Elections and public opinion polls are the obvious mechanisms, but what sense can we make of the aggregate vote?

The spatial-valence model again provides an analytical and interpretive guide. The percentage of people who will support a legislator come election time is the percentage of people who, based on valence characteristics and policy decisions, receive higher utility from choosing the incumbent over the challenger. The formulation above helps us to describe the shares of the electorate won by the challenger and incumbent. Recall that voters' preferences depend on ideological or policy proximity and a non-policy component or valence. To determine what share of the vote the incumbent representative wins we determine who is the "indifferent voter"—the voter for whom the utility differential between x and y is zero. That voter has an ideal point $w^0 = ((x+y)/2) + v/(2(y-x))$, assuming x is not equal y, and all voters choose the candidate who has the valence advantage if the two candidates promise the same policy.[6] For simplicity assume that the candidate x is the incumbent. The fraction of the electorate who vote for the incumbent representative is $F(w^0)$, where F is the cumulative distribution of voter ideal points.

Under the standard spatial model, which lacks the non-policy valence term, the cut point would be the simple mean between x and y. The valence term alters the electoral outcome. The second term in the formula for w^0 is positive if the incumbent has the net valence advantage. That would move the cut point to the right of where it would be without a valence advantage (assuming divergence), increasing the incumbent's share of the vote. That result is, fortunately, not surprising. More subtle, though, is the interaction between policy and non-policy considerations. The less distinct the candidates on policy, the more valence matters to the aggregate election outcomes.

Importantly, non-policy considerations completely change the electoral equilibrium on policy. Under the standard spatial model, two competing candidates will converge to a single point, the ideal point of the median voter, and the election is a tie. However, non-policy considerations create an opening for the candidate with the advantage. Ansolabehere and Snyder (2002) show that the incumbent may locate anywhere within an interval around the median and win with certainty, but the challenger has no winning strategy.

(p. 310) The spatial model without a valence term has recently been used by Jessee (2009) to estimate the responsiveness of members of the Senate to their states. He estimates the implicit ideal points of the states' median voters from state-level survey data on hypothetical roll-call votes posed to respondents, and he uses roll-call votes from the Senate to calculate the positions of the senators. He then regressed the roll-call votes of the Senators on the ideal points of the median voters in the constituencies and finds a very strong relationship between the policy position of the median voters across the states and the ideal points of the legislators. The basic conclusion of this work is consistent with earlier studies that examined exit polls and mapped the ideological and partisan leanings of states (Erikson, Wright, and Mciver 1999). Jessee's analysis improves in that these are studies of the entire constituency, not just voters, and the mapping of the data in the terms of the theoretical model of interest.

This analysis is a huge improvement over what was possible even ten years ago. Innovations in survey research methodology and the increasingly large scale of surveys permits measurement of the quantities of interest at the aggregate level. And there have been important breakthroughs in the methodology for scaling survey responses and roll-call votes in order to estimate ideal points.

The frontier in this vein of research is to incorporate the non-policy components of constituents' preferences. Specifically, we lack measures at the scale of constituencies of the magnitude of the valence advantage or of the specific activities that foster non- policy dyadic representation. Empirical analysis of the responsiveness of Members of Congress to their constituencies with both policy and non-policy components remains an important avenue for further inquiry. We do not have constituency- level indicators of many features of legislators that may be important to voters, quite apart from policy. For example, political science surveys typically do not ascertain much how citizens perceive candidates' or representatives' qualities, such as religion, age, veteran status, or marital status. Surveys such as the American National Election Study do ask respondents whether they think the representative is “honest” or “competent”, but these have not been aggregated up to the district level. To estimate the relative importance of candidates' characteristics or traits on policy position-taking and election outcomes requires aggregation of such survey data to the constituency.

In addition, the spatial framework does not adequately incorporate party as a concept. This owes, in part, to the complexity of party identification. Party identification is certainly rooted in personal, psychological identity as the authors of *The American Voter* argued (Campbell, Converse, et al. 1960). Party identification, however, also reflects policy agreement with individual members and with the parties and past non- policy assessments of candidates and parties (e.g. Fiorina 1978). This has made it very difficult to sort out party and other forms of collective representation from policy and non-policy dyadic representation both in theoretical terms and empirical analysis. That challenge lies at the forefront in the continuing effort to understand the nature of representation in the United States.

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Notes:

(1) See also Eulau, Wahlke, et al. (1959).

(2) Campbell and Miller (1957); Moos (1952).

(3) Much split-ticket voting appears to arise when individuals choose a presidential candidate that is not in line with the individual's partisan preferences.

(4) See Canon (1990); Green and Krasno (1988); Jacobson (2004).

(5) See Alesina, Londregan, and Rosenthal (1993); Ansolabehere and Snyder (2000); Groseclose (2001).

(6) See Ansolabehere and Snyder (2000) for a derivation.

Stephen Ansolabehere

Government, Harvard University

Stephen Ansolabehere is a Professor of government at Harvard University.

Philip Edward Jones

Political Science and International Relations, University of Delaware

Philip Edward Jones is assistant professor of political science and international relations at the University of Delaware.